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**Influence of Culture on Adaptation Processes based on
Hofstede's Cultural Models. Case: Germany - Ecuador**

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To my grandfather, Marco Molina, who today accompanies me from the heavens. I know that this achievement would fill him with pride and that, in some way, he has always been guiding me.

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**Influence of Culture on Adaptation Processes based on Hofstede's Cultural Models.
Case: Germany - Ecuador**

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the influence of the cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model on intercultural adaptation processes between Germany and Ecuador, especially in academic and student mobility contexts. This research arises from personal experiences of cultural exchange and focuses on understanding the cultural shocks that occur in a globalized world. To this end, an exploratory-descriptive qualitative approach is used with methods such as semi-structured interviews with Ecuadorian and German participants. For the state of the art, criticisms of the Hofstede model, intercultural communication, trends in student mobility, adaptation models such as those of Berry and Kim, and concepts like the third culture are included. Among the objectives are identifying similarities and differences in dimensions of the Hofstede model, exploring real adaptation experiences, and proposing strategies to improve integration. A comparative analysis and recommendations for educational programs is offered, thus contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 10 and 16, to support research in international relations.

Keywords: adaptation, culture shock, communication, interculturality, Hofstede's model, student mobility.

Influencia de la Cultura en Procesos de Adaptación basado en Modelos Culturales de Hofstede. Caso: Alemania - Ecuador

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo de titulación analiza la influencia de las dimensiones culturales del modelo de Hofstede en los procesos de adaptación intercultural entre Alemania y Ecuador, especialmente en contextos académicos y de movilidad estudiantil. Esta investigación surge a partir de experiencias personales de intercambio cultural y se enfoca en entender los choques culturales que se dan en un mundo globalizado. Para ello, se utiliza un enfoque cualitativo exploratorio - descriptivo con métodos como entrevistas semiestructuradas a participantes ecuatorianos y alemanes. Para el estado del arte se incluyen críticas al modelo de Hofstede, comunicación intercultural, tendencias de movilidad estudiantil, modelos de adaptación como el de Berry y Kim, y conceptos como la tercera cultura. Entre los objetivos se incluyen el identificar similitudes y diferencias en dimensiones del modelo de Hofstede, explorar experiencias reales de adaptación y proponer estrategias para mejorar la integración. Se ofrece un análisis comparativo y recomendaciones para programas educativos, así aportando al cumplimiento de los objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, específicamente los ODS 10 y 16, para contribuir a la investigación en relaciones internacionales.

Palabras clave: adaptación, choque cultural, comunicación, interculturalidad, modelo de Hofstede, movilidad estudiantil.

INTRODUCTION

The research for this thesis will focus on answering the following question: "How does culture influence the adaptation processes between Germany and Ecuador from the perspective of Hofstede's cultural models?" For this, it is necessary to take into account that we live in an increasingly globalized world, where the processes of interaction between people from different cultures have intensified greatly, especially thru academic mobility.

The fact of engaging in these exchanges not only represents an opportunity for personal, professional, and social growth but also presents significant challenges that are strongly linked to cultural adaptation, as there are differences in values, social norms, communication styles, and organizational forms that can generate cultural clashes, misunderstandings, and integration difficulties for individuals facing cultural contexts different from their country of origin.

It is important to take into account that culture is understood as a shared system of meanings and values which directly influences the way people perceive and interpret their own reality and, based on that, relate to others. That is why cultural models are a fundamental part of analyzing and comparing cultural patterns between countries.

For the countries to be analyzed, which are Ecuador and Germany, these two countries present several cultural contrasts according to the Hofstede model. That is, while Germany is characterized by a low power distance, high levels of individualism, and an alignment toward planning and efficiency, Ecuador is associated with a higher power distance, a collectivist approach, and a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships. That is why these cultural differences can directly affect the adaptation experience of students, professionals, or individuals participating in mobility processes between the two countries.

On the other hand, despite the increase in academic and cultural exchanges between these countries, there is little specific research analyzing how cultural dimensions influence adaptation processes between these two national contexts. Therefore, it is important to understand these dynamics, not only to reduce cultural shock and facilitate integration but also to strengthen intercultural communication and promote more effective international relations.

That is why, from this perspective, the present research aims to analyze how the cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model influence the adaptation processes between Germany and Ecuador, with a special emphasis on academic contexts of student mobility,

thru a qualitative approach and a case study, where the goal is to explore real experiences of intercultural adaptation, identify the main cultural challenges and facilitators, and propose guidelines that contribute to improving integration and intercultural coexistence processes, with the ultimate objective of contributing both to the academic field of intercultural studies and to the practice of mobility and international cooperation programs.

CHAPTER 1

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE ART ON HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PROCESSES OF INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION BETWEEN GERMANY AND ECUADOR

1.1 Preliminary Definitions of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

As a main theme, Hofstede's cultural dimensions serve to analyze the cultural differences that may exist between societies, as Muñoz (2025) points out, and these dimensions are defined as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of a group or category of people from others" covering the six axes that will be developed later.

It can be clearly evidenced that Hofstede is still present today and that he largely corroborates the theme of culture where even authors such as (Fernando Rueda Rodríguez, 2022) and links it to modern issues such as environmental care and peaceful coexistence, using 2020 data from the EPI and dimensions of Hofstede and (Cynthia Vinney, 2025) who underlines its relevance today in what psychology is, business and migration, with practical applications as cultural adaptations in global environments, although he criticizes their generalization by not describing all the individuals of a culture, saying that "these dimensions are generalizations. Therefore, they may not describe everyone from a specific culture".

That is why this state of the art aims to address the current literature on cultural influence in adaptation processes, taking into account Hofstede's cultural dimensions model, intercultural communication, student mobility between Germany and Ecuador, and adaptation and acculturation models. For this, articles from 2020 to 2025 will be needed to provide a more globalized and up-to-date view, thus being able to recognize empirical advances and current critiques on the topic.

1.2 Current and Comparative Criticisms of Hofstede

Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions remains a highly influential framework in educational and management studies, but he has faced recent criticism for his biases. Ouyang et al (2025) highlight that key dimension such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, and long-term orientation influence educational management and teaching behaviors, it also emphasizes the importance of having cultural sensitivity in globalized

contexts to improve it, although it also mentions limitations such as bias in publications and the lack of more practical research. On the other hand, McSweeney (2023) presents a critical point of view towards Hofstede's model, where he assumes that the model oversimplifies culture by treating it as something fixed and uniform within each country, without recognizing the internal diversity that exists or social changes. In addition, he points out that Hofstede based his conclusions on limited data from IBM employees, which means that his results do not represent an entire nation, which is why from McSweeney's perspective he proposes to understand culture as something dynamic and changing, which cannot be reduced to numbers or general classifications.

On the other hand, Tang & Zhang (2023) identify that Hofstede is used in intercultural adaptation studies, but they also criticize its static approach by comparing it to more recent theories, such as cultural intelligence. It is also necessary to mention Duanaeva et al (2023), as they conduct a transcultural study on resilience and stress in students from Kazakhstan, China, and India, showing that Hofstede's dimensions such as collectivism influence coping strategies with culture, although no significant differences in overall resilience are observed.

In the same way, Sattorovich (2020) compares the views between Hofstede and Trompenaars on intercultural aspects and points out that knowledge of intercultural communicative norms can resolve cultural conflicts, which adds a comparative perspective to Hofstede's model by emphasizing its role in the understanding of national differences. In contrast, Zidkova et al (2025) relate Hofstede's dimensions to population health indicators and find a positive correlation between power distance and years of life lost in countries with a high human development index, which questions the idea of the model's universality itself. Finally, Escandon-Barbosa et al. (2022) analyze the role of cultural dimensions in national innovative performance, noting that orientations such as performance orientation and humanity directly influence innovation trajectories, which reinforces the criticism of Hofstede's model's rigidity in contrast to more dynamic approaches.

1.3 Intercultural Communication: Competencies and Facilitators

Intercultural communication is very important for adaptation, which is why it is necessary to know terms such as cultural sensitivity, which acts as a facilitator, as opposed to cultural shocks that hinder the process.

According to Tang & Zhang (2023), their review identifies cultural intelligence and intercultural sensitivity as key competencies emerging in international students, also

highlighting other barriers such as acculturative stress and facilitators like social support. Similarly, Ouyang et al. (2025) explain that cultural differences influence the way teachers communicate and teach their classes with students from different countries. They point out that when these differences are not considered, misunderstandings or difficulties in teaching can arise; on the other hand, educational policies that value cultural diversity help create more respectful environments. Therefore, the authors emphasize that training teachers in competencies such as empathy, adaptation, and cultural intelligence facilitates and improves communication and coexistence in multicultural contexts.

Porras Quimis & Luján Johnson (2023) in their Ecuadorian case, they highlight what intercultural coexistence is as a facilitator in educational inclusion, thus reducing barriers such as discrimination in foreign environments and Reyes Rojas et al. (2023) say that intercultural competence is key to preventing culture shock in student mobility of language learners, facilitating comprehensive motivation that includes extralinguistic knowledge.

Another author to highlight from a more contemporary perspective is Karsaklian, (2023), who points out that intercultural communication goes beyond simple linguistic transmission, since it involves understanding symbolic, emotional and social systems, which structure human behavior in cultural contexts. The author says that communicating interculturally requires recognizing that messages are not neutral, but are loaded with cultural meanings that can vary according to the context, so communicative effectiveness depends on the ability to interpret these meanings from a cultural logic different from one's own. That is why intercultural communication is conceived as a process that requires openness and adaptation to cultural diversity.

From a sociological and educational perspective, intercultural communication is understood as a fundamental process for coexistence in contexts characterized by cultural diversity. In the educational field, language plays an important role in the construction of shared meanings and in the interaction between people from different cultural contexts, which directly influences the way social and academic relationships are established. For this, interculturality not only implies the recognition of diversity but also the development of communicative practices based on respect, dialog, and mutual understanding, as many authors mention. Therefore, key elements are important to promote inclusion and reduce situations of exclusion or conflict in educational spaces, as Millán-Gómez (2024) mentions.

Finally, in a complementary way, intercultural communicative competence is very important in globalized academic environments, since it allows individuals to interact more effectively and adapt to different cultural contexts, the development of this competence favors the constructive management of cultural differences, facilitates the processes of academic and social integration and minimizes misunderstandings derived from linguistic or cultural barriers as discussed above.

In scenarios of academic mobility, intercultural communication thus becomes a key resource for cultural adaptation, because by strengthening skills such as empathy, cultural openness and the ability to interpret social norms, this promotes a more harmonious coexistence within educational institutions mentioned by (Ruiz, 2022).

1.4 Germany-Ecuador Student Mobility

Student mobility between Germany and Ecuador shows increasingly growing trends with findings on adaptive challenges influenced by cultural differences. According to the DAAD (2023), there was an increase in international mobility in Germany during the year 2020-2021, with non-European students facing greater pandemic-related barriers than more developed countries. A noteworthy point here is that Germany attracts students due to its internationalization, but compared to Ecuador, this outgoing mobility grows toward Europe. Costales Zavgorodniaya & Mikhailova (2020) analyze the psychosocial adaptation of Ecuadorians in Russia, thus finding distinct correlational structures in cultural scenarios and with tendencies toward greater stress in wide cultural distances, which is similar to potentials in Germany.

Reyes Rojas et al. (2023) also highlight that academic mobility is recognized as one of the most widely used strategies for the internationalization of higher education, although its success depends to a large extent on understanding the cultural factors involved in the adaptation process. That is why these authors underline the importance of developing intercultural competencies that reduce culture shock and promote more effective integration in foreign educational contexts, an aspect especially relevant for Ecuadorian students who carry out academic stays in Germany.

Porras Quimis & Luján Johnson (2023) also examine inclusion in Ecuador for foreigners, revealing trends in intercultural coexistence that facilitate adaptation, although there are findings of discrimination in cantons such as Durán, inverse to the Ecuador-Germany flow. As a side point, it is interesting to mention Tang & Zhang (2023) since they

note an increase in publications on student mobility after 2007, with findings of stress in students from Asia and Latin America in the West, thus comparing Ecuadorians in Germany. Also, for Valls-Figuera et al. (2023) study mobility of LAC students in Barcelona, finding that the experience fosters personal and professional growth, and in this case with tendencies towards greater self-confidence and maturity a year later, which highlights facilitators in European contexts similar to Germany.

1.5 Adaptation-Acculturation: Recent Models and Indicators

These days, adaptation and acculturation models are understood as dynamic processes rather than fixed stages, which is why there are several studies that use psychological indicators that change over time and context, such as resilience, stress, and coping strategies.

In the cross-cultural study with international students by Duanaeva et al. (2023), it is shown that the greater the resilience and coping repertoires, the more varied they are associated with better academic and socio-emotional adaptation, while high levels of stress are related to greater difficulties. The important contribution of this study is that they do not view adaptation as an "all or nothing" phenomenon, but rather as a balance between personal resources such as resilience, environmental demands such as stress, and learned responses such as coping.

From a review by Tang & Zhang (2023), it is confirmed that the most recent literature on international students uses acculturation markers such as culture shock, depression, and acculturative stress to capture adjustment trajectories instead of fixed "types" of cultures. In their synthesis, variables such as social support, cultural intelligence, and intercultural sensitivity appear as protective factors that reduce stress and improve well-being during adaptation.

Finally, Costales Zavgorodniaya & Mikhailova (2020) apply Yankovskiy's adaptability test and other psychosocial measures to Ecuadorian students and find that although the levels of the variables do not change much between contexts, what does change is the structure of relationships between them. This is why they suggest that adaptation is flexible, as the connections between stress, emotional states, and adaptation are reconfigured according to the cultural environment, supporting a non-universalist and more contextual view of adjustment indicators.

1.6 Relationship between Germany and Ecuador

On the other hand, it is important to mention the comparison between Germany and Ecuador from Hofstede's perspective, as it reveals a very significant cultural contrast, especially across the dimensions of Power Distance and Individualism-Collectivism that will be explored throughout this research. Hofstede defined national culture through crucial dimensions, which are fundamental for characterizing differences in work values. The literature of this article indicates that Germanic countries like Germany typically show low Power Distance, while Latin nations such as Ecuador rank among the highest in Power Distance according to Sattorovich (2020). Likewise, individualism is more prevalent in developed and Western countries, while collectivism dominates in less developed ones, according to the aforementioned author.

Ecuador is also characterized by a high score in the issue of acceptance of inequality and is considered one of the most collectivist cultures globally, prioritizing group harmony over individual tasks according to Guerra (2020).

A study that analyzed the correlation of Hofstede's dimensions with the burden of disease (Disability-Adjusted Life Years) in countries with a very high Human Development Index such as Germany found that a high-Power Distance correlates positively with premature mortality: Years of Life Lost (YLL, $r=0.528$) according to Zidkova et al. (2025). This has been interpreted as a sign that excessively hierarchical or centralized social structures can restrict access to essential health services, which is a critical adaptation factor for an individual coming from a high-Power Distance culture. Similarly, in these high Human Development Index nations, high Individualism was associated with more years lived with disability (Years Lived with Disability, $r=0.667$), highlighting the negative impact of the lack of social cohesion, suggesting a link with loneliness and mental health (Zidkova et al., 2025).

Research in the Ecuadorian context also has a key complexity, although the national culture is highly collectivist, a recent study in engineering students in Ecuador revealed high scores in individualism, contradicting the social norm according to Guerra (2020).

It is postulated that this deviation could be due to the influence of the Western educational system, where the completion of the degree is mainly based on evaluations of individual knowledge, contrary to the group construction of knowledge. This finding suggests that the disciplinary "engineering culture" could be stronger than the national

culture, which forces the present research to consider whether the adaptation builder should be shaped by the national culture or by the academic/professional subculture of the student who migrates to the other country.

This need for distinction highlights the importance of equivalence in methodology. The literature on cross-cultural assessment warns that the absence of bias is an indispensable prerequisite for making valid comparisons between cultural populations according to Van De Vijver & Tanzer (2025). Construct bias occurs if the concept measured as "adaptation" is not identical across cultural groups; this can manifest when an instrument based on a Western conception, such as Germany, fails to cover all relevant aspects of the construct in a non-Western context like Ecuador. Therefore, any analysis of the adaptation of Ecuadorian students in Germany must be cautious regarding the application of metrics that may be biased by the dominant cultural perspective.

To mitigate the challenges of adaptation, Intercultural Competence (ICC) is established as an essential tool, as it is seen as the set of skills that allows individuals from different cultures, ethnicities, and languages to communicate and relate according to Reyes Rojas et al. (2023). This training is vital because the process of facing a new cultural environment can trigger culture shock, an impact that is social, psychological, and professional, and that can culminate in frustration and identity crisis according to the author. Knowledge of communication norms and traditions is fundamental for mutual understanding and for solving global problems such as the clash of cultures, as Sattorovich (2020) discusses.

In the context of mobility between Ecuador and Germany, the ICC must provide more than just linguistic knowledge, as language proficiency alone is not sufficient for effective performance, according to Reyes Rojas et al. (2023). Comprehensive training is required to develop sensitivity and understanding of different cultural environments, providing the necessary emotional tools for the student to assimilate the destination culture without feeling that their identity is compromised. The lack of this preparation can be a catalyst for personal barriers, including fear and uncertainty.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURE AND INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The topic of culture has been widely discussed in recent years due to globalization, therefore another topic to address is the processes of adaptation in cultures different from one's own, and that is what will be mainly covered in this thesis, taking into account various opinions and theories from some authors.

2.2 Intercultural Competence and Communication: Aneas, Adler, Hall

The study of cultural influence in adaptation processes, such as in the case of the student experience, largely depends on Intercultural Competence (ICC), which is the key ability that moderates adaptation. According to Álvarez (2005), it is represented as a person's capacity to act effectively in multicultural environments, combining appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Thus, having this ability allows one to adequately respond to the professional, personal, and emotional demands that may arise when interacting with people from different cultures than one's own. It is necessary to understand that at this point, intercultural competence is not just an innate human ability, but a dynamic process of continuous learning that develops through experiences, critical reflection, and interaction with different cultural contexts. This is why ICC becomes a very important and central element for the success of academic internationalization processes, as it conditions the way individuals interpret social norms, communication, and expectations in the aforementioned "cultural contexts."

To be able to adapt, it is necessary to begin by overcoming cognitive and emotional challenges, as mentioned by Peter S. Adler in 1975, who contributed to this field by developing the idea of the multicultural person, as noted by Chen et al. (2013) in their article. This occurs in a state that is achieved after facing and overcoming "culture shock," as Oberg mentioned, leading to the restoration of personal identity. Moreover, Adler emphasizes that transcultural communication confronts the limits of one's own perception, interpretation, and evaluation. Therefore, to navigate this uncertainty, the ability to "step distance oneself" is required. This means it is good to maintain awareness of one's own assumptions, as they can

be erroneous and the situation may not make sense from one's own point of view, whether due to our culture or our own understanding based on it.

A point to highlight is that effective communication in diversity requires not only using the "language of the mind" of the other but also having an emotional awareness of others to understand them. In this line, Chen et al. (2013) emphasize that intercultural communicative competence includes the affective dimension, which highlights cultural empathy, emotional openness, and the willingness to interpret others' behaviors beyond our own knowledge without ethnocentric judgments, in order to strengthen the quality of intercultural interactions.

On the other hand, Nancy Adler expands the analysis of intercultural competence by introducing the concept of cultural synergy, which is relevant for understanding adaptation processes in complex intercultural contexts. This is why for Adler (2008), cultural synergy occurs when cultural differences are not perceived as obstacles, but as valuable resources that, when managed consciously, allow for the generation of superior solutions to those that would arise from a single cultural perspective. From this approach, intercultural adaptation does not imply the assimilation of a dominant culture or the simple coexistence of differences, but the joint creation of new forms of interaction that integrate the best of each involved culture. Adler also argues that this process requires the development of skills such as cultural openness, cognitive flexibility, and the ability to question one's own cultural assumptions, as only through the recognition and appreciation of diversity is it possible to build more effective intercultural relationships. Likewise, the author emphasizes that cultural synergy promotes cooperation, decision-making, and problem-solving in multicultural contexts, contributing to a deeper and more sustainable intercultural adaptation, especially in environments where people with different values, communication styles, and ways of interpreting reality interact.

To apply Intercultural Competence in practice, it is necessary to recognize how culture influences social dynamics and communication. That is why ICC is understood from a three-dimensional model: awareness, sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness, which help to have very important skills to interact and relate appropriately in contexts of cultural diversity (Rueda Gómez et al., 2022). Intercultural awareness involves recognizing one's own cultural values and assumptions, while intercultural sensitivity relates to the attitude of respect and openness toward differences, understanding the other person from a different culture. Finally, intercultural effectiveness is expressed in the ability to act appropriately and

strategically in intercultural situations that arise. This is why this model is particularly suitable for analyzing adaptation processes in academic mobility environments, where academic and social norms can vary significantly between countries.

At this point, Edward T. Hall (1976) made contributions to the understanding of these dynamics by distinguishing between monochronic and polychronic cultures based on how social groups manage time (Denyer, n.d.). To understand this, it is necessary to recognize that the perception of time is not universal but culturally constructed. For example, in monochronic cultures, time is viewed as linear and quantifiable, which implies that activities are organized in a sequential manner, prioritizing planning, strict punctuality, and adherence to previously established schedules. This approach can be associated with formal institutional structures with a high level of organization. In contrast, polychronic cultures perceive time as flexible, allowing for multiple activities to be carried out simultaneously and placing greater importance on interpersonal relationships. According to Hall, these differences in time management directly influence patterns of interaction, behavior, and the way individuals interpret commitment, responsibility, and efficiency in academic environments.

Polychronic cultures tend to prioritize human contact and honesty over speed and efficiency. Additionally, Hall introduced the distinction between high-context and low-context cultures, and research has shown that culture influences individuals, whether in their identity, values, and worldview, affecting their social role and the way they relate to others (A. Álvarez, 2005).

In this context, Hall in "Beyond Culture" (1976) explains that polychronic cultures are often associated with high-context cultures, where much of the communicative meaning is transmitted implicitly through gestures, silences, prior relationships, and shared norms, that is, with a prior context, unlike monochronic cultures, which are linked to low-context cultures, characterized by explicit, direct, and verbally structured communication. These contextual differences affect the way social relationships are built, institutional norms are interpreted, and intercultural conflicts are addressed. In the academic field, these divergences can manifest in different perceptions of formality, feedback, class participation, and the relationship between teachers and students. As Álvarez (2005) points out, the internalization of these cultural patterns profoundly influences individual identity, values, and worldview, conditioning people's social roles and their way of relating to others. This understanding aligns with Hall's key tools for comprehending intercultural adaptation processes,

influencing communication styles, the interpretation of silence, and the use of implicit or explicit language.

Therefore, Intercultural Competence integrates the knowledge of these models and the ability to transcend the rigid perception of cultural differences (Chen et al., 2013) in order to develop a dialogic and critical activity based on understanding and respect for the other, that is why a developed ICC allows cultural information to be used intelligently, without stereotyped assumptions, thus achieving harmony with the values and norms of the other.

2.3 Young Yun Kim's Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model

Young Yun Kim's Stress-Adaptation-Growth model is the cornerstone of his Integral Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation from Young Yun Kim's study, which says that the human being is like an open system that exchanges information with the environment and co-evolves with it (Kim, 2008).

Cross-cultural adaptation is defined as the integral phenomenon by which individuals, when moving to an unknown sociocultural environment, strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal and functional relationship with that environment. The theory rejects the view of adaptation as a linear progression, thus presenting it instead as a dynamic, dialectical, cyclical and continuous process called "the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic". (Young Yun Kim & Yang so Kim, 2016) (Kim, 2008) This dynamic is known as the "back to jump" pattern which is the draw back to leap.

That is why each new cultural experience demands an adaptive change and this inevitably generates stress in the individual psyche, manifested in uncertainty, confusion or anxiety, which is equated to the phenomenon known as culture shock (Kim, 2008). However, the theory postulates that this state of imbalance maladjustment is the engine that drives the individual to overcome adversity and actively participate in the development of new habits and adaptation (Young Yun Kim & Yang so Kim, 2016). Adaptive success ends in a subtle psychological growth characterized by greater complexity in the individual's internal system.

The key to advancing in this continuous process is the Guest Communicative Competence that Kim identifies as the main engine to advance on the adaptive path and this competence is broken down into three essential components: the cognitive, which includes the mastery of the host language and knowledge of the culture, the affective, the motivation to interact and the operational, which are the behavioral skills to communicate effectively (Young Yun Kim & Yang so Kim, 2016).

The success of the individual in the adaptation process is influenced and said by a structural model that articulates the reciprocal causal relationships between these communicative competencies, social communication, both with the host group and with the ethnic group, the environment, of receptivity and pressure of conformity of the host) and the personal predisposition, preparation and ethnic proximity. Ultimately, adaptation leads to a process of interculturalization that involves individuation, which is seeing oneself and others as unique individuals, and universalization by recognizing common humanity beyond cultural differences, resulting in the emergence of an Intercultural Personality (Kim, 2008).

2.4 Culture and intercultural adaptation

To begin with, it is necessary to keep in mind the key concept of culture, which according to lead author Hofstede is characterized by being a "collective programming of the mind" and that makes it distinguish groups and is expressed in comparable patterns between countries according to Hofstede (2011). From the perspective of A. Álvarez (2005) also speaks of an important concept that is intercultural competence that integrates knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable effective and ethical interactions in diverse contexts, in addition to sustaining the exercise of citizenship, moreover Aneas stresses that it is "a key element in intercultural professional achievement and a primary basis for the exercise of citizenship". On the other hand, it is important to mention intercultural adaptation, according to Berry in 1997, who describes acculturation strategies such as integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization that is an important factor for psychological well-being and sociocultural adjustment.

2.4.1 Relevance in Current Academic Mobility

Academic mobility is known around the world as the most widely used strategy for the internationalization of higher education according to (Reyes Rojas et al., 2023). That is why, for example, a student exchange from Ecuador to Germany, represents a deep immersion that involves a set of internal and behavioral transformations (M. Fajardo, 2008), it could be said that this transition is considered one of the most important stressful events in someone's life (Dario et al., n.d.).

The anxiety generated by uncertainty when acting in cultural situations that are not one's own can seriously hinder relationships (Aneas, 2005) and this anxiety can manifest itself as culture shock, which Oberg (1954) defined as the emotional reactions and stress that arise when facing an unfamiliar environment. That is why the success of the international

experience is measured by cultural adaptation, and this implies the achievement of an emotional adjustment over time (Benatuil & Laurito, 2010).

Now, in the context of international academic mobility, it is important to know that language is a fundamental element in this type of cultural adaptation process, since it is an intermediary between academic communication and social integration in the host community, which is why (Council of Europe, 2002) thinks of the use of language as a form of social action in which individuals act as social agents who mobilize various skills to function effectively in certain contexts.

From this perspective, communicative competence is not limited only to linguistic knowledge, but integrates sociolinguistic dimensions that are fundamental to understanding cultural norms, adapting discourse to different situations and actively participating in intercultural academic environments, so that in scenarios of academic mobility, these competencies directly influence the ability of individuals to interact with teachers, students and institutions in the destination country.

On the other hand, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is an international standard that defines linguistic competence in languages developed by the Council of Europe and where it also introduces the concept of plurilingual and multicultural competence, understood as the dynamic interaction between the languages and cultures that make up the individual's experience. This notion is key to the analysis of human mobility, since cultural adaptation involves not only the learning of a foreign language, but also the negotiation of meanings and the construction of new forms of identity in international academic contexts (Council of Europe, 2002).

2.5 Culture and Models

This section deals in a general way with the authors who touch on the subject of culture, taking into account several models that will be the basis for the degree work and the most important ones.

2.5.1 Hofstede Model

Geert Hofstede's 1980 model is fundamental to this study because of its ability to quantify and compare national cultures. Mainly, it is important to understand that initially it had four dimensions, but the most recent model includes six dimensions, presented on the website *The Culture Factor* (Hofstede, 2011), form the basis of this thesis: Power Distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Individualism/Collectivism (IDV),

Masculinity/Femininity (MAS), Long-Term/Short-Term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence/Restraint (IVR) (Hofstede, 2011). This model is essential to contrast Ecuador, characterized by a high PDI (Power Distance Index) and a collectivist approach as mentioned by Aguilar et al. (2018), with Germany, which has always shown a low Power Distance with a society that has high levels of Individualism according to Farías Nazel (2007).

These dimensions help explain the social organization and structure of a society according to the country comparison tool, which is why it is relevant to explain each dimension to have a clearer focus, starting with Power Distance Index (PDI), which reflects the extent to which the less powerful members of any institution or organization accept that power is distributed "unequally." This indicates the hierarchy and authority perceived within a society. Therefore, in cultures with high PDI, power differences are generally accepted, while in low PDI cultures, greater equality is sought, and power inequalities are less justified.

The dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) indicates to what extent members of a culture feel uncomfortable in uncertain situations or those without very clear rules. Therefore, a high score in this dimension is usually associated with societies that heavily depend on norms, rules, and procedures to cope with uncertain events and reduce risks, while on the other hand, a society with low UAI accepts innovation more readily as a natural part of life. This dimension is useful for understanding differences in teaching styles, academic evaluation, or even decision-making in different societies.

The dimension of Individualism and Collectivism (IDV) addresses the degree of interdependence that a society maintains among its members, that is, whether identity is defined in terms of "I" or "we." For example, in individualistic societies, personal autonomy, independence, and self-fulfillment are valued more, all for oneself, while collectivist cultures prioritize group cohesion, loyalty, and the well-being of the group above the individual. This dimension not only influences social expectations but also group dynamics within academic contexts, such as individual work compared to collaborative work.

The dimension of Masculinity and Femininity (MAS) measures the distribution of emotional roles between genders within a culture; however, recently this dimension has been expanded to capture values associated with achievement, success, and competitiveness, which is masculinity, versus values of quality of life, cooperation, and social support, which is femininity. In these cases, cultures with high masculinity tend to emphasize competition

and achievement based on ambition, while cultures with higher femininity place more value on solidarity, empathy, and the balance between work and personal life.

The dimension of Long-Term Orientation and Short-Term Orientation (LTO) reflects whether a culture values long-term planning and perseverance over adapting to changes, as opposed to a preference for traditions where norms are already established with immediate results. For example, in an intercultural academic context, this dimension can influence expectations about study planning or project management with the value placed on sustainable effort over time.

The dimension of Indulgence and Restraint (IVR) is the degree to which a society allows the free satisfaction of basic human desires related to enjoying life and having fun versus a strict regulation of impulse gratification thru strong social norms, which is restraint. Cultures with high indulgence tend to prioritize enjoyment and emotional expression, while restrictive cultures value self-control and moderation with adherence to traditional social norms. This dimension provides a perspective on how social impulses and behavior norms are managed, which can also influence interpersonal relationships and cultural adaptation.

This model is important for contrasting Ecuador and Germany and using it as a basis. Hofstede also suggests that demographic variables such as population size can be positively correlated with the PDI index according to the aforementioned author, which demonstrates that cultural differences are not static and can be affected by economic and geographical variables.

2.5.2 Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner

Another important approach to the study of cultural differences is that of Trompenaars, who is also frequently cited alongside Hofstede and GLOBE, forming what McSweeney (2015) calls "The Trio," also mentioned by Tocar (2019). Additionally, Trompenaars introduces seven dimensions and argues that culture is the result of the interaction between three layers: explicit, intermediate, and implicit, according to Benatuil & Laurito (2010). His model differs by focusing on how people approach specific problems, called dilemmas, which arise from three main sources: relationships with others, attitude toward time, and attitude toward the environment.

This model was developed in 1990 and with the help of the page THT Consulting, where he explains the first which is universalism vs particularism, which analyzes whether a culture prefers to apply general rules equally for everyone or if it adapts decisions

according to personal relationships and circumstances, the second, individualism vs. communitarianism which refers to whether identity and responsibility are understood mainly from the individual or from the point of view of the individual. the group. The third dimension, neutral vs. affective, shows the extent to which emotions are openly expressed in social interaction, while the fourth, specific vs. diffuse, explains whether people clearly separate personal and professional lives or whether relationships extend to different areas of life.

The last three dimensions are related to status, time and the relationship with the environment. The achievement vs. affiliation dimension analyzes whether social status is obtained by merit and personal performance or by social origin or family relationships. The sequential time vs. synchronous time dimension explains whether cultures organize their activities in a linear and planned way or if they perform several tasks at the same time with greater temporal flexibility. Finally, the internal management vs external management dimension refers to whether people feel they can control their environment or if they believe they should adapt to it. Together, these seven dimensions allow us to understand how cultures structure their social relations, manage time, and cope with change, which makes the Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner model a useful tool for analyzing intercultural adaptation processes, such as those between Germany and Ecuador.

2.6 GLOBE and its Hofstede Vision

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project was initiated by Robert House in 1993 and brought together 170 researchers from 64 countries, including Ecuador. This model was created with the purpose of extending the findings of Hofstede's cultural model in its quantitative aspect in Ogliastri et al. (2002). This study aimed to analyze how culture influences both leadership and organizational effectiveness, revealing that Latin American countries, including Ecuador, share a cultural homogeneity characterized by a strong emphasis on collectivism and an explicit desire for the common good to prevail over individual interests, according to the author Ogliastri and others.

According to Hofstede's previous work, the GLOBE project developed nine cultural dimensions, all of which six are directly broken down from the Hofstede model, these dimensions are: Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Institutional Collectivism,

Collectivism Within the Group, Gender Equality, Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Performance Orientation, and Human Orientation as mentioned by Shi & Wang (2011).

It should be emphasized that the relationship between the two models is evidenced in four main aspects: First, GLOBE maintains the original labels of the dimensions of Power Distance and Avoidance of Uncertainty, second, Hofstede's Long-Term orientation is expanded as "Future Orientation", third, it divides the dimension of Individualism-Collectivism into two parts, which are Institutional Collectivism and Collectivism Within the Group, finally, it replaces the Masculinity-Femininity index with four new dimensions which are: Assertiveness, Gender Equality, Performance Orientation and Human Orientation, in order to achieve a more valid and specific measurement of cultural values (Shi & Wang, 2011).

2.7 Adaptation and Acculturation

Adaptation in academic mobility is a process that could be framed within the concept of acculturation and according to Berry (1980) acculturation is as a process of resocialization that involves psychological characteristics, thus defining it as the set of internal and behavioral transformations experienced by the individual in contact with a new culture said in a study on the acculturation of (M. Fajardo, 2008).

Acculturation occurs when two autonomous cultural groups are in constant contact, a dynamic process that, by its nature, generates potential conflicts and negotiation needs based on Benatuil & Laurito (2010). Kim in 1988 has also studied adaptation as an internal transformation of an individual who finds himself in a new cultural environment Chen et al., 2013).

2.8 Limitations of Hofstede's essentialist approach

Hofstede's dimensional model has been one of the main references for studying cultural differences between countries, although authors such as McSweeney (2015) that have pointed out that his approach, which defines culture as a "collective programming of the mind", has several theoretical, empirical, and practical limitations. One of the most important criticisms is that the model understands culture as something static and coherent, composed of fixed values that determine human behavior, which is why from this perspective there is a risk of simplifying social reality and leaving aside the internal diversity of each society.

In the methodological realm, McSweeney (2015) mentions the ecological fallacy, which is when it is assumed that the traits of a nation can automatically be applied to individuals or organizations within it. Additionally, he also questions the validity of Hofstede's results, as they were based on a limited sample of IBM employees, who are middle-class individuals with secondary or higher education. This is why it is complicated to represent an entire nation according to Ly (2013). Piller (2011), also cited by Ly, also questions what urban professionals and illiterate peasants within the same country could have in common, thus highlighting the limitations of that sample.

On the other hand, Clifford Geertz's anthropological perspective, mentioned by McSweeney, stresses that culture is not a force that forces people to act in a certain way, but a set of meanings that individuals themselves construct and share. Geertz rejects Hofstede's idea of a "national culture" that is closed, that is, in which the subject disappears within the group. Moreover, in a similar way, Edward Hall agrees that culture influences what behavior is, but he defines it as communication and his contribution focuses on the observable, that is, on the use of personal space, the level of context in messages and the importance of "looking at what people do" rather than what they respond to in surveys. However, Hall has also been questioned for generalizing traits to entire populations, such as the Japanese or Central Americans.

Finally, several contemporary authors say that Hofstede's model fails to reflect the dynamic nature of culture as Tony Fang does, quoted by Ly, who describes it as a "black box" or a "rigid onion" designed in the context of the Cold War, unable to capture dynamic, hybrid, and changing cultures. Fang proposes the Yin-Yang paradigm: values are not fixed opposites, but complementary ones that vary according to the time, place and situation. Ly (2013) adds that within the same country enormous cultural differences coexist, which denies the existence of a homogeneous national culture. In conclusion, Hofstede's model remains a useful reference to begin the analysis, but it is insufficient to explain the complexity of social action without incurring simplifications or stereotypes.

2.9 Psychological and Sociocultural Adaptation

Psychological and sociocultural adaptation could be said to be the central axis of the migratory process of foreign students. Castro Solano (2011) defines psychological adaptation as the level of emotional well-being that the migrant experiences when facing a new environment, while sociocultural adaptation involves learning to move freely in

classrooms, transport and local customs. In this research with 125 foreign university students and 121 Argentines, the author demonstrates that the integration strategy must maintain one's own cultural identity while actively participating in Argentine life, it is also the one most chosen by both groups and the one that generates greater satisfaction with life, better academic performance and less sense of discrimination.

On the contrary, those who opt for separation, that is, reducing contact with the locals, report greater isolation, more perceived prejudice and difficulties in passing subjects. This discovery underscores the importance of designing welcome programs that promote intercultural encounters from day one, because when migrants and hosts agree on valuing integration, acculturative stress decreases and the university become a space for shared growth.

2.10 Third Culture

The Third Culture emerges as a key concept for bridging gaps in the world of knowledge, going beyond the division between Snow's two classic cultures: the scientific and the humanistic or literary. According to Del Campo Urbano (2005), in his analysis of Snow's 1959 lecture, this third culture was already implicit as an intermediate ground that could reconcile both worlds, and Snow himself glimpsed it in 1963 as something emerging, albeit premature, capable of overcoming the educational and social barriers between scientists optimistic about progress and humanistic or literary figures focused on human solitude; moreover, he proposes that social sciences act as this third culture by mediating and dialoguing, citing examples such as the book "The Three Cultures" which explores its emergence in European contexts.

On the other hand, E. Álvarez (2004) delves into how Brockman redefined this third culture in 1991 and 1995 not as a bridge facilitated by humanists, but as a space occupied by scientists and empirical thinkers who communicate directly with the public, like popularizers such as Sagan or Gould, turning science into "public culture" and generating intense, sometimes conflicting debates that intertwine with the "science wars" over intellectual impostures. For the development of my thesis work protocol, this approach is particularly relevant, as it demonstrates that the notion of the third culture transcends the theoretical realm and serves as a practical tool that allows for the articulation of different knowledge in an increasingly interdisciplinary context, promoting the openness of knowledge and a genuine dialog between various fields.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS ON THE ADAPTATION PROCESSES BETWEEN GERMANY AND ECUADOR

3.1 Methodology

This research is developed from a qualitative approach, since the purpose of this is to understand and interpret the experiences, perceptions and meanings constructed by people who have participated in processes of cultural adaptation between Germany and Ecuador in academic contexts. According to Hernández et al. (2014), the qualitative approach allows the analysis of social phenomena from the perspective of the actors involved, thus prioritizing the in-depth understanding of their experiences.

In this sense, as Sautu et al, (2005) point out, social research is the axis that guides the formulation of questions and the interpretation of data, so from this perspective meanings do not "emerge" in a neutral way, but are constructed from a theoretical framework that guides the researcher's gaze and gives meaning to the information collected. And that is what is being proposed. It is important to know that this position recognizes that knowledge is a situated construction, the product of the interaction between researcher and participants, which requires conceptual rigor and clarity at each stage of the research process, according to the aforementioned authors.

In the same way, the research is based on the documentary review of secondary sources such as books, scientific articles, institutional reports and specialized websites, which allows the theoretical contextualization of the topic presented. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews are also used aimed at both students with experience of academic mobility and professionals linked to exchange experiences, in order to analyze more fully the points of view of the processes of intercultural adaptation between the two countries.

Finally, and in order to strengthen the validity and quality of the study, triangulation is used as a methodological strategy. According to Okuda Benavides & Gómez-Restrepo (2005), triangulation consists of the use of different methods, data sources, theories or researchers to analyze the same phenomenon, allowing perspectives to be contrasted and interpretation to be enriched. Within the framework of this research, a methodological and data triangulation is mainly applied, combining documentary review with semi-structured

interviews, which makes it possible to analyze the process of intercultural adaptation from different angles. As the authors point out, triangulation does not necessarily imply obtaining identical results, but rather understanding the complexity of the phenomenon studied, identifying convergences and divergences, and expanding the depth to give greater solidity to the study, by articulating theory, empirical evidence and different sources of information in a reflective and critical process typical of social research.

3.1 Participants

This study is developed in the context of academic mobility between Germany and Ecuador, taking into account the experiences both at the level of secondary education and higher education that would be university and volunteering, so the study population that is directed by the interviews is made up of people who have participated directly in this type of academic exchange processes between these countries, in addition to general points of view from professionals that helped to have a global concept on the subject.

The selection of participants was carried out through intentional sampling, which according to Hernández et al, (2014) is appropriate when seeking to select informants who have specific and relevant characteristics for the study, that is why students and volunteers who had direct experience in cultural adaptation processes varying between men and women of different ages were chosen.

The sample is made up of:

Ten young people:

- German students who studied and volunteered in Ecuador.
- Ecuadorian students who studied in Germany.

Four professionals:

In addition, four professionals with experience in accompanying exchange students, such as teachers, academic readers or administrative staff linked to academic mobility programs, such as Tammy Fajardo, current deputy dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Cuenca, Marcelo Calle, current director of International Relations of the University of Azuay, Birgid Schwarz, current professor of German for immigrants in Germany and Marie Malchereck, current representative of the DAAD at the University of Cuenca.

With this diversity of participants, it is possible to obtain a much broader and comparative vision of the processes of intercultural adaptation from different experiences, roles and perspectives.

Below is a table with the interviewees for this work:

Table 1
Profiles of interviewed professionals

Interviewees	Biography
Marie Malcherek	He has international experience in Africa and Latin America. She is currently a representative of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at the University of Cuenca, where she teaches German, advises on scholarships and organizes academic exchange activities.
Tammy Fajardo	She was Director of International Relations at the University of Cuenca for approximately four years and is currently Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy. Her work focuses on pedagogy, language teaching and intercultural competence.
Birgid Schwarz	She has been a teacher of German as a foreign language since 2016, with ten years of experience teaching adult migrants in Germany. He has worked with students from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Turkey, Eastern Europe and, recently, Ukraine, teaching courses from basic (A1) to advanced (B2) level. His experience focuses on linguistic integration processes.
Marcelo Calle	Since 2021 he has been director of the Department of International Relations at the University of Azuay, a position he assumed for his experience in international studies and his academic career abroad. She has had international experience linked to sports, which has strengthened her intercultural perspective and her management in the field of academic mobility.

Note. This table details the information of the professionals to be participants in the interview.

Table 2
Profiles of students and volunteers interviewed

Name	Profile/Area	Experience
EUE 1	Medical student in Germany	Student who began his medical career in 2021 in Heidelberg - Germany, he is currently in his fifth year and plans to do his internship in the same country as part of his professional training.
EUE 2	Graduate of the Business and Economics degree in Germany	She began her training in Germany in 2019, completed a preparatory year and finished her degree in Business and Economics in 2025, after six years of residency, her experience reflects a deep process of intercultural adaptation and identity construction between the Latin and German context.
EE 1	Student of Organizational Psychology in Ecuador	Ecuadorian student who did a student exchange in Germany between 2021 and 2022 during high school. She is currently studying Organizational Psychology. Her mobility experience included academic and cultural adaptation in a German school, which influenced her personal development and intercultural perspective.
EE 2	Multimedia Design Student in Ecuador	She participated in the Student College program in Germany in 2021, with an emphasis on Social Sciences and Humanities. After completing an academic year abroad, he returned to Ecuador to continue his studies at the Salesian Polytechnic University.
EA 1	Next Dentistry Student in Germany	She did a school exchange in Cuenca - Ecuador in 2022 for a year to learn Spanish and get to know Ecuadorian culture, also motivated by her family roots. She is currently preparing to start university studies in dentistry, after doing preparatory internships in the health area.
EA 2	Next law student in Germany	She participated in a school exchange program in Ecuador during her high school education, where she lived with a host family and studied at a German school in Cuenca. Her experience included learning the Spanish language, cultural adaptation, and participation in academic and social activities within the exchange program.
USA 1	Architecture graduate in Germany	She participated in an exchange at the University of Cuenca between 2024 and 2025 and faced language barriers and academic differences, but managed to adapt through social interaction and cultural activities, considering it an enriching experience.
USA 2	Architecture graduate in Germany	She carried out an academic exchange in Ecuador between 2024 and 2025 and her experience was marked by learning the language and adapting to a different educational system, highlighting the social closeness and the support of classmates and teachers in her integration process.
VA 1	German Volunteer (Cultural Exchange & Heritage)	High school graduate in Germany. She volunteers for a year at the Pumapungo Museum in Cuenca, where she supports the maintenance of the garden and activities with tourists.
VA 2	German Volunteer (Education and Community Work)	High school graduate in Germany (Abitur) and participant in the international volunteer program. She did a year of volunteering in Cuenca - Ecuador, working initially in the Botanical Garden and later in a kindergarten, supporting care and activities with children.

Note. This table details the information of the students and volunteers who will be participants in the interview.

3.2 Instruments

Source analysis was used as a complementary instrument, thus reviewing academic literature, comparative studies and institutional documents related to culture, intercultural communication and academic mobility between Germany and Ecuador, thus helping to have a clearer organization and interpretation of the documents and understanding how Corbin

et al. (2012) it talks about qualitative analysis as a transformation of data through procedures such as comparison in order to build good interpretations.

For the collection of information, semi-structured interviews were used, which is the most important instrument for the thesis and is the most commonly used for qualitative research due to its depth and flexibility of interpretation. According to Hernández et al. (2014), this type of interview allows the conversation to be guided by a set of questions as the interview flows, obviously without limiting the possibility for participants to freely express their lived experiences and viewpoints.

The interview guide was elaborated based on the cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model: power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, avoidance of uncertainty, long-term orientation and indulgence, proposed by the same author, which constitute the categories of analysis of the study. Each question is aimed at the interviewees telling their experiences abroad or as trainers of this academic mobility aimed at the dimensions in order to then be able to categorize them according to the processes of academic and social adaptation of the participants.

On the other hand, before conducting the interviews, it is essential to establish a prior communication process between the interviewer and the participant in order to generate an environment of trust that facilitates the exchange of information. This is important in social research such as this one, since, as it points out Meo (2010), research can generate a certain tension when requesting the collaboration of people in processes that are not necessarily developed for their direct benefit or in those who have participated in their design. To this end, informed consent is an essential element to guarantee ethical principles such as respect, confidentiality and protection of participants' information.

Therefore, informed consent implies that participants receive clear information about the purpose of the research, the type of participation requested, the use of the information and the institutional support of the study. According to Meo (2010), in order to respect the autonomy of individuals, it is necessary that this consent be fully informed, which implies explaining the objectives of the study and resolving any doubts that may arise. Likewise, authorization must be requested for the use of the information and for the recording of the interviews, also guaranteeing the right of participants to interrupt their participation at any time, refuse to answer questions that are uncomfortable for them and request the review or

deletion of their information before its use. Finally, consent is formalized by signing the corresponding document, thus ensuring an ethical and transparent research process.

3.3 Procedure

The methodological procedure was developed in three phases, first the documentary review where secondary sources such as books, scientific articles and institutional documents related to culture, Hofstede's cultural models and intercultural adaptation processes are explored, as a second phase is the collection of information, where semi-structured interviews were carried out with students, volunteers and professionals. these interviews were conducted virtually through platforms such as Zoom and were recorded with the informed consent of the participants for analysis.

The last phase is the analysis and triangulation of the information, which proceeded to the analysis of the information through a thematic content analysis, organizing the data into categories related to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. Finally, methodological triangulation was applied, contrasting the results of the interviews with the information obtained in the documentary review, which reinforces the validity of the findings (Okuda Benavides & Gómez-Restrepo, 2005).

The analysis was carried out manually, supported by categorization matrices, without the use of statistical software, given the qualitative nature of the study and the case study approach, which is suitable for analyzing contemporary phenomena within their real context (Yin, 2018).

CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEW RESULTS

4.1 Birgid Schwarz

Schwarz has been a teacher of German as a foreign language in Germany since 2016, thus having more than ten years of experience in teaching adult migrants, she has worked mainly in language integration courses, starting with basic levels such as A1-A2 and currently teaches advanced levels such as B2, which has allowed her to observe the processes of linguistic adaptation first-hand.

Throughout his career he has worked with students from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Turkey, Eastern European countries and, in recent years, Ukraine. As I mentioned earlier, her experience is marked in migratory contexts linked to international conflicts, which situates her pedagogical practice within complex processes of cultural, emotional and social integration.

Schwarz not only teaches the language, but also observes the processes of intercultural adaptation, facing challenges related to educational differences, religion, climate and learning styles. Her perspective combines professional observation with a reflective look at the individual and cultural factors that influence the integration of students.

4.1.1 The Interview

The interview with Schwarz offers a point of view on the processes of cultural adaptation of migrants in Germany from the German as a foreign language classroom and his discourse is built from direct experience with students from different cultural contexts.

Throughout the dialogue there are topics such as the influence of education on the ability to adapt, differences in styles of participation in class, punctuality, the relationship with authority and the impact of climate and religion on integration. Schwarz talks about the tendency to attribute behaviors exclusively to national culture, emphasizing that factors such as education, previous migratory experience, and family context can be even more determinant in an individual way and not a generic cultural one.

4.1.2 Narrative Body

In the first part of the interview, Schwarz defines culture as a set of shared traditions, behaviors and knowledge, linking cultural identity with language and belonging to a group. From her personal experience, she recognizes that living in another country works as a "mirror" that confronts the person with the image that others have of their nationality, which can lead to questioning one's own identity. In this sense, the interviewee explains that when a person lives in another cultural context, they begin to perceive how others interpret their nationality and behaviors, which can generate a deep reflection on their own cultural identity. As she herself expresses, contact with other cultures allows us to discover how others interpret a person's national identity, saying that "when I go abroad, they see me as German, and then I realize what people think it means to be German" This reflection shows how intercultural encounter can make one's own identity visible through the gaze of the other, functioning as a process of cultural self-knowledge. (Schwarz, personal communication, 2026).

In her teaching practice, she identifies several main challenges in the adaptation of her students: German bureaucracy, the need for self-organization, high academic expectations, and a lifestyle perceived as more individualistic and less socially close. He points out that punctuality and compliance with rules represent visible cultural differences in the classroom. In addition, he mentions that for many migrant students, life in Germany involves a high level of individual responsibility and personal organization. In his words, "life in Germany means a lot of self-structure, self-management" which reflects how the German social and educational system demands strong personal autonomy, this aspect can represent a major challenge for students coming from cultural contexts where social or family structures are more collective and less individualized (Schwarz, personal communication, 2026).

Schwarz notes differences between national groups, for example, noting that Ukrainian students seem to adapt more easily than Syrian or Afghan students, attributing this in part to cultural and climatic factors, for example, that Ukraine has a climate similar to that of Germany, however, he emphasizes that education is the most determining factor in adaptation: the higher the educational level, the greater the cultural flexibility. Schwarz also highlights that people with a higher level of education tend to show a greater ability to adapt to new cultural contexts, since they have developed skills that allow them to understand and face new situations more easily, explicitly stating that "in my opinion, the strongest influence is education", highlighting that the level of education significantly

influences the way migrants interpret and deal with cultural differences in the country of destination. He also adds that people with a lower level of education tend to stay more attached to their cultural traditions, as these offer them security in the face of a new and uncertain environment (Schwarz, personal communication, 2026).

In the classroom, identify differences in participation, relationship with authority, and teamwork. For example, some students from more hierarchical educational contexts show less oral participation, while other groups show greater competitiveness or greater group cohesion.

It also stresses that proficiency in the German language significantly facilitates integration, but also mentions that there are deeper cultural barriers, such as religion or differences in previous socialization, it also highlights the importance of emotional support in the early stages of adaptation, considering it fundamental for learning and successful integration. In this sense, Schwarz states that language plays a fundamental role in the process of social integration, pointing out that "knowing German makes integration much easier" However, he also recognizes that there are cultural barriers that go beyond language, such as religious differences or social norms that influence the interaction between people. For this reason, she emphasizes that emotional support during the early stages of adaptation is essential for students to be able to function more safely in the new cultural context. According to their teaching experience, when students feel understood and supported by the institution and their teachers, they develop greater self-confidence and manage to advance in a better way in their process of cultural and linguistic integration (Schwarz, personal communication, 2026).

4.1.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 3

Results of the Interview with Birgid Schwarz.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Professional observation of cultural adaptation</p> <p>Analyzes motivations, expectations, and first experiences of cultural adaptation upon arriving in another country.</p>	<p>From her experience as a German teacher for adult migrants, Birgid Schwarz observes that the process of cultural adaptation is complex and cannot be explained solely by the national culture of the students. She has worked with students from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Turkey, Eastern European countries and Ukraine, which has allowed her to observe different integration processes. He points out that some groups seem to adapt more easily than others, but emphasizes that the most determining factor is not nationality but educational level. In her experience, people with a higher level of education tend to show greater cultural flexibility and the ability to adapt to new social norms. In addition, it identifies other relevant factors such as previous migratory experience, family context, place of origin, whether urban or rural, and the experience of international mobility, it also mentions that apparently external elements, such as climate, can influence adaptation, since people coming from regions with very different climates may experience greater difficulties in integrating into daily life in Germany.</p>
<p>Culture and communication</p> <p>It examines how cultural differences between Ecuador and Germany are perceived in aspects such as communication, social interaction, and academic norms.</p>	<p>In the classroom context, she identifies various manifestations of cultural differences that influence learning dynamics. One of the most visible is punctuality, since the German education system requires levels of organization, autonomy and compliance with schedules. He also observes differences in the way students interact with the teacher and participate in class, some students coming from more hierarchical educational contexts are used to a model in which the teacher is the absolute authority and students must remain silent, which can generate difficulties in adapting to participatory methodologies typical of German education. On the other hand, he identifies differences in the dynamics of group work, some students show a strong collective orientation and tend to help each other, while others behave in a more competitive or individual way, in addition, he mentions that in some cases differences are observed in the interactions between men and women, especially in students from more traditional cultural contexts. These differences do not necessarily generate conflicts, since according to her experience the classroom usually becomes a space for intercultural learning where students are able to gradually adapt to new dynamics of interaction, since several cultures are found in a classroom, in addition to the fact that she affirms that more depends on the individual himself.</p>
<p>Evaluating Hofstede's Model from Practice</p> <p>This block analyzes the extent to which Hofstede's cultural dimensions are reflected in the interviewees' actual experiences of cultural adaptation.</p>	<p>When describing differences in the relationship with the teaching authority or in class participation, aspects related to power distance can be identified. Similarly, when talking about cooperation between students or competitiveness in the classroom, they show elements linked to collectivism and individualism. However, the interviewee implicitly questions any deterministic interpretation of culture. From his perspective, cultural characteristics do not completely determine people's behavior, since each student has a different individual trajectory, therefore, he insists that variables such as educational level, migratory experience, diversity of the family environment or the social context of origin can have an even greater influence than the national culture.</p> <p>This practical perspective introduces a critical look at the use of cultural models and suggests that they are best used as interpretive tools, but not as absolute explanations of human behavior.</p>
<p>Institutional recommendations</p> <p>It examines the strategies used by students and institutions to facilitate cultural adaptation.</p>	<p>Schwarz identifies several elements that can facilitate the integration process of migrant students. First of all, he stresses the importance of close institutional support, especially during the early stages of adaptation, he points out that German bureaucracy can be particularly difficult for migrants, so administrative accompaniment and the possibility of receiving face-to-face guidance are essential to reduce that feeling of insecurity, emotional support is also very important, since many students arrive in Germany in situations of vulnerability or stress derived from migratory processes, which is why he considers that teachers must adopt an empathetic, respectful and flexible attitude, avoiding generating excessive pressure and recognizing the personal difficulties of students. Finally, it emphasizes that language learning is one of the most important factors for social integration, as it allows migrants to communicate, participate in society, and develop greater self-confidence.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.1.4 Analysis

The interview with Birgid Schwarz allows us to analyze cultural adaptation from a pedagogical perspective, her observations show that some dimensions of Hofstede's model can be identified in the classroom as: differences in power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, and avoidance of uncertainty. In particular, his observations on the relationship between students and teachers clearly reflect the dimension of power distance proposed by Hofstede, since some students from more hierarchical educational contexts show difficulty in actively participating in class. This is related to cultures where the authority of the teacher is unquestionable and the role of the student is more passive, which contrasts with the German educational model, which promotes greater participation and autonomy of the student. In this way, the classroom becomes a space where these cultural differences become visible and must be negotiated within the educational process.

For her, the level of education, previous experience of mobility and the urban or rural context are more determining factors than the culture itself. This finding is particularly relevant, as it introduces a critical perspective against rigid interpretations of Hofstede's model. Although cultural dimensions allow us to identify general patterns of behavior, Schwarz emphasizes that individual trajectories also play a fundamental role in cultural adaptation. From this perspective, educational level can be interpreted as a factor that facilitates cultural openness and the ability to understand different social norms, which coincides with research that suggests that education increases intercultural competence and cognitive flexibility in the face of new cultural realities.

Another relevant finding is the importance of language as a tool for integration, the mastery of German not only facilitates social and labor insertion, but also increases self-confidence and the sense of belonging, although language alone does not eliminate cultural barriers related to religion, climate or social structures. This aspect can also be related to the uncertainty avoidance dimension proposed by Hofstede, since language learning reduces the uncertainty that migrants experience when faced with a new cultural context. By better understanding the social norms, institutional rules, and communication codes of the host country, students can function more confidently in their environment. However, Schwarz points out that there are deeper cultural factors such as religion, social norms or forms of socialization that can influence integration beyond linguistic competence.

Likewise, his observations on the dynamics of cooperation between students allow us to relate the classroom experience with the dimension of individualism and collectivism. Schwarz mentions that some groups of students show a strong tendency to support each other and act as a social unit, while others manifest more competitive or individualistic behaviors. This difference reflects the contrasts between collectivist cultures, where identity is constructed in relation to the group, and more individualistic cultures, where personal autonomy and individual competence are privileged, characteristics that Hofstede identifies as distinctive features of many Western societies.

Finally, the interview underlines the emotional dimension of adaptation. Close institutional support, humane treatment and the reduction of bureaucratic barriers are key elements to avoid feelings of insecurity. From this perspective, cultural adaptation is not only a cognitive or normative process, but also a deeply emotional and relational one.

4.2 Tammy Fajardo

Tammy Fajardo is a teacher and researcher in the area of education; she graduated with a degree in Education Sciences with a specialization in English teaching and later completed specialized studies in Canada aimed at teaching English to adolescents and adults. She later earned a master's degree in teaching English as a foreign language and completed a doctorate in Languages and Literacies Education at the University of Toronto.

Throughout her career she has held various academic and administrative positions linked to the internationalization of higher education, including her role as Director of International Relations at the University of Cuenca for approximately four years, where she managed academic mobility programs, international cooperation and accompaniment to foreign students.

Her line of research is linked to critical pedagogy, humanizing education and intercultural communication, especially in the framework of foreign language teaching. She currently works as a researcher in the area of education and as vice-dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Cuenca, where she participates in projects related to global citizenship and intercultural communicative competence.

4.2.1 The Interview

The interview with Fajardo focuses on his professional experience in the management of academic mobility programs and in the direct observation of cultural adaptation processes of international students in higher education.

Based on her institutional experience, she reflects on the cultural challenges that students face when participating in exchange programs, highlighting factors such as differences in academic dynamics, the relationship between teachers and students, institutional expectations, and cultural norms linked to aspects such as punctuality or forms of social interaction.

On the other hand, something very important is that she emphasizes the importance of intercultural communicative competence and language mastery in the process of academic and social integration, from her perspective, student mobility not only contributes to academic development, but also favors personal growth, autonomy and the expansion of the global vision of students and different cultures.

4.2.2 Narrative body

During the interview, Tammy Fajardo begins by talking about the concept of culture, pointing out that it is not limited to visible elements such as gastronomy or clothing, but comprises a set of practices, values and forms of interaction that structure people's daily lives, for this, culture is expressed in aspects such as the way of relating to others, family habits or social norms that guide behavior within a community, in addition, having a double cultural heritage between Ecuador and Canada, which has influenced their way of understanding cultural relations and academic mobility. In this sense, the interviewee emphasizes that culture is also manifested in everyday aspects of social life and in the way people relate to their environment. Textually, he points out that "culture is everything that surrounds us... The practices with which I manage in my home, with my children, with my family, are my own culture This statement broadens the understanding of the concept of culture from a broader and more comprehensive perspective, where culture is not reduced to visible symbolic elements, but includes behaviors, values and forms of coexistence that make up people's cultural identity (Fajardo, personal communication, 2026).

In relation to student mobility, Fajardo points out that carrying out an exchange semester represents a training experience of great value both personally and academically

and from their personal point of view, students develop independence, autonomy and adaptation skills when facing unknown contexts and in the academic field, the exchange allows them to learn about different teaching methodologies, evaluation systems and forms of learning that enrich university education. At this point, Tammy highlights that academic mobility allows students to understand that knowledge and education do not develop in the same way in all cultural contexts, but that each educational system has its own dynamics that influence the learning experience. In his words, "the opportunity to go study abroad... it opens up many possibilities for us beyond just culture understood as music or food, because we are faced with different forms of communication and understanding academic relationships" (Fajardo, personal communication, 2026). From this perspective, student mobility becomes an experience that not only broadens academic horizons, but also allows students to develop a broader view of the world and their own culture.

From her experience as Director of International Relations, she identifies various cultural challenges faced by international students. One of the main ones is related to the differences in power dynamics between teachers and students, since in some academic contexts the relationship is more horizontal, while in others a more hierarchical structure is maintained, Tammy also highlights that language proficiency is a key factor for academic integration, although she clarifies that a basic interpersonal communication competence is not enough. To participate fully in the university environment, it is necessary to develop an academic communicative competence that allows them to understand specialized texts, participate in academic debates and meet the demands of higher education. The interviewee explains that many students experience difficulties precisely because they confuse the ability to communicate in one language with the ability to function academically in that same language. In this sense, he affirms that "having a competence in the language for interpersonal communication is not the same as for functioning in the academic aspect". This distinction is especially relevant in the context of international mobility, as it shows that academic adaptation depends not only on linguistic knowledge, but also on the ability to understand the academic and cultural codes of the host education system (Fajardo, personal communication, 2026).

Finally, Fajardo emphasizes the importance of institutional strategies of accompaniment to facilitate the cultural adaptation of students. Among them, he mentions mentoring programs between local and foreign students, constant monitoring by international relations offices and the implementation of intercultural competence

workshops before carrying out the exchange. For this reason, from his institutional experience, he points out that prior intercultural preparation is essential to reduce the impact of culture shock and facilitate the academic and social integration of students. In this sense, he maintains that "we cannot simply throw them and expect them to swim if they have not been taught to swim". This reflection highlights the responsibility of higher education institutions in the preparation and accompaniment of students who participate in academic mobility programs, highlighting that cultural adaptation does not depend only on the individual, but also on the institutional support they receive during their international experience (Fajardo, personal communication, 2026).

4.2.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 4

Results of Tammy Fajardo's Interview.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Professional observation of cultural adaptation</p> <p>Analyzes motivations, expectations, and first experiences of cultural adaptation upon arriving in another country.</p>	<p>From her experience as director of International Relations at the University of Cuenca, Fajardo points out that the cultural adaptation processes of international students depend to a large extent on their country of origin and the academic context to which they are accustomed. In general, it observes that students from Latin America tend to adapt more easily due to cultural and linguistic proximity, while European or Asian students may experience greater difficulties in social adaptation. An example mentioned is the case of a Japanese student who showed a strong concern for punctuality and waited for teachers at the exact time of class, which generated tensions with teachers accustomed to greater flexibility in schedules, he also mentions complex adaptation situations related to students who had specific needs or difficulties in social integration, which required institutional intervention and accompaniment by the university.</p>
<p>Culture and communication</p> <p>It examines how cultural differences between Ecuador and Germany are perceived in aspects such as communication, social interaction, and academic norms.</p>	<p>Culture includes everyday practices, social values, and forms of interaction that structure people's lives. In the academic field, these cultural differences are manifested in aspects such as the forms of communication between teachers and students, participation in class or expectations about group work, in the same way he stresses that language plays a fundamental role in academic integration, although he warns that it is not enough just to master the language at a conversational level, rather, it places a lot of emphasis on interpersonal communicative competence and academic communicative competence, pointing out that many students can communicate easily in social contexts, but face difficulties when reading academic texts, writing essays or participating in discussions in another language.</p>
<p>Evaluating Hofstede's Model from Practice</p> <p>This block analyzes the extent to which Hofstede's cultural dimensions are reflected in the interviewees' actual experiences of cultural adaptation.</p>	<p>Fajardo identifies cultural differences in the academic and social behavior of international students that can be related to cultural dimensions widely discussed in intercultural studies, for example, he mentions that in some European contexts the relationship between teachers and students is more horizontal, while in certain Ecuadorian institutions there is a more hierarchical perception of academic authority. This difference can generate misunderstandings when foreign students interpret the interaction with the teacher differently from that expected in the local context. On the other hand, it relates a case in which French students assumed that they could take the final exam directly without meeting previous requirements of attendance or continuous assessment, since in their educational system those conditions were different, therefore, these experiences show how academic norms are deeply influenced by specific cultural contexts and can generate conflicts when students transfer to another education system.</p>
<p>Institutional recommendations</p> <p>It examines the strategies used by students and institutions to facilitate cultural adaptation.</p>	<p>The interviewee proposes several institutional strategies to improve the cultural adaptation of students in academic mobility programs, among them the preparation of students well in advance before their exchange through workshops or courses on intercultural communicative competence, highlights the importance of offering psychological and academic support during the adaptation process, as well as implementing mentoring programs between local and foreign students. A successful example mentioned is the "Tu pana en Cuenca" program, through which a local student accompanied the international student during his stay, facilitating his social and cultural integration. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of strengthening communication between the international relations offices of the universities of origin and destination, in order to avoid problems related to the homologation of subjects, evaluations or academic expectations.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.2.4 Analysis

The interview with Fajardo offers an institutional and pedagogical perspective on the processes of cultural adaptation in the context of international academic mobility, so from her experience in the management of exchange programs, the interviewee highlights that cultural adaptation does not depend only on the language or previous knowledge of the destination country, but also of institutional, academic and social factors that influence the way in which students interpret and respond to a new educational environment. In relation to the theoretical approach of this research, these observations can be analyzed in the light of Geert Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions, particularly with regard to the power distance and individualism versus collectivism. For example, when Fajardo mentions that some European students perceive the relationship between teachers and students as more horizontal, while in certain Ecuadorian contexts this relationship may be more hierarchical, there is evidence of a manifestation of the dimension of power distance. In this sense, culture shock is not only caused by linguistic differences, but also by different expectations regarding authority, class participation and the dynamics of interaction within the classroom.

The interview shows that intercultural communication is a central element for the success of mobility programs, the interviewee emphasizes that language proficiency must be accompanied by academic communicative competence that allows students to function adequately in the university context. This finding is especially relevant for the analysis of cultural adaptation in international academic contexts, since language functions as a mediator between cultures, but also as a vehicle for access to knowledge and academic practices specific to each educational system. From the perspective of Hofstede's model, these differences can also be related to the uncertainty avoidance dimension, since students from cultures with higher levels of this dimension may experience greater difficulty when facing unfamiliar educational systems, with different academic rules or different learning methodologies. In this sense, intercultural communicative competence reduces this uncertainty by providing tools to interpret and negotiate the cultural norms of the target academic context.

From the institutional point of view, she highlights the importance of implementing support strategies that facilitate cultural adaptation, that is, programs such as mentoring between local and foreign students, intercultural preparation workshops and permanent monitoring by international relations offices contribute to improving the academic mobility experience.

Finally, the interview allows us to understand that the processes of cultural adaptation must be approached from a comprehensive perspective that combines prior preparation, institutional accompaniment and the development of intercultural competencies. In this sense, academic mobility is presented not only as an educational experience, but also as a space for intercultural learning that contributes to the formation of global citizens. This approach is aligned with the central objective of this research, which seeks to analyze how cultural adaptation processes influence the academic experience of students in international contexts, particularly in the case of mobility between Ecuador and European countries such as Germany. Through the analysis of the interview, it is evident that the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede can be observed in the daily practice of academic mobility, especially in aspects such as the relationship with authority, forms of social interaction and expectations about learning. In this way, Tammy Fajardo's testimony not only provides empirical evidence on the challenges of cultural adaptation, but also allows us to understand how theoretical models of culture manifest themselves in concrete experiences within international higher education.

4.3 Marcelo Calle

Marcelo Calle has been director of the Department of International Relations at the University of Azuay since 2021 and has an international academic background with experience in university management and academic mobility. He is an administrator by profession, has a master's degree in business administration and obtained his doctorate in administration and entrepreneurship at the University of Florida, United States, where he lived between 2015 and 2019.

Within his academic profile it is complemented by an international experience, both for his studies abroad and for his participation in sports activities at a competitive level that led him to live and compete in different countries, all these experiences contributed to strengthen his intercultural vision and his understanding of global dynamics and aspects that later became fundamental to assume the direction of International Relations within the university.

From his current role, he leads the internationalization processes of the University of Azuay, including the management of international agreements, the accompaniment of students in academic mobility and the reception of foreign students to the university, therefore, his experience allows him to observe the processes of cultural adaptation that

students experience in contexts of mobility. providing a practical perspective on the challenges and opportunities of interculturality in higher education.

4.3.1 The Interview

The interview with Marcelo Calle reveals the cultural adaptation of students who participate in academic mobility programs, both those who arrive at the University of Azuay and Ecuadorian students who carry out exchanges in other countries, so he gives an institutional point of view based on the observation of student mobility processes.

Throughout the interview, different factors that influence cultural adaptation are explored, such as language, educational systems, differences in interpersonal communication, nutrition and social dynamics according to each context, on the other hand, the strategies that the university implements to facilitate the integration of international students as accompaniment programs are also analyzed. Prior guidance and academic monitoring during mobility.

There is a point to highlight about intercultural preparation before carrying out an academic mobility, according to Calle, understanding the customs, social behaviors and cultural characteristics of the destination country or city is necessary to reduce culture shock and facilitate a more enriching academic and personal experience for students.

4.3.2 Narrative Body

In the first part of the interview, the interviewee defines culture as a fundamental element for understanding social dynamics and differences between peoples. From his perspective, "culture is customs that each town, each locality, each city or country may have rooted in the passage of time in the different generations", (Calle, personal communication, 2026) this definition shows an understanding of culture as a dynamic and collective phenomenon that allows identifying social groups and understanding the particularities of each cultural context.

In relation to academic mobility, Calle explains that the experience of carrying out an international exchange transcends academic objectives, he considers that student mobility constitutes an opportunity for personal development and the acquisition of intercultural skills. In his words, "an exchange semester goes far beyond the academic part", since it involves facing new social, cultural and personal contexts that contribute to the integral growth of students (Calle, personal communication, 2026)

In this process, the interviewee points out that one of the most important aspects of mobility is that it allows students to leave their usual environment and face new responsibilities and cultural realities, he explains that the experience of living in another country forces students to develop greater autonomy in their daily lives. As he mentions, "it allows them to get out of a bubble in which they are living", (Calle, personal communication, 2026) since during mobility students must assume personal responsibilities such as organizing their daily lives, adapting to new transport systems or functioning in different cultural contexts.

The interviewee also mentions that international students face various cultural challenges when they arrive at the University of Azuay. Among the main obstacles, he identifies language barriers, differences in transport systems, changes in diet and variations in educational models. These differences can generate initial adaptation processes that require institutional support. In this sense, Marcelo explains that "language will always be a barrier, both for students who come and for those who go, although it is a barrier that can be overcome" (Calle, personal communication, 2026).

To facilitate the integration of international students, the University of Azuay has implemented various institutional strategies aimed at strengthening cultural adaptation. One of the most important initiatives is the "International Friend" program, through which local students accompany foreign students during their integration process at the university and in the city. According to Calle, this program seeks to allow international students to integrate more quickly into the university community and develop social relationships with local students, he explains that the objective of this initiative is "to be able to quickly involve them in a group of friends and in different activities so that they can get to know the culture and society." (Calle, personal communication, 2026).

Last but not least, it highlights the importance of intercultural preparation before starting an academic mobility experience and recommends that students research in advance about the social customs, cultural norms and characteristics of the city or country to which they will travel as it says "students should seek information about the cultural behaviors of the destination, not only of the country but also of the city." (Calle, personal communication, 2026).

4.3.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 5

Results of the Interview with Marcelo Calle.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Professional observation of cultural adaptation</p> <p>Analyzes motivations, expectations, and first experiences of cultural adaptation upon arriving in another country.</p>	<p>Marcelo Calle points out that from his experience as director of International Relations, the cultural adaptation of students can be observed through their behavior during mobility, he also explains that when students feel comfortable and adapted to the new environment, their visits to the International Relations department are sporadic, however, when they experience cultural difficulties, academic or personal, they tend to go more frequently in search of support. An example he mentions is the case of a Brazilian student who enrolled in too many subjects and began to have academic problems, for this the department intervened explaining that mobility should not only focus on academics, but also on the cultural, social and personal experience that living in another country implies.</p>
<p>Culture and communication</p> <p>It examines how cultural differences between Ecuador and Germany are perceived in aspects such as communication, social interaction, and academic norms.</p>	<p>He identifies language as one of the main initial barriers in the processes of cultural adaptation, he says that both students who arrive in Ecuador and Ecuadorians who travel abroad can experience linguistic difficulties that affect their academic and social integration, however, he considers that this barrier depends to a large extent on the student's attitude to overcome it. He also mentions that there are cultural differences in the forms of social interaction, for example, in some European countries people may seem more reserved or distant compared to the Cuenca culture, which is characterized by being more open and hospitable. In addition, he mentions other cultural factors such as food, transportation systems or daily customs that can generate adaptation processes for international students.</p>
<p>Evaluating Hofstede's Model from Practice</p> <p>This block analyzes the extent to which Hofstede's cultural dimensions are reflected in the interviewees' actual experiences of cultural adaptation.</p>	<p>From his experience working with international students, Calle observes cultural differences that can be related to cultural dimensions analyzed by Hofstede, such as forms of social interaction and dynamics within the classroom, for example, he mentions that in some foreign universities the relationship between students and teachers may be more distant than at the University of Azuay, where there is a closer and more accessible interaction. It also points out that in some cultural contexts interpersonal treatment can be perceived as more direct or cold, which can be misinterpreted by Ecuadorian students if they do not understand these cultural differences, so these experiences show how cultural values influence the academic and social behavior of students in intercultural contexts.</p>
<p>Institutional recommendations</p> <p>It examines the strategies used by students and institutions to facilitate cultural adaptation.</p>	<p>Marcelo Calle talks about the importance of preparing students before carrying out an academic mobility to reduce the impact of culture shock, it is essential that students are previously informed about the customs, social norms and cultural characteristics of the city or country of destination, since even within the same country there can be important cultural differences, it also mentions strategies implemented by the University of Azuay to facilitate the integration of international students, such as the "International Friend" program, which connects foreign students with local students to support their social and cultural adaptation. Finally, he explains that the department provides guidance on practical aspects such as transportation, the education system, academic standards, and the cultural customs of the destination.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.3.4 Analysis

The interview with Marcelo Calle provides an institutional perspective to understand the processes of cultural adaptation in the context of international academic mobility between Ecuador and other countries, so from his position as director of the Department of International Relations of the University of Azuay, he directly observes the experiences of international students who arrive at the university, as well as the experiences of Ecuadorian students who carry out academic mobilities abroad. This institutional position allows him to identify recurrent patterns in the processes of cultural adaptation, providing a practical view that complements the theoretical approach of this research.

One of the main findings is that cultural adaptation in academic mobility programs is a complex process that involves multiple factors beyond language and although it is true that it recognizes this, it also points out that adaptation depends on social, academic and cultural elements that are part of the daily life of students. Among these factors, he mentions differences in food, in transportation systems, in the dynamics of social interaction, and in the educational models of the destination universities.

The findings that were obtained can be analyzed from the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede. In the first place, Marcelo Calle's observations can be related to the dimension of power distance, since in the interview it is mentioned that one of the aspects that Ecuadorian students most point out when they return from their mobility experience is the difference in the relationship between students and teachers in some foreign universities. According to his experience, many students value the educational model of the University of Azuay because it allows for closer interaction with professors and a more constant monitoring of academic performance, this aspect can be interpreted as a cultural difference in the way authority relationships are structured in educational contexts.

Another aspect that can be analyzed from Hofstede's model is the dimension of individualism vs. collectivism, where Calle mentions that the culture of Cuenca and Ecuador, in general, tends to be more open and welcoming to international students, promoting social integration through cultural activities and institutional programs such as the "International Friend", which seeks to connect foreign students with local students to facilitate their adaptation, this reflects a trend towards more collectivist social dynamics, where interpersonal relationships and a sense of community play a fundamental role in cultural integration. In contrast, the interviewee points out that in some European countries social

interactions may be perceived as more reserved or distant, which can initially generate a feeling of coldness for Ecuadorian students who are mobile in these contexts.

On the other hand, the experiences described in the interview can be related to the uncertainty avoidance dimension, which refers to the degree to which a society feels uncomfortable in the face of new or unfamiliar situations. The interviewee points out that many students face difficulties during the first months of mobility due to factors such as adapting to the academic system, selecting subjects or organizing their daily lives in a different cultural context. In this sense, the International Relations Department plays a key role in providing guidance and accompaniment during the adaptation process. Strategies such as pre-mobility briefings, academic follow-up, and social integration programs seek to reduce the impact of culture shock and provide greater security for students during their experience abroad.

Finally, according to Calle, one of the main benefits of international exchanges is that they allow students to develop personal and social skills such as empathy, autonomy, and the ability to understand other ways of life. These intercultural competencies are fundamental in a globalized world, where interaction between cultures is increasingly frequent, from this perspective, academic mobility not only contributes to the academic development of students, but also to their formation as citizens capable of interacting in diverse cultural contexts.

4.4 Marie Malcherek

Marie Malcherek is a German teacher specializing in biology and the teaching of German as a foreign language, she completed her university studies in Germany, where she initially completed an undergraduate degree in Biology and later obtained a state exam that allowed her to work as a teacher of biology and German as a foreign language. His academic career has been characterized by a strong international dimension, due to his experiences of mobility, travel and work in different cultures.

Throughout her career, she has lived and worked in different countries, such as Africa and Latin America, which has allowed her to develop a broad intercultural perspective on education, language and cultural adaptation, as well as contributing to her understanding of cultural dynamics and the integration processes of international students in diverse academic contexts.

She currently serves as a representative of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at the University of Cuenca - Ecuador, where she teaches the German language, has advice on academic scholarships and organization of cultural and academic exchange events. In addition, it actively participates in the promotion of student mobility and in the accompaniment of Ecuadorian students interested in studying in Germany.

4.4.1 The Interview

The interview with Marie Malcherek offers an institutional and practical perspective on the processes of cultural adaptation in contexts of academic mobility between Ecuador and Germany, from her experience as a representative of the DAAD and a German teacher, the interviewee makes known about the cultural differences that Ecuadorian students face when integrating into the German university system. as well as on the challenges experienced by international students in exchange processes.

During the conversation, Malcherek discusses the definition of culture and cultural identity, the differences between Ecuadorian and German academic cultures, the role of language in social and academic integration, and the individual factors that influence cultural adaptation, as well as how cultural characteristics can lead to misunderstandings or difficulties in everyday interaction between people from different cultural contexts.

The interview also includes recommendations for students who wish to participate in exchange programs and for institutions that manage academic mobility programs, emphasizing the importance of institutional accompaniment, intercultural preparation, and the development of personal skills such as cultural openness and resilience.

4.4.2 Narrative Body

In the first part of the interview, Malcherek reflects on the concept of culture, pointing out that it cannot be understood only from a national or homogeneous perspective, she states that culture is made up of practices and customs shared between social groups, but that these can vary significantly even within the same country and according to her words can be understood as "the customs of a group of people". although it clarifies that these should not be reduced to stereotypes or simplified representations associated with a nationality (Malcherek, personal communication, 2026).

One of the most relevant aspects of the interview is related to the differences observed between the university systems of Ecuador and Germany. According to Malcherek, one of the main differences lies in the degree of autonomy that students have in the German university system and explains that in Germany students have more freedom to organize their academic career, since "German students are more used to setting up their own study", deciding when and how to take certain subjects (Malcherek, personal communication, 2026).

This characteristic contrasts with the Ecuadorian university system, where study programs are usually structured in a more rigid way, so according to Malcherek, this difference can represent a challenge for Ecuadorian students who study in Germany, since it implies assuming greater levels of autonomy and responsibility in the management of their academic training.

Another aspect highlighted in the interview is the role of language in cultural integration processes, which is why she points out that the mastery of the German language can be decisive for social integration in certain regions of Germany, especially in smaller cities where the use of English is not as developed. In this sense, he explains that "to integrate into social life I really need a very good level of German", particularly in contexts where people do not speak English frequently (Malcherek, personal communication, 2026).

It also identifies cultural differences in the forms of social interaction between Germans and Latin Americans. He mentions that Germans are often perceived as more reserved or distant, which can lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings. In his words, "Germans are a bit more distant and cold," especially compared to the more open forms of social interaction common in Latin American countries (Malcherek, personal communication, 2026).

Finally, Malcherek emphasizes that cultural adaptation does not depend only on cultural differences between countries, but also on the personal characteristics of each individual and according to their experience, some students manage to adapt more easily to different cultural contexts, while others face greater difficulties. For this reason, he concludes that "it also depends a lot on the personality of each person" in the processes of cultural adaptation (Malcherek, personal communication, 2026).

4.4.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 5

Results of the Marie Malcherek Interview.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Professional observation of cultural adaptation</p> <p>Analyzes motivations, expectations, and first experiences of cultural adaptation upon arriving in another country.</p>	<p>From his experience as a representative of the DAAD and a German teacher at the University of Cuenca, Malcherek contributes according to his experience that one of the main challenges lies in the structural difference between university systems, while in Germany students must organize their own academic itinerary, decide the order of their subjects and assume greater autonomy in their training. In Ecuador, study programs are usually more structured. This difference implies a process of adaptation that is not only cultural, but also academic, since students must develop skills of self-management and individual responsibility. This contribution is relevant to the degree work because it shows that cultural adaptation in academic mobility is not limited to social or linguistic aspects, but is also manifested in the educational dynamics and institutional expectations faced by international students.</p>
<p>Culture and communication</p> <p>It examines how cultural differences between Ecuador and Germany are perceived in aspects such as communication, social interaction, and academic norms.</p>	<p>Malcherek points out that the cultural differences between Germany and Ecuador are also reflected in the forms of social interaction and everyday communication. As he explains, Germans are often perceived as more reserved or distant compared to Latin American cultures, where social interactions tend to be more open and close. This difference can lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings in contexts of academic mobility, especially in the early stages of adaptation. The interviewee mentions that even social invitations can be interpreted differently between the two cultures, since in Germany they are usually more concrete and direct, while in Latin American contexts they can have a more symbolic or informal character. This contribution allows us to understand that intercultural communication is a key element in the processes of cultural adaptation, since students must learn to interpret new forms of social interaction and adjust their cultural expectations to the new context.</p>
<p>Evaluating Hofstede's Model from Practice</p> <p>This block analyzes the extent to which Hofstede's cultural dimensions are reflected in the interviewees' actual experiences of cultural adaptation.</p>	<p>First, the greater autonomy that characterizes the German university system may be related to a smaller power distance, where the relationship between students and professors tends to be more horizontal, also, the emphasis on self-management of learning reflects a culture more oriented towards individualism, in which students are expected to make decisions about their own academic process. In contrast, the Ecuadorian education system has more structured characteristics that can be associated with cultures with a greater collective or institutional orientation, and differences in communication and forms of social interaction also show different ways of managing uncertainty in intercultural contexts.</p>
<p>Institutional recommendations</p> <p>It examines the strategies used by students and institutions to facilitate cultural adaptation.</p>	<p>To facilitate the processes of cultural adaptation of international students, universities must promote spaces for interaction between local and international students that allow for the construction of social networks and reduce the feeling of isolation that exchange students often experience. Among the strategies mentioned are the organization of intercultural events, language exchange meetings and academic activities that promote contact between different student communities. This contribution is relevant for the degree work because it shows that cultural adaptation does not depend only on the individual effort of the students, but also on the internationalization policies and institutional support provided by the universities.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.4.4 Analysis

According to the interview with Marie Malcherek, she confirms that cultural adaptation does not depend exclusively on language or cultural differences between countries, but also on institutional, academic and personal factors that influence the experience of international students.

From the perspective of the cultural dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede, the differences observed between the Ecuadorian and German university systems reflect contrasts in the dimension of power distance, while in Germany there is a more horizontal relationship between students and teachers and greater autonomy in the management of learning, in Ecuador the educational system tends to be more structured and hierarchical.

It is also important to mention that they can be related to the dimension of individualism versus collectivism, since the German university system, characterized by greater student autonomy, reflects a culture more oriented to individualism, where students are expected to manage their own educational process, unlike the Ecuadorian system presents more collective characteristics, where the institutional structure more clearly guides the academic trajectory of students. students.

Similarly, the avoidance of uncertainty is reflected in the way students face educational systems with different levels of flexibility. The greater academic freedom present in Germany can generate uncertainty in students from more structured educational contexts, which shows the importance of intercultural preparation processes before participating in academic mobility programs.

Finally, the interview also shows that cultural adaptation cannot be explained solely by national cultural factors. As the interviewee points out, the individual characteristics of students such as cultural openness, resilience or previous experience in international contexts play a fundamental role in the way people deal with intercultural situations.

4.5 Students Interviews

For the presentation of the qualitative results, it was decided to maintain the anonymity of the young interviewees who participated in the research. The selection of these participants was made considering their direct experience in processes of academic mobility and cultural adaptation between Ecuador and Germany, which allowed obtaining relevant

testimonies for the analysis of the study, among these are, two German girls who are currently volunteering in Ecuador, two Ecuadorian students who study or studied at the university in Germany, two young Ecuadorians who did an exchange in Germany and two Germans who did an exchange in Ecuador.

In order to protect their identity and ensure compliance with ethical research principles, their real names were replaced by codes or identifiers in the development of the analysis, in order to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants and encourage the interviewees to express their experiences and perceptions with greater freedom and honesty.

Table 6

Code guide for the students and volunteers who took part in the interview.

Code	Profile	Experience
EUE1	Ecuadorian student	University studies in Germany
EUE2	Ecuadorian student	University studies in Germany
EE1	Ecuadorian student	School exchange in Germany
EE2	Ecuadorian student	Studienkolleg in Germany
EA1	German student	School exchange in Ecuador
EA2	German student	School exchange in Ecuador
USA1	German student	University studies in Ecuador
USA2	German student	University studies in Ecuador
VA1	German volunteer	Volunteering in Ecuador
VA2	German volunteer	Volunteering in Ecuador

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.6 Ecuadorian University Student 1 (EUE 1)

The interviewee is an Ecuadorian student who moved to Germany to pursue university studies in the area of health sciences, she was mainly motivated by the quality of the German educational system and the academic opportunities it offers. The decision to study abroad was influenced by the possibility of accessing a high-level education in an international context.

Since her arrival in Germany, the interviewee has lived approximately five years in the country, thus developing her academic training within a highly competitive university environment in her area. Her experience is characterized by living with students of different nationalities, which has allowed constant contact with different cultures, languages and forms of social interaction, in addition this multicultural environment has influenced her

adaptation process and the way she perceives intercultural dynamics within higher education.

Throughout her academic career, the interviewee has faced various challenges associated with the migratory and educational process, including language barriers, differences in communication styles and the academic standards of the German system, however, she also highlights that this experience has contributed significantly to her personal growth, strengthening her autonomy, discipline and ability to adapt in cultural contexts different from her own.

4.6.1 The Interview

The interview explores the experience of cultural adaptation of an Ecuadorian student who studied at university in Germany, focusing on academic challenges, so that, from her testimony, different dimensions of intercultural adaptation are evidenced, including the initial culture shock, differences in communication styles, academic norms and social dynamics within the German university environment.

The conversation reveals how the adaptation process not only involves facing initial difficulties, but also developing personal strategies to integrate into a new cultural context, she highlights the importance of language, openness to new experiences and understanding the cultural norms of the destination country as key factors to achieve progressive integration.

Finally, the interview shows that academic mobility is a transformative process that impacts both personal identity and the way in which other cultures are perceived, it is important to know that this experience of studying abroad not only contributes to academic development, but also to personal growth, the broadening of cultural perspectives and the strengthening of intercultural skills.

4.6.2 Narrative Body

In relation to her experience of academic mobility, the interviewee explains that her decision to study in Germany was motivated by the quality of the educational system, however, she recognizes that the reality of the migration process implied significant challenges, especially during the first weeks of adaptation. One of the most difficult moments was that despite having arrived with an advanced level of German, it was difficult for him to understand technical terminology in his first classes. In this sense, she relates that in her first university class she felt overwhelmed when she realized that she still needed to

master part of the academic vocabulary of the language. As she points out in the interview, "when I left that class I left crying because I realized that I did not understand many technical words of the language" (EUE 1, personal communication, 2026).

Among the aspects that most caught his attention he mentions the high level of organization, punctuality and formality of the German context, according to his point of view, one of the features that surprised him the most was the tendency of people to maintain a greater interpersonal distance and to concentrate mainly on their own activities. In his words, "people are focused on their own thing... each one is doing his own thing", which contrasts with the closer forms of interaction he had experienced in Ecuador. He also explains that in Germany classes can have hundreds of students and that the relationship with the teacher is usually more distant and formal. In his experience, the professor represents a figure of academic authority with whom there is a high level of respect, but with little direct personal interaction.

The experience also transformed her perception of intercultural communication, Germans usually have a much more direct communication style than the one she was used to in Ecuador, at first, this form of communication was difficult for her to interpret, as she perceived some comments as too direct, but over time she learned to understand that this communicative style does not necessarily imply a negative intention, rather, it is part of the cultural norms of the German context. After several years living in Germany, he acknowledges that he has adopted some characteristics of the cultural context in which he lives, especially in relation to punctuality, discipline and organization. At the same time, he believes that the intercultural experience has broadened his perspective on other cultures and allowed him to develop a greater openness towards cultural diversity (EUE 1, personal communication, 2026).

4.6.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 7

Results of the EUE Interview 1.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Personal trajectory and context of mobility</p> <p>It analyzes the origin of the interviewee's mobility experience, including their previous training, motivations and expectations before the trip.</p>	<p>The interviewee decided to go to Germany because of the quality of the education system and the possibility of accessing free education in a developed country. This implied a process of academic mobility that involved leaving her family environment and adapting to a new educational, social and cultural system, she recognizes that emigrating to study implies starting over in an unknown context, which represents a significant personal challenge.</p>
<p>First contacts and culture shock</p> <p>Explore early experiences upon arrival in the country, initial difficulties, and perceived cultural differences.</p>	<p>The first weeks in Germany describe initial feelings of sadness and difficulty adapting to the new environment, especially due to factors such as the weather, distance from her family and the change in social dynamics, she also experienced difficulties in her first university classes due to the use of technical vocabulary in German. This moment marked an awareness of the demands of the new academic and cultural context.</p>
<p>Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience</p> <p>How cultural differences between countries are reflected in aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>The interviewee perceives German culture as more individualistic, where people tend to concentrate on their own responsibilities and there is less social interaction, in addition, she highlights the high level of organization, punctuality and respect for the rules of the German academic system, which reflects a strong orientation towards structure and compliance with rules. These characteristics contrast with their perception of a more flexible and relational Ecuadorian context.</p>
<p>Intercultural Communication and Language</p> <p>It discusses the role of language and communication styles in interacting with people from other cultures.</p>	<p>Although the interviewee arrived with an advanced level of the language, recognizes that everyday communication and academic language represented a challenge as well, she identified significant differences in communication styles. Example: Germany's communication is usually more direct and explicit, which at first was difficult to interpret, since in its previous cultural context interactions are usually more indirect. Over time he learned to understand this form of communication as a cultural characteristic of the environment.</p>
<p>Coping Strategies and Facilitators</p> <p>Identify personal, social, or institutional resources that help students adapt.</p>	<p>Throughout her experience, the interviewee developed different strategies that allowed her to adapt progressively, such as openness to new experiences, willingness to understand the cultural norms of the country, and the importance of not interpreting cultural differences personally. It also mentions the institutional support offered by the university, such as programs for international students and financial aid, which contributed to facilitating their process of academic and social integration.</p>
<p>Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth</p> <p>It examines the personal changes and learnings that arise from the experience of mobility.</p>	<p>The experience of living and studying in another country generated transformations in the personal identity of the interviewee, since after several years in Germany, she recognizes that she has adopted certain cultural traits of the environment, especially related to discipline, organization and punctuality, in addition, she considers that the intercultural experience allowed her to broaden her perspective on other cultures and develop a greater open-mindedness in the face of cultural diversity. as well as greater knowledge about themselves.</p>
<p>Recommendations and projection</p> <p>Suggestions and reflections on how to improve the processes of mobility and cultural adaptation for future students.</p>	<p>Based on her experience, the interviewee considers that knowledge of the language before emigrating is one of the most important factors in facilitating academic and social integration, but she also points out that university programs could improve the integration of international students by creating more spaces for social interaction that facilitate contact between local and international students. Finally, she highlights that emigrating to study can be an enriching experience, but it also requires emotional preparation and flexibility to adapt to new cultural realities.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.6.4 Analysis

The experience reported allows us to identify several of the cultural dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede in the context of academic adaptation in Germany. First, the dimension of individualism vs. collectivism is observed, since the interviewee perceives that in the German university environment a more individualistic logic predominates, where each student focuses mainly on his or her own academic performance. This is reflected when he mentions that in group work "everyone does their own thing" and that in general "people are focused on their own thing", which contrasts with more collaborative and close dynamics that he associates with the Ecuadorian context.

On the other hand, elements related to power distance and the avoidance of uncertainty are also identified, where the interviewee describes a more formal relationship between students and teachers, pointing out that in very large classes teachers do not usually know students personally and that there is a high level of respect for academic authority. It also highlights the strong structure of the German university system, characterized by clear rules, advance planning and strict adherence to academic dates. In his words, students know the evaluation calendar well in advance and must autonomously organize their academic career, which shows a highly structured institutional culture. (EUE 1, 2026)

In the experience described, the dimensions of masculinity vs. femininity and long-term orientation also appear. The interviewee mentions a competitive academic environment where each student seeks to obtain better results, which reflects an orientation towards achievement and performance. At the same time, it highlights that the educational system requires discipline, autonomy and planning for the future, which is related to a culture oriented towards long-term objectives. These characteristics influenced her own adaptation process, since over time she recognizes having adopted habits such as greater discipline, punctuality and organization in her academic and personal life.

4.7 Ecuadorian University Student 2 (EUE 2)

The interviewee is a young Ecuadorian who studied a degree in Economics and Business in Germany. Their academic exchange began in 2019, when she arrived in Germany to complete a year of preparatory studies, which is indispensable for her recognition in the German education system. She then began her university studies in 2021,

teaching courses mainly in German, although some in English, and finished her studies in 2025.

In the early years, he maintained close ties with Ecuador and considered his experience abroad as a temporary project. However, over time, he became familiar with the German social, academic and professional environment, his perspectives changed and a strong desire to stay and develop his career in Europe ended up emerging.

This exchange experience has transformed his cultural identity and worldview and he describes his current situation as a "period of identity transition", in which he retains Latin American cultural elements while integrating himself into the unique customs, values and organisational structures of German society. This process reflects a complex experience of intercultural adaptation, in which identity is constantly reconfigured through continuous interaction with different cultural backgrounds.

4.7.1 The Interview

The interview explores the academic mobility experience of an Ecuadorian student in Germany, focusing on the cultural, social and academic adaptation processes that accompany educational migration. Throughout the conversation, he reflects on his conception of culture, cultural identity and belonging, as well as on the changes he has experienced after several years living abroad.

In general, the dialogue addresses aspects related to the German education system, the dynamics of social interaction, the role of language in cultural integration and the differences in communication styles between cultural contexts. It also discusses the initial challenges he faced during his arrival in the country, such as climate, language barriers, and differences in building social relationships.

Finally, the interview allows us to understand how the experience of academic mobility influences the construction of identity and the way of perceiving other cultures. The interviewee highlights the importance of adaptation, resilience and intercultural openness as fundamental elements to integrate into a different cultural context.

4.7.2 Narrative Body

In the interview, the participant talks about the concept of culture as a complex phenomenon composed of various social and symbolic elements, from his perspective, culture cannot be defined in a simple way, since it integrates everyday practices, traditions and forms of behavior that influence the way people interpret the world and their words. Culture represents "an accumulation of factors in which customs and traditions are encompassed and which manifests itself in a form of character"

In relation to cultural identity, the interviewee explains that it is linked to the sense of belonging to a particular place or social context, although, after several years of living in Germany, he points out that his identity has been transformed and that he currently experiences an ambiguous sense of belonging between two cultural contexts. In this sense, he affirms that "today I am in limbo, because I am not German, but I would not feel comfortable living in Ecuador as before" (personal communication). This reflection shows how international mobility can generate processes of identity reconfiguration in migrant students.

He talks about German autonomy compared to other educational contexts and mentions that the responsibility for organizing the study lies mainly with the student himself, saying that "the only grade you have for the subject is the exam or the final project; how you organize your life is completely up to you." Also in Germany, friendships tend to develop more gradually, while in Latin American contexts relationships tend to be formed with emotional closeness and he highlights that "here it takes longer to make a friend; in Ecuador in a few days you can already consider someone your friend" (EUE 2, personal communication, 2026).

Finally, something very important that he mentioned that language even influences the way of thinking, stating that "when I speak German I think in a more structured way; It's like a version of me, but a little more German." (EUE 2, personal communication, 2026).

4.7.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 8

Results of the EUE Interview 2.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Personal trajectory and context of mobility</p> <p>It analyzes the origin of the interviewee's mobility experience, including their previous training, motivations and expectations before the trip.</p>	<p>He began with a preparatory year and continued with university studies in Germany. Her initial decision was motivated by the desire to experience something new and gain personal independence, over time, the academic and social experience transformed her perspective, going from considering her stay as temporary to projecting her professional future in the host country.</p>
<p>First contacts and culture shock</p> <p>Explore early experiences upon arrival in the country, initial difficulties, and perceived cultural differences.</p>	<p>The first weeks were marked by a socialization process mainly with international students, especially Latin Americans. However, the interviewee points out that one of the factors that had the greatest impact on their initial adaptation was the climate, which affects both physically and psychologically due to less sun exposure and seasonal changes, something uncommon in Latin American contexts.</p>
<p>Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience</p> <p>How cultural differences between countries are reflected in aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>The interviewee's experience reflects cultural differences related to individualism, punctuality, and social organization. He perceives that in Germany social and academic relations are structured in a more individual and formal way, while in Ecuador more collective and relational dynamics predominate. It also stresses the importance of punctuality and strict compliance with rules in the German context.</p>
<p>Intercultural Communication and Language</p> <p>It discusses the role of language and communication styles in interacting with people from other cultures.</p>	<p>Language appears as one of the most important elements in the adaptation process. Although the interviewee had previous knowledge of German, he points out that technical vocabulary and informal language represent additional challenges and recognizes that language influences the way of thinking and communicating, generating cognitive and cultural adaptation.</p>
<p>Coping Strategies and Facilitators</p> <p>Identify personal, social, or institutional resources that help students adapt.</p>	<p>The interviewee identifies resilience and learning from experience as the main coping mechanisms. Through a process of trial and error, he adjusted his behavior to the cultural norms of the environment, for example in aspects such as punctuality or forms of social interaction.</p>
<p>Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth</p> <p>It examines the personal changes and learnings that arise from the experience of mobility.</p>	<p>As he mentions, this cultural exchange significantly transformed his cultural identity and he describes feeling between two cultural contexts, incorporating elements of both Latin American and German culture. This process allowed him to develop a more relativistic and open vision towards other cultures.</p>
<p>Recommendations and projection</p> <p>Suggestions and reflections on how to improve the processes of mobility and cultural adaptation for future students.</p>	<p>As a recommendation for future students, the interviewee stresses the importance of developing personal responsibility, autonomy and adaptability and considers that academic success in Germany depends to a large extent on individual discipline and the ability to progressively integrate into the social and cultural environment.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.7.4 Analysis

In the interview, a significant difference is observed in the individualism vs. collectivism dimension, while the interviewee perceives that in Ecuador social and academic relationships tend to be more collective and based on interpersonal closeness, he says that in Germany interactions are structured in a more individual and gradual way, which is reflected both in the dynamics of friendship and in the functioning of university classes. The dimension of uncertainty avoidance is also evident, particularly in the importance that German culture gives to strict compliance with academic rules, schedules and deadlines. The interviewee mentions that in the German university system, deadlines are rigorously respected, even for seconds, which reflects a high level of institutional formality, unlike Latin American contexts there is usually greater flexibility in the management of rules and times.

On the other hand, the experience can also be analyzed from the long-term orientation dimension, which is manifested in the importance that German society attaches to planning, personal organization and individual responsibility. He says that his stay in Germany influenced the development of habits such as punctuality, organization and academic discipline, which reflects a process of adaptation to cultural values characteristic of contexts with a greater orientation to planning.

Finally, the interview also evidences elements related to the dimension of indulgence vs. restriction, especially in the way in which social relationships are built and emotions are expressed, where it points out that communication styles in Germany are more direct and structured, while in Latin American contexts more expressive and relational forms of interaction predominate.

4.8 Ecuadorian Student 1 (EE 1)

The interviewee is an Ecuadorian who completed a student mobility program in Germany during her high school stage and her experience was developed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which directly influenced her decision to participate in an exchange, she is currently studying at university in the area of Organizational Psychology, after having started her training in Clinical Psychology. a change he made after experiencing clinical work in hospital settings during his initial training.

Her international mobility experience was developed in a city in northern Germany, where she was integrated into a local school system together with German students of the

same age, during this process she faced important challenges related to language, cultural adaptation and living with a host family, although the experience allowed her to interact with classmates from different cultural contexts. including students of Arab origin and other international students.

From a personal perspective, she believes that this experience was a process of learning and personal maturation, since it involved facing a situation of autonomy outside the family environment for the first time. This process included the development of practical, social, and emotional skills that contributed to transforming their understanding of other cultures and their own identity.

4.8.1 The Interview

The interview addresses the academic mobility experience of an Ecuadorian student who participated in a school exchange program in Germany for a year and explores different aspects of the cultural adaptation process, including initial culture shock, language difficulties, differences in communication styles, and social dynamics within the German education system.

The conversation allows us to identify the main challenges he faced during his adaptation process, especially in relation to the language, social integration and living with the host family. He also highlights the fundamental role that friendships had in his integration process, as well as the personal impact that the experience had on his personal and academic development.

The interview also collects critical reflections on student mobility programs, especially in relation to the need to provide greater institutional accompaniment and emotional support to international students during their process of cultural adaptation.

4.8.2 Narrative Body

In the first part of the interview, he defined culture as an element closely linked to personal and collective identity, explaining: "Culture is part of the identity of a place or a person, and it changes a lot according to the perception of each one" (EE 1, personal communication, 2026).

Regarding her exchange experience, the interviewee explained that she decided to study abroad during the pandemic, although she initially considered other destinations, she finally chose Germany because she heard many positive experiences from other students.

However, upon arriving in the country, he faced challenges in linguistic and social adaptation. The truth even described her first weeks at school as emotionally draining, recalling, "The first day was terrible, I came home crying because I didn't know what to say or how to speak." (EE 1, personal communication, 2026).

The most crucial point for me about his story was the autonomy he acquired during the exchange. The interviewee summed up her experience, in one word: "mature", explaining that before the exchange she was completely dependent on her family for daily tasks. In this sense, he admitted: "I didn't know anything... not even how to buy a plane ticket or use a credit card," which made the exchange a practical and emotional learning experience for her.

In addition, she indicates that living with a host family was one of the most challenging aspects of her experience. The interviewee described several situations that made her feel discriminated against or uncomfortable, especially in relation to her cultural background and appearance. In this context, she mentioned some comments from her host family that were "really horrible... I don't know if it was racism or xenophobia, but those words were just wrong." (EE 1, personal communication, 2026).

Despite these difficulties, the interviewee said that the friendships she made during her stay in Germany were a key factor in her adaptation process. Also a key point to mention is that the interviewee reflected on the intercultural impact of this experience, stating that the exchange changed her perspective on other cultures and challenged certain cultural stereotypes. As he said, "It opened my eyes completely... You have a lot of perspectives on other cultures, but in the end, you discover that we have a lot more in common than we imagine."

4.8.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 9

Results of the EE Interview 1.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Personal trajectory and context of mobility</p> <p>It analyzes the origin of the interviewee's mobility experience, including their previous training, motivations and expectations before the trip.</p>	<p>She explains that her decision to do an exchange came during the pandemic and she initially considered other destinations, but ultimately chose Germany due to positive references from other students. Her mobility took place at an early stage of her academic life, which implied facing for the first time a process of personal independence outside the family environment.</p>
<p>First contacts and culture shock</p> <p>Explore early experiences upon arrival in the country, initial difficulties, and perceived cultural differences.</p>	<p>The first weeks were marked by a strong cultural and emotional shock, especially in the school context: The language barrier, the lack of confidence to interact with their peers and the feeling of isolation caused a significant emotional impact. This period was characterized by feelings of insecurity and difficulty in establishing social ties within the new educational environment.</p>
<p>Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience</p> <p>How cultural differences between countries are reflected in aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>The interviewee perceived that German students were more individualistic in academic activities and that social norms, especially in the family and social sphere, were more liberal compared to her experience in Ecuador.</p>
<p>Intercultural Communication and Language</p> <p>It discusses the role of language and communication styles in interacting with people from other cultures.</p>	<p>While in the academic field the language barrier made it difficult to complete tasks and assessments, in the social sphere communication was facilitated thanks to the use of English and the flexibility of young people to understand their German learning process.</p>
<p>Coping Strategies and Facilitators</p> <p>Identify personal, social, or institutional resources that help students adapt.</p>	<p>The main adaptation strategy was personal initiative to socialize and overcome the initial embarrassment and the interviewee highlights that the most important support came from her group of friends, who facilitated her social integration, introduced her to new spaces and allowed her to better understand the cultural context.</p>
<p>Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth</p> <p>It examines the personal changes and learnings that arise from the experience of mobility.</p>	<p>The interviewee underwent a process of personal and academic transformation, that is, a process of maturation that strengthened her autonomy, her ability to adapt and her understanding of cultural diversity. In addition, he points out that the experience modified his subsequent academic performance, increasing his motivation and discipline in studies.</p>
<p>Recommendations and projection</p> <p>Suggestions and reflections on how to improve the processes of mobility and cultural adaptation for future students.</p>	<p>The interviewee believes that mobility programs should include greater institutional accompaniment and emotional support for international students, since the adaptation process can be emotionally complex and requires closer monitoring by the organizations responsible for the exchanges.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.8.4 Analysis

Differences were observed between the individualistic and collectivist dimensions, as the interviewee perceived that the German educational environment prioritized individual autonomy compared to the Ecuadorian one, this is evident in group assignments and classroom interactions, where German students tended to act more independently than those

from Latin American cultures. characterized by a greater emphasis on collectivist social relations.

Similarly, the power distance was also reflected in the teacher-student relationships. While the interviewee felt respected by authority figures, she also observed differences in language use and intimacy in communication, as students in Germany addressed professors by name. This characteristic reflects a less hierarchical educational relationship, in stark contrast to the more formal education systems of many Latin American countries.

Another dimension clearly evident was the avoidance of uncertainty, particularly with regard to how academic assessment is conducted in the German education system, where the practice of providing personalized feedback to students throughout the school year reflects a teaching structure oriented towards continuous learning rather than the sanctioning of errors. The interviewee perceived this system as more resilient than those she had previously experienced.

The dimensions of masculinity vs. femininity and long-term vs. short-term orientation can also be identified, although more indirectly. For example, elements associated with values closer to culturally "feminine" societies are observed, such as the importance that the interviewee perceives in issues of well-being and social awareness, for example the predominance of vegetarian or vegan lifestyles among her peers and the interest in social debates such as feminism or socialism and these aspects reflect an orientation towards quality of life. social sensitivity and collective well-being rather than towards competition. Likewise, the long-term orientation dimension mentions daily practices that reflect more planned and rational lifestyles, such as more controlled consumption habits or organized dynamics in academic and family life.

4.9 Ecuadorian Student 2 (EE 2)

The interviewee is an Ecuadorian student from the city of Cuenca who carried out an academic mobility experience in Germany for approximately ten months. His previous education in a school with an orientation towards German culture significantly influenced his decision to study in that country, since from his school years he received language preparation, information about the German educational system and guidance to participate in study abroad programs.

His academic experience in Germany was developed through the Studienkolleg program, a preparatory system aimed primarily at international students who wish to subsequently enter German universities. In this academic context, the interviewee studied a program oriented to the area of humanities, with an interest in fields such as design, art and communication. Most of the students in this program were foreigners, mainly from Latin America, which generated a multicultural environment characterized by the coexistence of diverse nationalities.

During her stay in Germany, the interviewee faced different challenges related to cultural adaptation, language and the administrative processes of life in another country. However, this experience also contributed to her personal development, allowing her to strengthen skills such as autonomy, responsibility and the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts.

4.9.1 The Interview

The interview explores the academic mobility experience of an Ecuadorian student in Germany and her process of cultural adaptation during her stay abroad. In his answers, he talks about various aspects related to his personal journey, pre-trip expectations, first impressions upon arrival in the destination country and perceived cultural differences in everyday life.

One of the central themes of the interview is the contrast between Ecuadorian and German cultures, especially in aspects such as communication styles, social relations and social norms, among other things, but it highlights that German culture is characterized by being more direct, structured and reserved compared to Latin American culture, which he perceives as closer and warmer.

In addition, the interview allows us to understand the role played by social support networks, especially among Latin American students in the processes of cultural adaptation.

4.9.2 Narrative Body

The participant defines "culture is like the identity of each individual, each country or even each small town; they are values and customs that define a certain population". This reflects a broad understanding of culture as a system of shared meanings that influences the way people interpret and experience their social environment (EE 2, personal communication, 2026).

Regarding her experience of academic mobility, she explains that her decision to study in Germany was influenced by her school education, and although she initially had moderate expectations about the experience, she recognizes that she was aware that she would face a different cultural context, so that, during her stay in Germany, the interviewee identifies significant cultural differences between German and Latin American society. One of them was the style of communication and the forms of social interaction. According to his perception, "Germans are more closed, more direct and colder, while we are warmer and that makes you feel more at home" (EE 2, personal communication, 2026). This difference influenced the way he established social relationships during his stay, since most of his social circle was composed of Latin American students.

He also highlighted that the process of cultural adaptation was marked by moments of uncertainty, as he describes his experience as "unpredictable", as there were times when everything seemed to be going well and others when unexpected difficulties or challenges arose. It can be said that the experience of mobility also generated changes in her personal development, especially in terms of responsibility and autonomy, because she points out that living in another country led her to be more organized and to face new situations that required greater independence, which contributed to her personal and academic growth.

4.9.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 10

Results of the EE Interview 2.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Personal trajectory and context of mobility</p> <p>It analyzes the origin of the interviewee's mobility experience, including their previous training, motivations and expectations before the trip.</p>	<p>The interviewee's context facilitated her access to preparatory programmes for international students, allowing her to integrate into the German academic system through the Studienkolleg, her experience reflects how educational institutions can play a key role in promoting international academic mobility.</p>
<p>First contacts and culture shock</p> <p>Explore early experiences upon arrival in the country, initial difficulties, and perceived cultural differences.</p>	<p>It was a challenging period due to the change of environment, the distance from her country of origin and the need to adapt to new social and academic dynamics, she also mentions that at the beginning she experienced difficulties associated with independent living and administrative procedures, especially those related to residence and the banking system, which shows the importance of prior preparation to face these processes.</p>
<p>Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience</p> <p>How cultural differences between countries are reflected in aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>Throughout the interview there are several elements that reflect cultural differences between Ecuador and Germany, which the interviewee perceives that German culture presents a greater structure in social relations, greater respect for academic authority and a strong value of punctuality. These characteristics contrast with the Ecuadorian culture, which she describes as more flexible and close in interpersonal relationships.</p>
<p>Intercultural Communication and Language</p> <p>It discusses the role of language and communication styles in interacting with people from other cultures.</p>	<p>The interviewee highlights that Germans tend to communicate directly, while in Latin American culture it is more common to use indirect forms of communication. On the other hand, the language influenced their adaptation process, since Spanish predominated in their social environment, while German was mainly used in formal or administrative situations.</p>
<p>Coping Strategies and Facilitators</p> <p>Identify personal, social, or institutional resources that help students adapt.</p>	<p>One of the main factors that facilitated the interviewee's adaptation was the social support of other Latin American students. The creation of friendship networks with people who shared their language and similar experiences made it possible to generate an environment of mutual support that facilitated the resolution of everyday problems and contributed to reducing the impact of culture shock.</p>
<p>Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth</p> <p>It examines the personal changes and learnings that arise from the experience of mobility.</p>	<p>Although she notes that her cultural identity did not change significantly, she acknowledges that the experience allowed her to better understand other cultures and develop a more open attitude towards cultural diversity. It also highlights learning related to responsibility and personal autonomy.</p>
<p>Recommendations and projection</p> <p>Suggestions and reflections on how to improve the processes of mobility and cultural adaptation for future students.</p>	<p>The interviewee recommends that prospective students who wish to study in Germany inform themselves in advance about the administrative procedures and cultural norms of the destination country. It stresses the importance of punctuality and planning as key elements for proper integration into German society and suggests that educational institutions should offer more practical preparation to face the administrative challenges of living in another country.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.9.4 Analysis

In relation to the power distance, he points out that in Germany the relationship between students and teachers is more formal and structured, since there is a clear differentiation between both figures, the teacher maintains a position of authority that is respected without close or informal interaction, which differs with Latin American educational contexts where relationships can be more flexible.

According to individualism vs. collectivism, it shows that most academic activities were individual and that German social groups tend to remain closed, while Latin American students tended to support each other and form support networks, reflecting more collectivist traits.

The dimension of uncertainty avoidance also appears in his story, especially in the importance that German culture gives to rules, planning and punctuality, and highlights that being late can be considered disrespectful, which shows a strong orientation towards compliance with rules and the organization of time.

Regarding the dimension of masculinity vs. femininity, there is an orientation towards values such as responsibility, discipline and efficiency, elements that the interviewee perceives as characteristic of the German academic environment. On the other hand, long-term orientation, a strong culture of planning and organization is identified, visible in the academic and administrative processes that students must comply with. And finally, the dimension of indulgence vs. restriction can be observed in the greater rigidity of social and academic norms in Germany, in contrast to Latin American contexts where interactions tend to be more flexible and spontaneous.

4.10 German Student 1 (EA 1)

The interviewee is a German girl who did an academic exchange in the city of Cuenca - Ecuador, during the year 2022. His experience was developed in secondary education, in which he spent approximately one school year with the main objective of learning Spanish and getting to know a culture different from his own, his decision to carry out this exchange was motivated by his personal interest in Latin America and by a family link with Ecuador, since his grandfather is originally from this country.

During her stay, the interviewee was integrated into the Ecuadorian educational system and lived closely with local students and a host family, which allowed her to directly experience the cultural, social and educational dynamics of the country, this not only implied an academic learning process, but also a process of cultural and linguistic adaptation that transformed her way of understanding other cultures and ways of life and today, The interviewee is preparing to start university studies in the area of dentistry.

4.10.1 The Interview

The interview talks about the experience of cultural adaptation of a foreign student during her academic exchange in Ecuador, addressing both the initial perceptions about Ecuadorian culture and the challenges and learnings that arose during her stay.

Several key aspects of the intercultural adaptation process are evidenced, such as the initial culture shock, linguistic difficulties, differences in communication styles and social dynamics between Germany and Ecuador, allowing us to identify elements related to Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions, especially in aspects such as the importance of the family, the relationship between students and teachers and social interaction.

The interviewee reflects on the intercultural learning acquired during her experience, highlighting the value of cultural openness, the importance of language in integration processes and the need to maintain a flexible attitude towards cultural differences.

4.10.2 Narrative Body

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewee explains about the concept of culture saying that it is not limited only to traditions or practices, but covers points of social life, from her point of view culture includes ways of relating, social values, daily life and the importance that each society gives to aspects such as family or community. In his words, culture is made up of "all things together... how people treat each other, how people live and how important family and friends are" (EA 1, personal communication, 2026).

Also one of the most outstanding elements of the interview is the comparison she makes between German and Ecuadorian culture, she perceives Ecuadorian society as more open and warm in interpersonal relationships, especially highlighting the forms of greeting and social closeness, that is why she mentions that in Ecuador people tend to greet each other

more frequently and closely, even when they are not previously known (EA 1, personal communication, 2026).

Another relevant aspect of his experience was the importance of the family in Ecuadorian daily life, as he observes that in Ecuador family activities occupy a central place, especially during weekends, while in Germany the social life of young people tends to focus more on the group of friends than on the family. In relation to the adaptation process, the interviewee recognizes that the language represented one of the greatest initial challenges, during the first weeks she experienced difficulties in communicating due to her limited Spanish, which generated moments of frustration and insecurity, although, with the passage of time and thanks to the support of her companions and host family members, He managed to improve his understanding and production of the language until he reached a fluent level of communication towards the end of his stay.

She also said that the exchange transformed her way of perceiving cultural differences and affirms, this experience allowed her to develop a more open attitude towards other ways of life and understand that many cultural practices must be interpreted from the context in which they arise, in this sense, she affirms that the experience helped her to "see people in a different way" and to understand that each person acts according to their own context cultural (EA 1, personal communication, 2026).

4.10.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 11

Results of the EA Interview 1.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Personal trajectory and context of mobility</p> <p>It analyzes the origin of the interviewee's mobility experience, including their previous training, motivations and expectations before the trip.</p>	<p>The interviewee carried out an academic exchange in Ecuador motivated by her interest in Latin America and her family ties with the country, reflecting an interest in experiencing other cultures and broadening her personal and academic perspective.</p>
<p>First contacts and culture shock</p> <p>Explore early experiences upon arrival in the country, initial difficulties, and perceived cultural differences.</p>	<p>The first weeks were marked by linguistic difficulties and the need to adapt to new social dynamics, in addition to the lack of command of Spanish initially generated frustration, although it later became a progressive learning process.</p>
<p>Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience</p> <p>How cultural differences between countries are reflected in aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>He mentioned the importance of the family in Ecuadorian society, where family activities are a central part of life, especially on weekends, he also mentions differences in punctuality and in the forms of social interaction, saying that in Ecuador people tend to be more flexible over time, on the other hand, he perceives a closer relationship between students and teachers, where there is respect, but also greater closeness and trust compared to the German education system.</p>
<p>Intercultural Communication and Language</p> <p>It discusses the role of language and communication styles in interacting with people from other cultures.</p>	<p>During the first weeks the language barrier made it difficult for her to integrate socially, since she did not understand the conversations nor could she participate actively, to overcome this difficulty she used tools such as digital translators and the support of her classmates, who in some cases helped her using English, after a few months she managed to understand more and more Spanish until, After about half a year, he was able to communicate and participate fully in social and academic life.</p>
<p>Coping Strategies and Facilitators</p> <p>Identify personal, social, or institutional resources that help students adapt.</p>	<p>Cultural adaptation was facilitated mainly by the social support she received from her immediate environment. Example: Her host sisters and friends helped her understand cultural situations, correct her Spanish, and accompany her in social activities. In addition, the interviewee's own attitude was decisive, since she sought to actively integrate by asking questions, participating in social activities and accepting invitations to meet new people and experiences.</p>
<p>Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth</p> <p>It examines the personal changes and learnings that arise from the experience of mobility.</p>	<p>She described her exchange experience as a process of personal growth that transformed her way of understanding other cultures, developing a more open and understanding attitude towards cultural differences, learning to interpret behaviors from the cultural context of each person. As he explains, he now tries to understand that many actions or ways of acting may be related to the customs or ways of life of other cultures, which allowed him to broaden his perspective on the world and on intercultural relations.</p>
<p>Recommendations and projection</p> <p>Suggestions and reflections on how to improve the processes of mobility and cultural adaptation for future students.</p>	<p>Based on her experience, the interviewee recommends that future exchange students learn the language as quickly as possible to facilitate social and academic integration. It also highlights the importance of maintaining an open attitude and actively participating in all possible activities during the mobility experience, as time abroad is limited. From his perspective, taking advantage of opportunities to get to know people, cultures and places is essential for the exchange experience to truly contribute to intercultural learning.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.10.4 Analysis

According to the individualism vs. collectivism dimension, she perceives that in Ecuador the family occupies a central place in social life, especially on the weekend, this trait contrasts with Germany, where the social life of young people is more often organized around the group of friends. This difference reflects a trend towards a more collectivist culture in the Ecuadorian context, where family and community ties are more relevant. Apart from the dimension of Power Distance. In the Ecuadorian educational context, the interviewee perceives a closer relationship between students and teachers, where proper names are used and a more personal interaction is established, although the authority figure still exists, this relationship is perceived as less hierarchical than in the German educational system, where academic relationships are usually more formal.

Another dimension is the avoidance of uncertainty, particularly in the way in which academic norms and organization are perceived. The interviewee observes differences in the structure of schoolwork, the organization of work and the way in which deadlines are handled, which is why these perceptions reflect different levels of flexibility and institutional organization between both educational contexts. On the other hand, the dimension of indulgence vs. restriction, especially in forms of social interaction. The interviewee describes Ecuadorian society as more expressive, open and close in interpersonal contact, which is reflected in social practices such as greeting with a kiss or more dynamic group conversation and contrasts with more reserved communication styles that, according to her experience, characterize German culture.

Finally, the long-term vs. short-term orientation dimension can also be interpreted based on the interviewee's reflections on her exchange experience, since the decision to carry out a cultural exchange and learn a new language reflects an orientation towards intercultural learning and long-term personal development, aspects that coincide with the academic mobility objectives analyzed in this research.

4.11 German Student 2 (EA 2)

The interviewee is a German girl who completed an academic mobility program in Ecuador during her school years. She was born and raised in Germany, although she comes from a family with Russian roots, which has significantly influenced her way of understanding cultural identity, so this double cultural reference led her to reflect from an

early age on the meaning of belonging to a specific culture and on how family traditions, Language and customs shape the sense of personal identity.

Her experience of academic mobility was developed during adolescence, when she participated in an exchange program organized by her educational institution, in this process she lived with an Ecuadorian host family and studied at a German school in the city of Cuenca.

She is currently starting university studies in the area of law in Germany and her academic mobility experience represented a personal and cultural learning process for her, as it allowed her to develop a greater awareness of cultural differences, forms of communication between societies and the challenges faced by students in intercultural contexts.

4.11.1 The Interview

The interview shows the participant's experience during her stay in Ecuador, focusing on her process of cultural adaptation, perceptions about the socio-cultural differences between Germany and Ecuador, and the challenges she faced.

Throughout the conversation, reflections are made on cultural identity, intercultural communication, social dynamics in the educational environment and the strategies used to adapt to a new cultural context, it also describes situations of culture shock related to social norms, communication styles, gender roles and dynamics of interaction in social and academic spaces.

It can be seen that the academic mobility experience was marked by a combination of positive learning and significant challenges, which allowed the participant to develop a greater understanding of cultural differences and a more critical perspective on the processes of intercultural adaptation.

4.11.2 Narrative Body

In the first part, the participant tells about the concept of culture, pointing out that it is not limited only to visible elements such as food or language, but from the coexistence between people, their forms of interaction and their daily practices, as she herself mentions, culture is related to "people who live together in a country and create culture with their language, their food and the way they react to each other." (EA 2, personal communication, 2026).

Based on her experience of academic mobility in Ecuador, she describes her stay as a complex process that combined positive moments with difficult situations. Describing her overall experience, she states that it was "interesting" as it represented "a wonderful time, but also a difficult one", in which she learned as much about Ecuadorian culture as she did about herself (EA 2, personal communication, 2026).

Another relevant aspect of the experience was the process of learning the language, although she received Spanish classes during her stay, the interviewee points out that the language represented one of the main challenges in her adaptation and explains that on many occasions daily communication was carried out in English, which reduced her opportunities to practice Spanish in informal contexts. thus generating some difficulties in everyday situations.

Regarding cultural differences in the educational environment, the interviewee perceives important contrasts between the German and Ecuadorian educational systems, especially that in Ecuador she observed a more formal relationship between students and teachers, while in Germany the interaction is usually closer and she points out that "there was much more respect for teachers" in the Ecuadorian context. while in Germany the relationship is usually more horizontal (EA 2, personal communication, 2026).

She describes her experience of academic mobility as a personal learning process, but acknowledges that she faced certain challenges during her stay, so she considers that the experience allowed her to develop a greater understanding of cultural differences and reflect on her own identity, stating that it was "a wonderful time, but also difficult", which allowed her to learn about herself and about other realities (EA 2, personal communication, 2026).

4.11.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 12

Results of the EA Interview 2.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Personal trajectory and context of mobility</p> <p>It analyzes the origin of the interviewee's mobility experience, including their previous training, motivations and expectations before the trip.</p>	<p>She participated in a school exchange program, where her main motivation was the interest in traveling, getting to know new cultures and experiencing a reality different from the European one, in addition, before traveling, she had a limited vision of Latin America, mainly associated with poverty, but also with a rich culture and a friendly society.</p>
<p>First contacts and culture shock</p> <p>Explore early experiences upon arrival in the country, initial difficulties, and perceived cultural differences.</p>	<p>During his first weeks he experienced both positive surprise and difficulties in adaptation, he was surprised to discover that the city was more developed than he imagined and he faced difficulties related to climate, altitude, social differences and certain uncomfortable situations in social contexts.</p>
<p>Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience</p> <p>How cultural differences between countries are reflected in aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>The interviewee perceived cultural differences related to power distance and social norms, observed that in Ecuador students show greater respect and formality towards teachers, while in Germany the relationship is usually more horizontal. He also perceived differences in the form of social interaction and in the organization of relationships within the school environment.</p>
<p>Intercultural Communication and Language</p> <p>It discusses the role of language and communication styles in interacting with people from other cultures.</p>	<p>The language was one of the main challenges during her process, although she received Spanish classes, her daily interaction was largely developed in English with her host family, thus limiting her opportunities to practice the language and hindering her communication in academic or medical situations.</p>
<p>Coping Strategies and Facilitators</p> <p>Identify personal, social, or institutional resources that help students adapt.</p>	<p>One of the most important factors for her adaptation was the support of her host family and her exchange sister. The presence of friends and other international students also contributed to her feeling more accompanied during her stay in Ecuador.</p>
<p>Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth</p> <p>It examines the personal changes and learnings that arise from the experience of mobility.</p>	<p>The experience allowed the interviewee to reflect on her own cultural identity and develop a broader view about other cultures and also allowed her to question some previous stereotypes and better understand cultural differences in forms of social interaction.</p>
<p>Recommendations and projection</p> <p>Suggestions and reflections on how to improve the processes of mobility and cultural adaptation for future students.</p>	<p>She recommends prospective students to keep an open attitude, try new experiences and take the opportunity to get to know the country and its culture. He believes that Ecuador is a country with great cultural and natural wealth, and that the exchange experience can be very enriching if it is lived with openness.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.11.4 Analysis

According to the dimension power distance, this is manifested by saying that in Ecuador the relationship with academic authority is characterized by greater formality and respect for teachers, while in Germany interaction is usually more horizontal. In this sense, the interviewee points out that in the Ecuadorian context "there was much more respect for teachers", while in her country the relationship can be closer and less hierarchical (personal communication). On the other hand, the individualism vs. collectivism dimension is

evidenced in the way in which the interviewee perceives social relations during her stay in Ecuador and although she observes the presence of relatively closed social groups within the school environment, she also identifies a strong importance of the family and close social networks in daily life. Living with their host family and participating in family activities reflect a social dynamic more oriented towards collectivity and interpersonal interaction, contrasting with more individualistic cultural contexts in several European countries.

In relation to the dimension of uncertainty avoidance, the interviewee perceives that both in the German and Ecuadorian education systems there are clear norms and rules, although she identifies differences in the way in which these are applied by teachers, she points out that in some cases she observes a greater rigor in disciplinary and behavioral aspects within the Ecuadorian school environment. This dimension can be related to the way in which each society establishes mechanisms to reduce ambiguity and maintain order within educational institutions, while the long-term vs. short-term orientation dimension can be observed in the differences that the interviewee perceives between the lifestyles and social expectations of both cultural contexts. since in Germany there is greater social pressure related to compliance with rules, time planning and academic performance, which reflects a culture more oriented towards achievement and long-term planning. In contrast, during her stay in Ecuador she perceives a more flexible lifestyle focused on social interaction and everyday experiences.

Finally, the dimension of indulgence vs. restriction reflects that social life among young people is characterized by a greater openness towards celebration, socialization and the enjoyment of collective activities, which can be interpreted as a manifestation of cultures with a greater orientation towards indulgence according to Hofstede's model.

4.12 German University Student 1 (EUA 1)

The interviewee is a recently graduated German architecture student who participated in an academic mobility program at the University of Cuenca during the period between September 2024 and January 2025, this experience was part of an agreement between his university in Germany and the Ecuadorian institution, which allowed him to do an academic semester.

The interviewee was trained in a European university system, where he is characterized by large classes, with large groups of students and a more flexible attendance structure, unlike his experience in Ecuador that allowed him to know a different educational

context, with smaller classes and academic dynamics that required greater presence in the classroom and a more direct interaction with teachers and classmates.

On the other hand, her motivation for the exchange was linked to both the academic opportunity and the desire to experience a different culture, allowing for a cultural and academic learning process that helped her to confront her own expectations and broaden her understanding of cultural diversity.

4.12.1 The Interview

This interview explores the academic mobility experience of a German participant during his stay in Ecuador, talking about topics related to culture, cultural identity, academic and social adaptation, intercultural communication and personal learning.

The interviewee describes culture as a set of elements that identify people according to the place where they grow up and the traditions they share, he also reflects on cultural identity as a dynamic process that transforms over time, especially in contemporary societies such as Germany, where cultural diversity and migratory processes have modified traditional notions of national identity.

Throughout the interview, the differences between the German and Ecuadorian university systems are examined, as well as the challenges posed by the language barrier and the strategies used to integrate into the environment, from perceptions of academic relationships, group work, university norms and social dynamics between students and teachers.

4.12.2 Narrative Body

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewee defines culture as a set of elements that allow people to be described and understood according to the context in which they grow up and that culture is deeply linked to the history, traditions and experiences shared by a society, as well as mentioning in his words, "culture is what describes people who live in different places, something you can relate to and grew up with." (EUA 1, personal communication, 2026).

During his experience of academic mobility in Ecuador, he points out that one of the aspects that most caught his attention was the difference in the structure of university classes, since while at his university in Germany classes are usually held in auditoriums with more than one hundred students, at the University of Cuenca he found smaller groups of

approximately twenty to thirty students. which generated a closer academic environment. It also mentions that compulsory attendance at classes was a significant difference with respect to the European education system.

Another important aspect of her experience was the language barrier, where she explains that most of the classes were taught in Spanish, which represented a major challenge for her academic and social adaptation process, even communication with classmates and teachers was possible thanks to the support of some students who could translate or explain the contents. Although, he acknowledges that language limitation made it difficult to build deeper social relationships with local students, as much of his interactions were with people who spoke English or with other international students.

Despite these difficulties, the interviewee said that the experience was enriching and transformative and describes it as "an exciting, new and challenging experience at the same time", highlighting that it allowed him to broaden his cultural perspective and learn about new ways of teaching within the architectural discipline (EUA 1, personal communication, 2026).

4.12.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 13

Results of the Interview EUA 1.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Personal trajectory and context of mobility</p> <p>It analyzes the origin of the interviewee's mobility experience, including their previous training, motivations and expectations before the trip.</p>	<p>He participated in an academic mobility program between a German university and the University of Cuenca, motivated by his interest in knowing Latin America and experiencing a different culture, his academic stay was developed for a semester, allowing him to temporarily integrate into the Ecuadorian university dynamics and learn about other forms of teaching within his discipline.</p>
<p>First contacts and culture shock</p> <p>Explore early experiences upon arrival in the country, initial difficulties, and perceived cultural differences.</p>	<p>The interviewee describes an initial feeling of disorientation when adapting to a different academic environment, since the differences in the language, the educational system and the university dynamics generated an initial process of adjustment, although they also aroused curiosity and enthusiasm to get to know a new culture.</p>
<p>Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience</p> <p>How cultural differences between countries are reflected in aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>From his experience, the interviewee identifies cultural differences in the form of academic organization, relationships with professors and group work dynamics, although he also observes similarities in respect for academic authority, he also perceives a university environment that is more collaborative than competitive among students.</p>
<p>Intercultural Communication and Language</p> <p>It discusses the role of language and communication styles in interacting with people from other cultures.</p>	<p>The Spanish language represented a barrier to their academic and social integration, since the difficulty in communicating fluently limited their interaction with local students to some extent, which led to interacting mainly with people who spoke English or with other international students.</p>
<p>Coping Strategies and Facilitators</p> <p>Identify personal, social, or institutional resources that help students adapt.</p>	<p>To adapt to the new context, the interviewee participated in social and cultural activities together with local students, such as excursions, parties and academic trips, facilitating the integration process and allowing him to establish social bonds within the university environment.</p>
<p>Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth</p> <p>It examines the personal changes and learnings that arise from the experience of mobility.</p>	<p>It contributed to broadening his vision of the world and to better understanding cultural differences, although the interviewee considers that his personal identity did not change radically, he recognizes that the experience allowed him to develop a greater sensitivity to other cultures and ways of life.</p>
<p>Recommendations and projection</p> <p>Suggestions and reflections on how to improve the processes of mobility and cultural adaptation for future students.</p>	<p>The participant recommends learning the local language before undertaking an academic exchange, as knowledge of the language facilitates social and cultural integration, as well as allowing for a deeper understanding of the university environment and the culture of the host country.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.12.4 Analysis

In relation to the interactions between students and professors, according to the power distance dimension, it is evident that there is respect for academic authority in both contexts, symbolic differences are also observed in the way teachers are addressed, for example, when using professional titles such as "architect" instead of "professor". These types of practices reflect particular cultural ways of recognizing academic authority and hierarchy within the educational setting.

In relation to the individualism and collectivism dimension, the interviewee perceives that academic work in Ecuador is carried out in a relatively collaborative environment, he says that, according to his experience, students tend to support each other during group work and there is a less competitive dynamic than in other academic contexts, coinciding with societies where cooperation and collective work have an important weight in social interactions.

The avoidance dimension of uncertainty can be observed in the differences that the interviewee identifies in the academic organization and university rules, since while in their university of origin students have greater autonomy and flexibility to attend classes or manage their learning, in the Ecuadorian context they perceive a greater structuring of the academic system. especially in aspects such as compulsory attendance. The dimension of masculinity versus femininity is also indirectly reflected in the emphasis that the interviewee observes on collective well-being and collaboration within the university environment. The lower presence of competition among students and the importance given to social relationships can be interpreted as traits associated with cultures that value cooperation and social harmony more than individual competence.

Finally, the long-term orientation dimension can be identified in the way in which the interviewee reflects on the learning obtained during his or her mobility experience, considers that his or her personal identity did not change radically, recognizes that the academic exchange broadened his or her cultural perspective and allowed him or her to develop new ways of understanding other societies and educational contexts.

4.13 German University Student 2 (EUA 2)

The person interviewed is a German university student of architecture who did an exchange in Ecuador between the end of 2024 and March 2025, his motivation to participate in this program was the desire to experience a different context from what he was used to, in addition to learning a new language as a personal challenge.

They are a person with an openness to intercultural experiences, influenced by their personal context, since they have a background from the Philippines, allowing them to have a greater willingness to adapt to new environments from scratch and understand different ways of life. On the academic side, his training in architecture influences his interest in observing cultural, social and urban aspects of the destination country.

During his stay in Ecuador, the interviewee not only focused on academics, but also on social and cultural experience, thus interacting with both local and international students, reflecting a challenging adaptation process, especially in the field of language, but also for significant learning in terms of human relationships and cultural differences.

4.13.1 The Interview

The interview addresses the participant's experience of academic mobility in Ecuador, emphasizing his process of cultural adaptation, his perceptions of the differences between Germany and Ecuador and the challenges faced during his time in the country.

Topics such as initial culture shock, language difficulties, differences in education systems, and forms of social interaction are highlighted. It also tells how the social environment and the support of other people played a key role in her adaptation process, thus ending with a reflection on her experience in a general way, describing it as positive and enriching, and provides recommendations for future students who wish to carry out an academic exchange in Ecuador.

4.13.2 Narrative Body

At the beginning, the participant defines culture as "the culmination of traditions, expectations and experiences of a society" and cultural identity as that which allows people to differentiate themselves and generate a sense of belonging, directly linking them to the processes of intercultural adaptation analyzed. Regarding her mobility experience, she mentions that her main motivation was to learn Spanish and live a different experience, noting that she was looking for "some kind of adventure" (personal communication, 2025), although one of the biggest challenges was the language, because her initial level did not allow her to fully understand the classes, making her academic participation difficult (EUA 2, personal communication, 2026).

The interviewee also highlights differences in social interaction, saying that in Ecuador people are more open and willing to engage in deeper conversations than in Germany, saying: "people seem to be more open to talking about things that really matter (EUA 2, personal communication, 2026) also implying the closeness in the relationship between students and teachers, indicating that he was surprised that they were "so close and friendly", in contrast to Germany, where there is "more distance and formality".

Highlighting the point of adaptation, he emphasizes that social support was fundamental, indicating that "the people I was with were what helped me adapt the most."

(EUA 2, personal communication, 2026). Showing the importance of social support and interpersonal networks in the processes of intercultural adaptation, a central element in this research.

4.13.3 Table of Thematic Axes

Table 14

Results of the U.S. Interview 2.

Thematic axis	Contribution
<p>Personal trajectory and context of mobility</p> <p>It analyzes the origin of the interviewee's mobility experience, including their previous training, motivations and expectations before the trip.</p>	<p>The interviewee's participation in an academic exchange program motivated mainly by experiencing a completely different environment and learning a new language, it is necessary to emphasize that his decision does not respond only to academic interests, but also to a personal search for change, adventure and intercultural growth. This element is key to the degree work, as it shows that academic mobility not only implies academic training, but also processes of personal transformation that influence adaptation.</p>
<p>First contacts and culture shock</p> <p>Explore early experiences upon arrival in the country, initial difficulties, and perceived cultural differences.</p>	<p>The first weeks demonstrate a culture shock related to the perception of security and ignorance of the environment, as he describes its arrival as shocking, generating a bit of fear, disorientation and isolation, evidencing how contextual factors (such as safety or the urban environment) directly influence the initial phase of adaptation, confirming that culture shock.</p>
<p>Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience</p> <p>How cultural differences between countries are reflected in aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>Regarding the power distance, a closer and less hierarchical relationship between students and teachers is perceived in Ecuador compared to Germany, on the other hand, in the individualism vs collectivism dimension, greater social openness and willingness to interpersonal bond is observed in Ecuador, less long-term planning is also perceived in some Ecuadorian students.</p>
<p>Intercultural Communication and Language</p> <p>It discusses the role of language and communication styles in interacting with people from other cultures.</p>	<p>The interviewee reports that his low level of Spanish hindered his academic understanding and participation in classes, although language learning took place through social interaction, evidencing that intercultural communication not only depends on linguistic knowledge, but also on the social context.</p>
<p>Coping Strategies and Facilitators</p> <p>Identify personal, social, or institutional resources that help students adapt.</p>	<p>The adaptation process was mainly facilitated by the support of classmates and friends, both local and international, constant contact with people and the willingness of some teachers to help were also key factors, demonstrating that intercultural adaptation is not an individual process, but a collective one, where support networks play a very important role.</p>
<p>Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth</p> <p>It examines the personal changes and learnings that arise from the experience of mobility.</p>	<p>Although the interviewee mentions that his way of seeing other cultures did not change so much due to previous experiences, but he can evidence a development in his ability to adapt and understand other cultures, thanks to facing challenges and learning to communicate in another language, this axis contributes to the degree work by showing that intercultural learning can be progressive and does not always imply a drastic change. but a broadening of perspectives.</p>
<p>Recommendations and projection</p> <p>Suggestions and reflections on how to improve the processes of mobility and cultural adaptation for future students.</p>	<p>He recommends future students to learn Spanish before traveling, establish social networks and get to know the context, especially in terms of safety, he also mentions that it is important to take advantage of the cultural experience, travel and interact with local people.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

4.13.4 Analysis

In this interview, several dimensions of Hofstede's model are identified, such as the Power Distance that is manifested when the interviewee contrasts with the higher level of formality observed in Germany, highlighting that teachers were closer and friendlier, which shows less rigidity in academic hierarchies and more horizontal interaction. Regarding individualism vs collectivism, a duality is mentioned, since at the academic level some students focus on individual objectives, however, in the social sphere they identify a greater closeness and willingness to generate more meaningful bonds, opening up to deep conversations, this reflects more collectivist traits in interpersonal relationships in Ecuador, in contrast to a more individualistic and reserved German culture.

According to the avoidance of uncertainty, there are initial difficulties that it experiences in the face of the lack of clear organization in the Ecuadorian academic system, for which it mentions problems in the structuring of subjects, schedules and administrative processes, contrasting with the more structured systems in Germany. In relation to the dimension of long-term vs. short-term orientation, it is perceived that several Ecuadorian students are more focused on the present and on fulfilling immediate tasks, rather than on strategic planning for the future compared to Germany who tend to have long-term goals, such as career building or professional development.

On the other hand, the dimension of masculinity vs femininity is observed that in the Ecuadorian context there is a greater value of social relationships, the enjoyment of free time and interpersonal closeness, for example the fact of spending more time outside, socializing and sharing activities such as dancing or traveling, this can be associated with characteristics of cultures more oriented towards the "feminine". where quality of life, well-being and human relationships are prioritized over strict competition or individual performance.

To conclude, the dimension of indulgence vs. restriction, the interviewee mentions that people enjoy more free time, spend more time in open spaces and express their emotions more directly, showing a more indulgent culture, where there is greater emotional expression and enjoyment, in contrast to more restricted contexts such as Germany.

4.14 Volunteers

This section collects the experiences of two participants who, although they are not part of academic student exchange programs, contribute significantly to this study. Both participants with their trajectories in volunteer contexts involve processes of cultural

adaptation that are relevant to the analysis, since they face similar dynamics of intercultural interaction, learning and adjustment to new social environments as the other participants. That is why their testimonies allow us to broaden the understanding of the phenomenon studied, offering complementary points of view that enrich the analysis beyond the strictly academic field, responding to the intention of capturing the diversity of experiences of cultural adaptation, knowing that this process is not only limited to formal contexts of student mobility, but also manifests itself in other spaces of cultural exchange.

4.15 German Volunteer 1 (VA 1)

The interviewee is a young German woman who, after finishing her secondary studies, decided to volunteer in Ecuador as part of an exchange program. He is currently working at the Pumapungo Museum, where he has functions in the tourist area and in the maintenance of green spaces.

Their motivation is based on personal benefit and social-cultural contribution. Throughout her experience, the interviewee has built social networks with both other volunteers and local people, especially through sports and community activities, thus opening up to new experiences and an active willingness to integrate into the culture to which she arrived, which is key in her cultural adaptation process

4.15.1 Narrative Body

The participant defines culture as "the language of people, how they behave in everyday life" showing communication and daily interactions. When comparing Germany and Ecuador, he highlights clear differences in emotional expression, mentioning that in Ecuador "people talk more and also show emotions more", while in Germany they are more contained (VA 1, personal communication, 2026).

He also acknowledges that "the thing with the times... it is a little difficult", since he comes from a highly specific context, but over time he manages to adapt by understanding that "I cannot change anything", evidencing a progressive adjustment to cultural norms different from those he knows (VA 1, personal communication, 2026).

In the workplace, he says that in the work he finds that in Ecuador it is characterized by greater flexibility and less structured planning, mentioning that activities are organized "day by day" and not under planning. In relation to the language, he represented an important barrier, saying that "at the beginning it is a little more difficult for me to communicate", but that over time he managed to adapt by relating the vocabulary to his work environment, he

also mentioned a positive and relaxed mentality in the face of the change of culture, saying "I don't need so much stress... everything is going to work." (VA 1, personal communication, 2026).

4.15.2 Analysis

In the first instance, the Power Distance is evidenced by the fact that decisions are made by an authority figure and executed by the rest of the team. This reflects an acceptance of more marked hierarchies compared to contexts where decisions are more participatory.

Regarding the individualism vs. collectivism dimension, the participant perceives that the work in Ecuador is developed in a more collective way, highlighting that the activities are organized in a community and collaborative way. This contrasts with more individualistic contexts such as Germany, where responsibilities are usually more delimited. This difference directly influences their adaptation process, as it involves adjusting to new forms of social and work interaction.

The uncertainty avoidance dimension is also key in their experience. The interviewee comes from a context with high planning and structure, while in Ecuador she perceives greater flexibility and less formal organization. This initially generates discomfort, but later becomes a learning experience, as it manages to adapt to a more unpredictable and less rigid environment.

Regarding the masculinity vs. femininity dimension, it can be interpreted that Ecuadorian culture, from its perception, is more oriented towards values related to well-being and quality of life, evidenced by the lower work pressure and the importance of personal time. This is in contrast to a more performance- and efficiency-oriented culture, such as Germany's, where work can extend beyond working hours.

Finally, the dimension of long-term vs. short-term orientation is reflected when you have learned to reduce stress and live more flexibly with a less rigid view of time and more focused on the present.

4.16 German Volunteer 2 (VA 2)

The interviewee is a young German woman who decided to volunteer in Ecuador for a year after finishing her secondary education in Germany. The motivation she had to carry out this cultural exchange was initially related to the interest in ecological projects and that led her to choose Ecuador as a destination, although when she was here, she ended up working in educational contexts, specifically in a kindergarten.

Her experience is marked by a complex adaptation process, with moments of culture shock, frustration and personal growth, she also faces differences in social norms, work dynamics and forms of interaction, which leads her to rethink her own perceptions and develop skills such as patience, independence and intercultural empathy.

4.16.1 Narrative Body

In the interview, at the beginning the interviewee mentions that for her culture encompasses: "food, manners, tradition... society, rules, everything", which reflects a comprehensive vision, in the same way, he defines cultural identity as an element that "shapes how you are as a person... your values, personality traits, everything." (VA 2, personal communication, 2026).

She recognizes that language is a central factor, saying, "language is really, really important" as it directly influences his ability to socialize and build relationships, she even mentions that his personality was affected by the language barrier: "people perceive me so differently... It seems that I am very shy... but in reality, I am not.", evidencing how intercultural communication impacts perceived identity, it also talks about how language not only fulfills a communicative function, but also identity, since it conditions the way in which a person is perceived and how they perceive themselves (VA 2, personal communication, 2026).

The interviewee describes her experience as a process of "up and down and chaotic", marking moments of enthusiasm and difficulty.

On the other hand, he also mentions that he learned to understand that cultural differences are not right or wrong, but simply different and that it is necessary to "put yourself in another position" to understand them. She highlights that living as a foreigner allowed her to experience what it means to be constantly perceived as "the other", which generated greater empathy for other people (VA 2, personal communication, 2026).

4.16.2 Analysis

According to the power distance, it is evident in the perception of more hierarchical labor relations in Ecuador, since the interviewee mentions that employees show "a real big respect for their bosses." Regarding the individualism vs. collectivism dimension, an important difference is observed in family and social norms, and he mentions that he is surprised by the family control over the personal lives of young people, which reflects a more collectivist orientation in Ecuador, where the family has a stronger role in decision-making.

Regarding the avoidance of uncertainty, she perceives strict institutional norms within her organization, as rigid rules, indicating a high level of control and regulation, although at the same time she mentions certain contradictions in the application of norms, which generates confusion in her adaptation process. The dimension of long-term vs. short-term orientation, the interviewee is surprised to notice that in the Ecuadorian context, goals such as marriage and family are highly valued from an early age, while in her culture these priorities may be different and more oriented to individual or professional projects.

In relation to the degree work, the interview confirms that cultural adaptation is a dynamic process that involves not only the learning of external norms, but also an internal transformation, developing greater intercultural awareness, empathy and cultural relativism, key elements in adaptation models such as Berry's.

4.17.2 Integrated Results

Table 15

Integrated results of all interviewees.

Hofstede Dimension	Main results	Differences by group
Power Distance	In all the interviews carried out, it can be seen that, in Germany, although there are clear hierarchical structures, especially in university structures, a more direct and less mediated interaction between students and authorities of the institution can be observed. On the other hand, in Ecuador a more visible hierarchy is maintained at the institutional level, but accompanied by closer interpersonal relationships than in Germany, that is, more relational, where respect is expressed through closeness. On the other hand, the results show that the perception of authority also varies according to educational level.	<p>Ecuadorians in Germany: They perceive a system where the relationship with authority is more direct and autonomous.</p> <p>Germans in Ecuador: They mention a combination of hierarchy: Strict rules, but with closeness to teachers, which can be contradictory.</p> <p>Professionals: they emphasize that the clash is not the hierarchy itself, but the forms of institutional communication between levels.</p> <p>Voluntary: There is closeness, but centralized decisions in the workplace.</p>
Individualism vs. collectivism	In interviews, it is repeated that the German system requires a high level of autonomy, both socially and academically speaking. Students must organize their own curriculum, decide schedules and assume responsibility, this generates initial difficulty for people who are not used to it. In Ecuador, a more guided system is observed, where institutional structures accompany the academic process, in addition, several interviewees pointed out that Ecuadorian students tend to form groups with other Latinos, showing that collectivism works as an adaptation strategy, but also as a barrier to complete cultural integration.	<p>Ecuadorians in Germany: they develop support networks with other Latinos to compensate for the lack of institutional accompaniment, facilitating emotional adaptation, but limiting cultural integration.</p> <p>Germans in Ecuador: find faster social integration due to the openness and support of the cultural environment.</p> <p>Professionals: identify social networks as a key factor of adaptation.</p> <p>Volunteers: they highlight the importance of the group and the community in their volunteer experience.</p>
Uncertainty avoidance	Several participants mention that in Germany the pressure of having to meet high expectations, such as punctuality, organization and self-learning, can be stressful, knowing that planning and individual responsibility is paramount, generating initial anxiety in international students. On the other hand, in Ecuador, the German interviewees highlight the flexibility in times and rules, mentioning situations such as meetings that change schedules or activities that do not follow a strict planning, they also describe experiences where plans are delayed by several hours, which generates a perception of lack of control, thus evidencing that uncertainty does not disappear. but changes form: in Germany it is associated with individual responsibility, while in Ecuador with the unpredictability of the environment.	<p>Ecuadorians in Germany: they experience stress due to the need for self-management and the high demands of the system.</p> <p>Germans in Ecuador: they feel frustration in the face of informality and the difficulty in planning.</p> <p>Professionals: emphasize the need for prior preparation to reduce shock.</p> <p>Voluntary: they identify flexible planning as a challenge in the workplace.</p>
Masculinity vs femininity	The results some differences in cultural priorities, for example, in Germany, the participants highlight a focus on performance, efficiency and the	Ecuadorians in Germany: they perceive greater academic pressure and the need to meet high standards that are required of them.

	<p>fulfillment of objectives, where the student is responsible for their performance, on the other hand, in Ecuador a greater importance is observed in social relationships and well-being, even some interviewees mention that in Germany there is greater academic pressure and high expectations, while in Ecuador a more relaxed environment is perceived, where social relationships and emotional well-being are prioritized. On the other hand, in some cases, experiences related to social norms are mentioned, such as strict rules in educational institutions, which reflect clear expectations about behavior. This suggests that the differences are not absolute, but respond to different ways of prioritizing academic success over social life.</p>	<p>Germans in Ecuador: they value the social approach, cooperation and openness to help.</p> <p>Professionals: They identify that in Germany it is a culture oriented towards achievement, and the fulfillment of objectives, while in Ecuador well-being and interpersonal relationships are prioritized. This influences how students approach their academic responsibilities.</p> <p>Volunteers: In Ecuador there is greater closeness, flexibility and emphasis on coexistence, in contrast to a more structured and performance-oriented style in Germany.</p>
Long-term vs. short-term orientation	<p>In the interviews, it is evident that Germany promotes a long-term vision, in which students must plan their academic career autonomously, that is, a flexible but strategic academic planning. It is mentioned that students know that they must complete certain subjects, but they decide when, how, and in what order. In Ecuador, on the other hand, the system is more structured and guided, which reduces the need for long-term individual planning, and is more oriented to the present and to immediate resolution. This difference generates an important change in the way students make decisions, since they must move from a guided system to an autonomous one.</p>	<p>Ecuadorians in Germany: they face the challenge of planning their academic career independently.</p> <p>Germans in Ecuador: perceive less structured planning, but value flexibility.</p> <p>Professionals: they emphasize the importance of prior preparation.</p> <p>Voluntary: they observe differences in the organization of activities.</p>
Indulgence vs Restraint	<p>In Ecuador, participants talk about a more open and expressive culture, where it is easy to socialize and bond, i.e. a more forgiving culture, characterized by expressiveness, closeness, and spontaneity. In contrast, in Germany there is a more reserved society, where relationships take longer to develop. In addition, some interviewees mention differences in communication styles, noting that Germans are more direct, while in Ecuador communication tends to be more indirect, which can lead to misunderstandings.</p>	<p>Ecuadorians in Germany: they experience difficulties in integrating socially due to cultural reserve.</p> <p>Germans in Ecuador: they integrate easily, but face difficulties with indirect communication.</p> <p>Professional: differences in communication styles stand out.</p> <p>Voluntary: they highlight social openness as a key facilitator.</p>

Note. This table contains results found based on the answers to the interview. Own elaboration.

Taking into account the integrated results of the interviews, it can be seen that the cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model greatly influence the processes of intercultural adaptation between Germany and Ecuador, it could even be said that these effects do not occur in isolation, but interact with each other and are presented differently depending on the academic context, social and the profile of the participants.

In the first place, there is the dimension of power distance, where it shows that culture shock is not only related to the level of hierarchy, but also to the way in which it is exercised and perceived, for example, in Germany, the participants highlight a more direct interaction with academic authorities, where students can communicate with professors without the need for intermediaries and assume a more autonomous position within the system. showing a degree of respect, it could even be said that due to the number of students there is not so much close relationship in the university environment. In Ecuador, more hierarchical structures are identified at the institutional level, but accompanied by closer interpersonal relationships, which generates different interpretations of the role of authority in each context. This combination generates different perceptions of authority: while some Ecuadorian students in Germany experience insecurity in not knowing how to interact in a more direct system, Germans in Ecuador perceive a mixture of strict rules and closeness that can be contradictory in how they interact.

In the dimension of individualism vs collectivism, it could be said that it is one of the most decisive in the adaptation processes, since Germany presents a highly individualistic model, where the student is expected to manage their own learning, organize their time and make academic decisions independently, representing a challenge for Ecuadorian students. who come from more guided contexts and with greater institutional accompaniment. According to several students interviewed, they develop adaptation strategies based on the formation of support networks with other Latin American students, which facilitates emotional adaptation, but can also limit complete cultural integration, contrasting the Germans in Ecuador who highlight the ease of social integration due to openness and a sense of community. evidencing the role of collectivism as a facilitator in this adaptation process.

In relation to uncertainty avoidance, the results show that this dimension is shown in a complex way in both contexts. In Germany, although there is a clear institutional structure, the system requires high levels of self-organization, individual responsibility, and compliance with rules, which can lead to stress for international students. Several participants mention the need to manage their academic load by themselves and adapt to

high expectations of punctuality and performance, but in Ecuador, greater flexibility in rules and times is observed, which reduces structural pressure, but reveals a different form of uncertainty associated with the unpredictability of the environment, such as schedule changes or less planning. This shows that uncertainty does not disappear, but changes shape according to the cultural context.

The dimension of masculinity vs. femininity allows us to analyze the differences in social values and cultural priorities, showing in the results that Germany presents a greater orientation towards performance, efficiency and the fulfillment of objectives, reflected in high academic standards and strong individual responsibility. In Ecuador, there is a greater appreciation of interpersonal relationships, well-being and coexistence. This difference is shown in the perception of the participants, where Ecuadorians in Germany experience greater academic pressure and Germans in Ecuador value the more social and collaborative environment, in addition the professionals highlight that these differences directly influence the way in which students face their responsibilities and their adaptation process.

Regarding long-term vs. short-term orientation, it is evident that Germany promotes a more strategic and future-oriented vision, where students must plan their academic career autonomously, deciding how and when to complete their studies, demonstrating that this flexibility implies greater individual responsibility. In Ecuador, the academic system is more structured and guided, which reduces the need for long-term planning on the part of the student. This difference generates a change in the way in which Ecuadorian students must adapt to the German context, developing organizational and projection skills that were not so necessary in Ecuador and Germans in Ecuador perceive less structured planning, although they value the ability to adapt and solve problems immediately.

Finally, the dimension of indulgence vs. restriction shows clear differences in emotional expression, social life, and communication styles. Ecuador is characterized by a more expressive, open and socially oriented culture, which facilitates the creation of bonds and integration, and in Germany it is perceived more as a more reserved society, where interpersonal relationships take longer to develop. Interviewees highlight differences in communication styles, noting that Germans tend to be more direct, while in Ecuador communication is more indirect, which can lead to misunderstandings.

The results allow us to observe that the intercultural adaptation between Germany and Ecuador is a dynamic and multidimensional process, since cultural differences not only

generate challenges, but also opportunities for learning and personal development in each one. It can also be said that adaptation is not homogeneous, but depends on the group of origin, the strategies of each individual and the context in which the experience takes place. In this way, it is confirmed that Hofstede's cultural dimensions constitute a useful tool to analyze these processes, but they must be complemented with individual and contextual factors to fully understand the complexity of intercultural adaptation.

CONCLUSIONS

This research helped to show that culture has a decisive influence on the processes of adaptation in both Germany and Ecuador, especially in academic contexts, confirming that the differences in the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede directly influence the way in which individuals perceive, interpret and respond to new sociocultural realities. In this sense, the research question is answered by demonstrating that adaptation is not a linear or homogeneous process, but much more dynamic and conditioned by specific cultural factors, where dimensions such as power distance, individualism-collectivism and the avoidance of uncertainty have a significant impact on the integration of students.

In relation to the general objective, it was possible to analyze how Hofstede's cultural dimensions influence the adaptation processes, identifying that the structural differences between both cultures generate both barriers and opportunities, for example, the shorter Powe Distance in Germany translates into more horizontal relationships between students and teachers, which can generate initial insecurity in Ecuadorian students accustomed to more hierarchical structures such as the interviewees mention. In addition, greater German individualism contrasts with the more relational and collective Ecuadorian approach, affecting the way in which social bonds and support networks are built that are fundamental for adaptation.

Regarding the first specific objective, the theoretical analysis confirmed that Hofstede's model remains a useful tool for understanding cultural differences, as noted by Ouyang et al. (2025), who highlight its applicability in educational contexts. However, its limitations are also evident, in line with McSweeney (2015), who criticizes its static nature and proposes understanding culture as a dynamic phenomenon. This is reinforced by the contributions of Tang & Zhang (2023), who suggest complementing this model with concepts such as cultural intelligence, highlighting that adaptation does not solely depend on cultural differences, but also on the individual's ability to manage them.

Regarding the second specific objective, the experiences analyzed allow us to clearly evidence Berry's acculturation model, for example, several participants did not abandon their Ecuadorian cultural identity, but they did incorporate German practices such as punctuality or academic autonomy, which corresponds to an integration strategy. Although there were some cases, they reflected moments of separation, where students preferred to relate only to other Latin Americans in the initial stages, which made it difficult for them to adapt to the

new context itself. This fact shows that acculturation strategies are not homogeneous and can vary over time, Therefore, it was observed that the integration strategy is the most effective, allowing elements of the culture of origin to be maintained while adopting aspects of the receiving culture.

On the other hand, the process described by Kim (2016) in their stress-adaptation-growth model is clearly evidenced in the reports, where participants initially go through a phase of initial stress manifested in anxiety, frustration or language difficulties, second, an adjustment phase where they begin to understand social and academic norms, finally, a personal growth, for example, a participant mentioned that at the beginning he felt "limited" by the language, but later he managed to develop with greater confidence, which shows the process of progressive adaptation described by this author.

Similarly, the findings reflect the concept of culture shock mentioned by Adler (2008), who understands it as a transformation in the individual's identity itself. This can be especially evident in situations where the language limits personal expression, generating misconceptions about personality, which directly affects social interaction as mentioned by some interviewees. In this context, the intercultural competence defined by Aneas (2005) also becomes important, as those participants who demonstrated greater openness, communication skills, and willingness to learn adapted more quickly, thus showing that adaptation depends not only on the context but also on individual capabilities.

Regarding intercultural communication, the results clearly confirm Hall's theory when Ecuadorian students perceived German communication as too direct, even cold, while Germans in Ecuador valued closeness and the emotional component in interactions, this reflects the difference between low-context cultures such as Germany and high-context cultures such as Ecuador. In addition, differences were evidenced in the perception of time, where Germany punctuality is strict, showing that it has a greater tendency to a monochronic time and Ecuador has greater flexibility with a more polychronic time, which generated initial tensions in adaptation and influencing the academic organization and expectations about punctuality and planning.

On the other hand, the results can also be interpreted with the GLOBE model, where dimensions such as performance orientation that explains the perception of high academic demand in Germany, where the interviewees indicated that they felt greater pressure to meet high standards and demonstrate individual results, unlike the human orientation that is

reflected in the Ecuadorian context through the willingness to help, cooperation and emphasis on interpersonal relationships, aspects positively valued by German students.

Collectivism within the group is evidenced in the importance that Ecuadorian students give to support networks and a sense of belonging, while in Germany there is less dependence on the group and greater individual autonomy. There is also the dimension of assertiveness that manifests itself in more direct communication in the German context, as opposed to more moderate communication in Ecuador. Finally, although less explicitly, gender equality is perceived in more equitable academic structures in Germany, which is also part of the students' adaptation environment.

The contributions of Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner allow us to deepen the analysis, such as the dimension of universalism vs. particularism, where it was evident that in Germany a strict application of norms predominates, while in Ecuador there is greater flexibility depending on the context or the relationship with the teacher, in terms of individualism vs. communitarianism, Germany promotes autonomy, while in Ecuador group support is prioritized. Similarly, the neutral vs. affective dimension is reflected in a more contained communication in Germany versus a more expressive one in Ecuador, which generated initial perceptions of coldness.

In the specific vs. diffuse category, it is observed that Germany clearly separates the academic from the personal, while in Ecuador these relationships are closer compared to Germany. In achievement vs. affiliation, Germany values individual performance, while in Ecuador relationships also play a role. In terms of sequential vs. synchronous time, Germany has greater punctuality and planning, compared to Ecuadorian flexibility and, finally, in internal vs. external management, Germany shows greater control of the environment, while in Ecuador adaptation to circumstances predominates, influencing the integration process.

Regarding the third specific objective, it can be seen that in the results the cultural dimensions with the greatest impact on the adaptation process between Germany and Ecuador are the power distance, individualism-collectivism and the avoidance of uncertainty, since they directly influence academic interaction and the way of facing new contexts. A clear example is found in the shorter distance from power in Germany generates more horizontal relationships with teachers, which initially causes insecurity in Ecuadorian students accustomed to more hierarchical structures, in addition to the greater German individualism, which makes it difficult to build support networks for students from more

relational contexts and finally, the aversion to uncertainty, where it was evidenced in the difficulties faced by students when they did not have clear instructions in some academic activities in Germany and several participants pointed out that this generated confusion and anxiety for them not knowing exactly what was expected of them, showing how the lack of structure affects their security in new contexts.

However, other dimensions also affect adaptation, such as masculinity that is evidenced in the higher perceived academic demand in Germany, unlike a more cooperative environment in Ecuador, long-term orientation is reflected in more structured planning in the German context and indulgence vs. restriction influences the form of social interaction. Perceiving greater expressiveness in Ecuador compared to a more contained communication that exists in Germany. Taken together, these results show that adaptation cannot be explained from a single dimension, but from the interaction of all of them, configuring a dynamic and multidimensional process.

This work contributes to the field of intercultural studies by demonstrating that culture not only conditions adaptation processes but can also become a resource for learning and personal transformation. This is understood in light of the concept of third culture, which, according to Del Campo Urbano (2005), emerges as an intermediate space that allows for the articulation of different forms of knowledge and the overcoming of traditional divisions between disciplines. In this sense, the results show that the adaptation processes between Germany and Ecuador do not merely involve adjusting to a new culture, but rather the construction of new ways of thinking and acting that integrate elements from both. Similarly, from Álvarez's (2004) perspective, the third culture is configured as a dynamic space for dialog and knowledge construction, which is reflected in students who, based on their intercultural experience, develop a broader, more flexible, and interdisciplinary vision. Therefore, it is concluded that successful adaptation does not solely depend on reducing cultural differences, but on the ability to integrate those differences and transform them into learning opportunities through the development of intercultural competencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings obtained in this research on the adaptation processes between Germany and Ecuador, the following recommendations are proposed, both at the institutional and personal levels, with the aim of improving the mobility experience and facilitating a more effective integration in a new cultural context.

In the first place, it is recommended that institutions strengthen the point of linguistic preparation of students before their academic mobility, as well as evidenced by the results, language not only fulfills a communication function, but also directly influences the construction of identity and the social perception of the individual. For example, several participants mentioned that by not fully mastering the language, they were perceived as more shy or less participatory, thus affecting their academic and social integration, which is why it is not enough just to teach the language in a technical way, but it is necessary to incorporate practical dimensions of language, such as daily use, cultural expressions and communication styles specific to each context such as interpersonal communicative competence and competence communicative academic intercultural.

It is also essential that institutions promote cultural contextualization processes prior to mobility, at least one year in advance, in addition to providing general information about the destination country, it is also necessary to explain social norms, academic dynamics and cultural expectations, in the same way to promote an anticipated and comprehensive preparation, since cultural adaptation should not be understood as a spontaneous process. but as one that requires planning, for that it is necessary orientation programs, intercultural workshops and testimonies of students who have already lived the experience can be effective strategies.

From a personal perspective, it is recommended to develop an attitude of openness and understanding towards the other, so many of the difficulties in adaptation arise from interpretations based on one's own culture, a clear example are behaviors that can be perceived as cold or distant in Germany actually respond to different cultural norms about communication and social interaction than one's own culture, Therefore, it is necessary to understand that there is no single "correct" way to act, to reduce prejudices and facilitate integration.

It is important to recognize that cultural adaptation is a process that depends largely on the individual, although the environment influences, the personal willingness to learn, observe and adjust is the key, so participants who adopted a proactive attitude such as making an effort to speak the language, participate in social activities or step out of their comfort zone, they were able to achieve a more effective adaptation.

To conclude, it is recommended to develop intercultural competencies that allow not only to adapt, but also to integrate different cultural perspectives. In line with the concept of third culture, this implies going beyond simple adaptation and building a new way of understanding the world based on the combination of experiences. For example, students who manage to integrate German efficiency and planning with Ecuadorian flexibility and warmth develop valuable skills both personally and professionally.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Sample Fact Sheet: Interview

Fact Sheet: Interview
<p style="text-align: center;">Influence of Culture on Adaptation Processes based on Hofstede's Models. Case: Germany - Ecuador</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET</p> <p>The purpose of this research is to analyze the influence of the cultural dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede's model on the processes of intercultural adaptation between Germany and Ecuador, especially in academic, educational and international mobility contexts. The research starts from the need to understand how cultural variables such as distance from power, individualism vs. collectivism, avoidance of uncertainty, long-term orientation and indulgence influence experiences of adaptation, integration and cultural shock. Part of the project includes semi-structured interviews, through which it will be possible to delve into the identification of the research problem, immersion, data collection, qualitative analysis, interpretation of results and preparation of the final report of the thesis.</p> <p>Keywords</p> <p>Adaptation, Culture shock, Communication, Interculturality, Hofstede's model, Student mobility.</p> <p>In this context, spaces for dialogue will be generated where academic actors, students, professionals and people who have lived adaptation processes between Germany and Ecuador will be represented, in this way it will be possible to understand how cultural differences influence intercultural communication, social and academic integration, and the construction of intercultural experiences. It will work mainly with in-depth interviews that will inquire about personal experiences, cultural perceptions, difficulties, adaptation strategies and reflections on the process lived, that is why it will seek to interview Ecuadorians who have resided in Germany, as well as German people who have experienced adaptation processes in Ecuador, both in academic and cultural fields. work or social. Additionally, the research presents a literature review through an analysis of theories of cultural adaptation, intercultural communication, student mobility and contemporary criticisms of Hofstede's model, in order to contextualize the empirical findings within the corresponding theoretical framework. In addition, it is expected that the interviews will allow for an in-depth dialogue that will lead to the collection of narratives, anecdotal experiences, personal reflections, and cultural interpretations that represent a contribution to the academic community in the field of intercultural studies and international relations.</p> <p>The compilation of documentary research will then be revised to conclude with the writing and editing of the thesis "INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON ADAPTATION PROCESSES BASED ON HOFSTED'S CULTURAL MODELS. CASE: GERMANY - ECUADOR"</p> <p>Through this document, we extend to you (name of the interviewee) the invitation to participate in an interview that will take place on the day (day, month, year), at (time of the interview), in mode (face-to-face/virtual) at (place of the interview/the Zoom platform), as previously coordinated.</p> <p>We guarantee that the information obtained by this means will be collected confidentially. The data will be carefully analyzed and will be published with the authorization of the interviewee, who may review the data prior to the publication of the thesis, to express his agreement with the material to be published. Individuals participating in the research will have the opportunity to learn about drafts of research products that contain any conclusions drawn from the data they have provided. Upon learning of these drafts, they will have the opportunity to request modifications to their interventions.</p> <p>In case of disagreement with parts or all of the interview or the data to be published, the interviewee may refrain from participating and the part corresponding to the data collected and the information will be removed from the publication. Likewise, the interviewee may refrain from answering any question or requesting the withdrawal of information at any time during the duration of this investigation. A copy of the data collected and findings, if any, will be available for review by the interviewee upon request, and then the final results will be available with the publication of the research.</p> <p>It should be noted that only the designated team, that is, the team of teachers and the student in charge of this project will have access to the data collected.</p> <p>The duration of the interview is expected to be approximately 60 minutes.</p> <p>As for the devices that will be used for the conduct of the interview, the Zoom recording device and an additional recording device via cell phone will be used in order to guarantee the accurate transcription of the data. In addition, fundamental aspects of the interview will be noted.</p> <p>The interviewee may request that the recording devices be turned off at any time during the interview, if he or she deems it appropriate. The data collected will be further analysed by means of transcription. The data collected will be examined and the relevant information will be selected to be included in the research to be published.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Andrea Julianna Maldonado Molina Researcher E-mail: andrea.maldonado@es.uazuay.edu.ec Cel: 0989982703 Address: Calle de las Aldeas 11-95 and Vía San Miguel s/n Cuenca</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lcda. Mónica Martínez Sojos, Mgt Director Email: mmartinez@uazuay.edu.ec Phone: 0998470787 Address: Guangarcucho s/n Cuenca</p>
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Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form	
<p>We, Andrea Julianna Maldonado Molina and Mónica Martínez Sojos, want to make sure that the people interviewed as part of the degree work "Influence of Culture on Adaptation Processes based on Hofstede's Models. Case: Germany - Ecuador" are fully informed about the implications of participating. Please check the boxes below if you think you have all the relevant information. If not, please let us know.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I have read and understood the project information sheet. <input type="checkbox"/> I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. <input type="checkbox"/> I agree to participate in an interview. <input type="checkbox"/> I understand that the interview will take approximately 45 minutes, but it could be extended or shortened depending on my availability. <input type="checkbox"/> I am participating voluntarily. <input type="checkbox"/> I understand that I may refuse to answer any question, for any reason. <input type="checkbox"/> I understand that I may withdraw from the interview at any time, for any reason. <input type="checkbox"/> I agree to have the audio of my interview recorded. <input type="checkbox"/> I agree that the researcher takes notes during the interview. <input type="checkbox"/> I understand that my words may be quoted in academic papers, research reports, and other research results. <input type="checkbox"/> I understand that, although no real names will be published in the research results, given that the sample size of judicial interviewees is modest, there is a minimal chance that someone will be able to identify me. Researchers will take anonymization measures to reduce this possibility. <input type="checkbox"/> I understand that the information provided will be used exclusively for academic purposes. <input type="checkbox"/> I understand that I may request to withdraw from the project within 15 business days from this date by contacting the research team whose contact details are on the fact sheet. In such a case, my information will be removed and destroyed. 	
Participant's Name	Signature
Date:	

Appendix C

Thematic Axes for Interviews

Thematic Axes for Interviews for Professionals

Thematic axes	Shaft Description	Axis Questions
Professional observation of cultural adaptation	It analyzes how professionals perceive and experience the process of cultural adaptation of students from an institutional perspective, identifying challenges, differences, and concrete cases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From your experience, what are the main cultural challenges that students face? • Do you notice clear differences between students in their adaptation process? • Could you tell me about a specific situation that you clearly remember, in which a student has had significant difficulties in adapting? • Tell me about a specific episode in which you have observed a significant cultural misunderstanding in the academic field. How did you intervene?
Culture, communication and the classroom	Examines the impact of cultural differences on communication within the classroom, including the role of language and other intercultural barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do cultural differences influence classroom dynamics? • To what extent does language proficiency facilitate integration or not? • Are there cultural barriers that go beyond the linguistic level?
Evaluating Hofstede's Model from Practice	It assesses the applicability of Hofstede's model in real-world contexts, considering how the culture of origin influences students' academic and social behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you describe a specific experience in which you have perceived that a student's country of origin clearly influenced their academic behavior or the way they interact? • When you receive students from different countries, how does prior knowledge about their cultural context influence how you anticipate or manage potential adaptation challenges? • Could you talk about situations in which a student's behavior does not affect their academic behavior? coincided with what is commonly attributed to their culture of origin? How do you understand these differences? • In your experience, what aspects of students' academic or social behavior seem to be most influenced by their cultural context of origin?
Institutional recommendations	It identifies strategies, policies and improvements needed in mobility programmes to facilitate effective intercultural integration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What institutional strategies work best to facilitate adaptation? • What aspects should be strengthened in mobility programmes or in intercultural preparation beforehand? • Do you think that mobility programmes adequately prepare students for culture shock? What would you recommend to avoid this? • What institutional strategies are most effective to make academic mobility a truly intercultural experience?

Thematic Axes for Interviews for students and volunteers

Thematic axis	Shaft Description	Axis Questions
Personal trajectory and context of mobility	It seeks to contextualize the student's experience in academic mobility, exploring their motivations, expectations, and the academic environment to which they were integrated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like you to tell me how your decision to study in Germany/Ecuador came about. What expectations did you have before traveling? • Could you briefly tell me about your experience of studying abroad or with foreign students? How would you describe the context you came to? • What motivated you to study in Germany/Ecuador? • How long have you been or have been in that academic context? • If you had to describe your experience in one word or phrase, what would it be and why?
First contacts and culture shock	It analyzes the first phases of adaptation, identifying initial experiences, difficulties and perceptions in the face of the new cultural environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were your first weeks in the country/institution? • Do you remember any situation that was particularly difficult or surprising to you? • What cultural aspects caught your attention the most at the beginning?
Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Everyday Experience	It connects students' empirical experience with the cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model, analyzing behaviors and perceptions in the academic environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you perceive the relationship between students and professors or older people? • Did you feel differences in the way you address authority figures? • How would you describe the way of working in a group? • Did you notice differences in the support between classmates or in university social life? • How did you perceive the system of rules, deadlines and academic organization? • How would you describe your attitude towards rules and compliance with rules?
Intercultural Communication and Language	It analyzes the role of language and communication styles in the process of academic and social adaptation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role did language play in your academic and social adaptation process? • Did you feel differences in communication styles? • Were there any cultural misunderstandings related to communication?
Coping Strategies and Facilitators	Identifies coping mechanisms, including personal strategies, resilience, and institutional or social support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What helped you most to adapt to the new context? • Did you receive institutional, academic or social support? • What strategies did you develop over time to feel more integrated?
Identity, intercultural learning and personal growth	It examines how the mobility experience influences the student's identity, cross-cultural learning and personal development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that this experience changed the way you see other cultures? How? • Were there any changes in your personal or academic identity? • What intercultural learning do you take away from this experience?
Recommendations and projection	It collects proposals to improve mobility programmes and reflects on the impact of the experience on the student.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you recommend to future students who want to study in Germany/Ecuador? • What could universities or mobility programmes improve? • Do you think that prior intercultural preparation is sufficient? • If you compare your "self" before and after the mobility, what differences do you find?

Appendix D

Transcript Cultural Adaptation Interviews

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Julianna Maldonado

Interviewee: Birgid Schwarz

Modality: Virtual, Zoom platform

Good afternoon, Birgid Schwarz. Thank you for accepting this meeting, this will be recorded. Okay, so first I will make some general questions. So yes, first is what is culture for you? A difficult question, what is culture for me? A lot of different traditions, way of behavior, common knowledge.

yes, this comes to my mind. Perfect, every answer is okay, it's correct. So I will continue with the next question.

What is cultural identity for you? Cultural identity, belonging to a group that shares, yes, basically common traditions, common experiences. Also, of course, the language is a big cultural issue. Okay.

yes, I think that's about it. Perfect. The next question is what do you think it means for a person to move to another country and start a new life there? What it means? This is a little difficult in English.

So I think, first of all, this feeling of feeling like a stranger, feeling uncertain. It is, I only know the German word, anstrengend, so it's a lot of energy. This is good.

Okay. So, in your opinion, how does living in another country contribute to a person's personal or professional development? How? yes, being among people with other traditions leads to the, it's difficult in English to say. When I go abroad, then I'm looked at as German.

And then I get to know what people think German means. And maybe they look at me in a way that I've never looked at myself. So they have a certain picture what German means to them.

And then I'm confronted with this picture and maybe I don't feel German. Sometimes you are not, as you say, conscious about your own behavior. This is a little bit like a mirror you look into.

The next question is what it means to be German for you? I'm sitting right, ah, jetzt. Now you move again. So, okay, try again.

Okay. What it means to be German for you? You mean in terms of what kind of behavior I think is German or my own Selbstbewusstsein? Selbstbewusstsein. yes, of course, I made the experience that being German in a lot of ways is an advantage.

yes, basically. Because not all, but a lot of people have a positive picture of Germany. yes, not all of them.

There is also a development over the last, I don't know, 40 years that I experienced. And of course, then I take advantage in their picture of Germany. And so I feel, then suddenly I feel proud being German.

Ja, oder Pünktlichkeit, Zuverlässigkeit, gute Autos, ja, this is also what I get. Oh, it's Mercedes, ha. Autos und Fußball, ja.

This is also very German. And I think people have trust in, I don't know, German products, German people. Okay, perfect.

So, right now I want you to tell me about your job or what are you doing in general? And where do the students come from? And tell me about you, so I can put like a biography. Probably what I do at the moment. yes.

Okay. For the past 10 years, I teach German as a foreign language for adults. I started in 2016.

And in those first years, I taught complete beginners German. So, on the language level A1 to A2. So, quite basic levels.

And in those first two to three years, the majority of the students, of course, came from Syria. yes, because this was the beginning of the war in Syria. And I had mainly male students and also from African countries, like, I don't know what it is in English, Eritrea.

And always from Afghanistan. This used to be a big group. And then I continued to the official integration classes that teach up to B1.

And this was quite a mixture of students, also from European countries, Eastern Europe, and then Turkish people. And, of course, for the last four years, I teach in higher level B2. And, of course, four years ago, I think it's tomorrow, four years ago, the Ukrainian war started.

And nowadays, the majority of my students are from Ukraine. Wow. Okay.

Thank you. Now, we will start with the more developed questions. yes.

Because I will try to understand. So, from your experience, what are the main cultural challenges that your students face when they are adapting to life in Germany? So, it means the German culture. So, one one major point is the bureaucracy.

They have a lot of paperwork to do. And they have, I think life in Germany means a lot of self-structure, self-management. yes, you have to.

yes. This is one major point. If they have children, it becomes even more challenging.

What they have to organize, to decide for their children. This is one major cultural challenge. And the other one is concerning the German classes.

A lot of people find life in Germany quite stressful because the expectations are quite high. They have to come on time. They have to do a lot of learning by themselves.

There's not so much support. And I think the social life, it would be the third point, the social life is not so close than in their countries. At least the Syrian people often complained about it.

Okay, interesting. So, the next question is, do you notice clear differences among students in their adaptation process? If yes, you can tell me one. You mean among students from different countries, like groups from different countries? Exactly.

yes, I would think that students from Syria or Afghanistan, for them it's more difficult to adapt than for people from the Ukraine. Okay. To me, it seems that they are much closer to us.

Okay. You mean the Ukraine people? Yes. Okay.

And why do you think? Because they have similar culture or they are good at adaptation? Or what do you think? yes, that's an interesting question. One, it seems so not important, but I think the climate plays a big role. yes.

So, the Ukrainian people, they are adapted to winter time, which is really difficult for Syrian and Afghanistan people, because it has consequences for the whole social life, so much. So, I can see quite clear differences. Perfect.

Could you tell me about a specific situation you clearly remember in which a student experienced significant adaptation difficulties? yes, this question I find a little bit difficult for me, because for me as a teacher, it is, I thought about that question, and for me it's difficult to to... To understand? No, not to understand, but to, let me think about the word. To differentiate or to limit what comes through culture and what is individual. yes, I have often, the more I look at the people as individuals, and I think some of the individuals have more problems to adapt than others.

For example, I had one student from Afghanistan, an older man, how old was he? Maybe around in his 40s, and he had difficulties in being tested, like he would, when I took tests, he would always cheat. Okay, okay, okay. I think it's, for him it was like, and I don't know if it was him as a person or more the cultural group of Afghanistan people. yes.

Interesting. He couldn't cope with the fact of not passing the exam, yes, so I think that was, yes. And at the beginning of my teaching career, I made this experience with young men from Eritrea.

They were very silent, did not really participate in class, and I was trying different methods to get them to talk and take part, but I was not successful, until one day when I brought a game where you could win or lose, and suddenly they would start learning and participate, yes. Interesting, okay. yes.

And I talked to one of the Eritrean boys, and he told me about their school culture, that they are not supposed to interact, yes. The teacher is like the boss, and the students have to stay silent, so he was not used to answer questions or, yes. I have a question about that.

Do you think in Germany that structure exists, or maybe is in a way that it's not like the professor is the boss and the students are like, yes, under? Do you think in Germany it's quite different, or what do you think? I think it's different in school. In university there is a hierarchy, yes. There is a clear hierarchy, yes.

But in school they try to be more on the same level, and participation and develop your own ideas, own methods is very much supported, yes, and is wanted, yes. Okay. Then in jobs maybe there is this hierarchy? It depends a little bit on the job and also on, I think, the personal attitude, yes.

But and it changed over the past decades, I would think, yes. Okay. So, I will continue with the next question.

Well, please describe a specific episode in which you observed a significant cultural misunderstanding in the classroom or daily life context, if you realize that. If not, then it's okay. yes.

Cultural misunderstanding, yes, I thought about that. I had one, yes, difficult situation.

But again, I'm not sure if it's more an individual problem with a woman from an Arab country. But it was more a conflict among these women. And but I did not experience it that often.

So, I would think it's more, it was more an individual problem of this woman, yes. So, no. Okay, perfect.

How do your cultural differences influence the classroom dynamics? Maybe it's a problem or is it okay to have many cultures in your classrooms? yes, I'm really surprised. I expected more problems, but there aren't so many. What I experience is that depending on the, how you say, Bildungslevel, like the, in the lower classes, especially A2, there are more cultural, the dynamics influence more the learning atmosphere than in the higher level, like the higher the education of the people, the less influence, the cultural influence you have in the class.

That's what I experience. And it's more, to my point of view, it's more a religious topic sometimes. But even from Arab countries, they work together in a group with women or men.

There has never been a problem. That's good to hear. So, the next question is, in your experience, how does knowing the German language help or limit immigrants in their integration process? I would completely say it makes it much easier.

And it helps, yes, it definitely helps in their integration. That's a good point, to integrate to the society, let's say that way.

Are there cultural barriers that go beyond the linguistic level? If you know some of them, you can name them. yes, I think, to me, noticeable, especially the religion is a barrier, that I would say, yes, to get into contact with the people or for the integration. I mean, even those groups that are in Germany for, I don't know, until the 1960s, they still do not fully integrate in the society.

And I think for the Ukrainian people, it is easier to integrate than for people from Syria. Oh yes. You also told me about the climate, the weather.

yes. And what else? And a cultural barrier would then also be education. That is a main point.

The next question is, can you share an example where a student's country of origin seemed to influence how they behaved or interacted in class? I know you told me that you see as an individual person, not as a group sometimes, but if you can tell me something, it's okay. If not, then it's also okay. yes, especially the male students from Arab countries, I can see that they keep in close contact one to another, or also these young males from Eritrea.

If one is not attending the class, it can happen that the other person doesn't come as well. So, they don't act as individuals, but as a social unity or something. That's what I experienced.

Arab males sometimes keep the distance to the females. Okay, perfect. So, when you have students from different countries, does your knowledge about their culture help you to prepare for possible challenges? Yes.

To be honest, when I was first confronted with these people from Syria, I didn't have much idea about their culture. Also, honestly, for people from Ukraine, I've never been to Ukraine and I have no clear idea of their culture. I don't think so.

Prior knowledge helped me a lot. It's not a problem. Okay, so do you think national culture strongly determines behavior or are other factors, for example, the age, the personality, as you mentioned, the migration experience, are more influential than the culture? What do you think and why? In my opinion, the strongest influence is education.

So, if the people are higher educated, the ability to adapt grows. And if the education level is lower, they stick more to their traditions, probably the feeling of they feel more secure. And there's a difference between females that stick more to traditions, especially in this Muslim religion context, I would think.

So, education is a big influence. And, of course, their experience, like if they've been to other countries before, like the traveling experience. And also, sometimes people have a quite diverse, familiar background.

And, of course, that helps. So, they have one parent or grandparent from one country and the other parent from a different country. Those people are more flexible.

And, of course, if they come from a big city or more a village, so where they grew up, that also is a difference. True. And why do you think this is a factor? Maybe because the big cities are more intercultural? yes, there's more contact to the rest of the world.

And especially if it's an industrialized country, the difference is not that big. But in a more rural country like Afghanistan, if you are living out in the countryside, you are quite isolated and there's not much intercultural knowledge. Thank you so much.

So, there is the next question. In what areas do you notice cultural difference the most? For example, participation, respect for authority, communication style, punctuality or maybe teamwork? Punctuality. There are a lot of differences.

And, yes, of course, also the respect. Sometimes I experience it in a positive way, so that students from Arab countries or Eritrea, they wanted to carry my bags and open the door for me and stuff like that. They are very, very nice.

A German student would never do that. And in the teamwork, I would think these Syrian or Afghanistan students are more used to help each other. Then, for example, I experienced this from the Ukrainian students.

They are more competitive. And they don't like group or teamwork so much. And also this Arab, Syrian, Afghanistan, Turkish society, the social interaction is very important.

I remember one group that I have had, the male students, it was in the summertime. And always one student paid for ice cream for the whole group. And so the youngest male from the group, he had the task to run to the supermarket and get the ice cream.

And the older ones, they paid. But he had to walk. And it was really very nice.

And it supported the spirit of the group very much. We always had ice cream together. Oh, that is so nice.

yes. And I don't experience this from Ukrainian people. Also, if we have a party at the end of the class, when the class is finished, the Arab women, they create incredible food and bring it to the class.

And it's so beautiful. And they put a lot of work and effort in this preparation. And from the Ukrainian students, they just get some from the river or they just buy some from the Rewe or the edeka.

And yes, it's not that they bake a cake by themselves. Just, yes, not that much. It's a real big difference.

yes. I want my Arab students back. So cute.

Okay. Thank you for sharing with this experience. Okay.

We have four last questions. Okay. What attitudes or behaviors from teachers or institutions help the students feel respected and understood? From the institution, I have the feeling if there's somebody like the secretary who really supports them and gives them the feeling that they can come with every question, it's like they have the open door and she takes time for the students.

This really helps. And also, yes, the teacher, I think a respectful, yes, and humorous attitude helps. yes.

I'm not too strict if they are a little bit late or if they are maybe tired. And I try not to put too much pressure on them. And sometimes I talk to them in a more private way and I have made the experience that really helps them.

Okay. If they feel that they are seen as a person and, yes, that really motivates my students. Okay.

yes. Have you noticed specific moments in which a student began to feel more confident or secure? What contributes to that change? I think some success in their language, in their ability to use the language, that really helps so that they feel more comfortable. And you mean also in the class, they feel more comfortable in the class? Yes.

Okay. yes. And also, if they get to know the people, of course, that's why I really like to do a lot of teamwork in different teams.

And if there is some personal contact between the students, and so, yes, then after a few weeks, I experienced they feel more comfortable. And yes, the better they know the language and maybe know some jokes in German, they like it a lot. Okay.

Some funny words, they use it and that helps a lot so they feel more capable. yes. Okay.

Perfect. What mistakes should institutions avoid in order to increase feeling of, no, yes, in order not to increase feelings of insecurity or exclusion? Institutions, when they come to our school, I think the personal contact is really important. If I think it's difficult for them if they are confronted with a lot of paperwork they have to do first of all, and so the barrier is quite high for them to start a class.

And I think because we have the administration or if they want to apply for a class, they usually come to our school. And I think that's quite important. yes.

Because writing emails and the, I don't know, the digital application, the digital application, I think is quite difficult, at least for, maybe not for Ukrainian students in a higher level, but for the lower levels, that's very difficult. And I think that's the easiest way if they have people who help them. Okay.

yes. So, how important is emotional support during the first stages of adaptation in your point of view? Very important. yes.

Because if people feel overwhelmed or they are afraid, they can't learn and they can't adapt. And so, I would think the emotional support is the most important measure at the beginning for students, so that they can arrive in the country and they get some stable floor under their feet. yes.

So, I would think that's very important. Have you ever had students from Latin America? Yes, I have one woman from Colombia at the moment. And yes, I had students, not that many, but let me think.

yes, I had students from Brazil, Chile. Chile. So, some students, yes.

Okay. And what do you think about them? Oh, but it's not, I had a lot of students from Mexico. yes, when I was teaching, because they work in a hospital here, I had some special classes.

They are not, how would you say, an auffällige Gruppe. Of course, the students from Mexico, they were all quite young and they were very lively. Okay.

And there's a big cultural difference between these students from Mexico and I had, in the same class, some students from India. Ah, okay. That's black and white to me.

From India, they are very disciplined and from Mexico, they were more easygoing. But I think the adaptation, that is at least was my point of, my view, is at least for the students from Mexico, maybe because they are so young, I have no idea, it's quite difficult. And they complain a lot about the weather.

yes, they don't feel comfortable in the wintertime. Okay, that's interesting. And how do you think, like, I want to make another question because that helps me out.

So, you told me you had, like, Mexican students. Can you tell me a little bit how you experience the culture of them and how do they adapt to the other cultures, the other students and so on? Maybe if you see something. yes, maybe because they were a group and also as a group working in one hospital, to me, they seem not so open for other cultures.

They were, to my point of view, they didn't feel so comfortable in Germany. They had some difficulties. And maybe in general, from Latin America, you told me, like, students from Chile, from Colombia.

No, not in the same way. Maybe it was because they were a group and they were in their early 20s. And I think for most of them, it was the first time outside of Mexico.

And I think they had some problems of adaptation, but there was one male student, he did much better. His girlfriend also from Mexico, she was in a hospital in another part of Germany. So, he had to travel and he was much better in adaptation.

But the other male student, he had quite a hard time. He was very nice and very friendly, and the women as well. But the other students from Brazil or Chile or Colombia, there was no difference to other students.

Okay. Perfect. That would be all.

Okay. Bye. Tschüss.

Tschüss.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Julianna Maldonado

Interviewee: Marie Malcherek

Modality: Virtual, Zoom platform

Good afternoon, Marie Malcherek, thank you for accepting the invitation, I would like to start with some general questions. First, what does culture mean to you? Oh, I also studied a little bit of languages and everything, so it's not as easy to say my culture, as one thinks. But yes, I think the conclusion is something like the customs of a group of people.

We can't define it that way by nationalities either, no, I don't like that so much anymore. Especially as a German, everyone asks me about Oktoberfest and I'm from the north, so since I don't consider myself part of this culture that organizes an Oktoberfest. Traditions, not necessarily as a language, but something that unites there as a group of people.

Perfect. What does cultural identity mean to you? Cultural identity? Well, I think that's how each person defines themselves, as I said, maybe I've defined myself, or my definition of myself maybe it's like I do have a certain German culture, but as I already said, the culture of North German is already different from the South, also many years ago abroad. So I think that the cultural identity of each person is something that is built on one side of life. What does being German mean to you, German culture? To be German? Yes.

Well, outside of the stereotypes perhaps, that if they are punctual and drink a lot of beer, like all stereotypes perhaps they are more like in popular culture than really in the real culture of the country. Thank you very much. Would it be possible to turn the music down a little bit? Yes.

Thank you very much. I don't know, for me, if I think like I am German, why? Perhaps more like some traditions, more than traits, such as being punctual. I don't know, for example, something small like taking off your shoes when you enter the house.

So I think they're more like those customs, more like that personal traits, like being punctual or something like that. Perfect. Well, in the stay that I have been here in Ecuador, how would you consider Ecuadorian culture? How would you describe it? Ecuadorian culture? Yes.

What do you think you are like? Perfectly. Ah, how does the person receive me? Yes. As a German? As I mean.

Do you feel German about the culture you perceive in Ecuador? Ah, on the contrary, what I perceive of Ecuadorian culture. Yes, I think that just like in Germany or any country, Ecuador also has many different cultures. As the huacanos are very different from the coastal ones, for example.

Or with Quito, which is like the capital, they also have more in common perhaps with other capitals of other countries than perhaps with Cuenca or with Guayaquil itself. But yes, many people ask me about the cultural differences between Ecuador and Germany. And for me, who before coming to Ecuador lived for two years in Argentina, I think that the difference between Argentina and that Ecuadorian, Cuencan culture, is perhaps a bigger difference than between the Cuencano and the German.

Yes? And why does he say that? Why do you think this is so? Yes, because at least here in Cuenca people are also quite formal, a bit like this professional distance also between people, which reminds me a lot of Germany. Because yes, as with the Argentines, like my experience I had there, also more like a smaller city, so people were more, much more open. I was also like one of the few foreigners there, which is also like a difference here in Cuenca, that there are many gringos here.

That they are already as accustomed perhaps to as different customs. Well, now I would like you to tell me a little about what you do, your academic career, what you have studied and a little about yourself. Well, I studied in Germany.

First I did a bachelor's degree, a bachelor's degree in biology and then I started traveling the world. I visited some countries, lived longer in Namibia, in Africa and then returned to Germany to study a second time. So there it is called like a state exam, which is basically the combination of an undergraduate degree with a master's degree.

So I studied like this state exam to be a biology teacher German and German as a foreign language. From there I worked as a teacher for German as a foreign language and I am currently working for the DAD, right? As they say here. So exchange, the German academic exchange service and yes, I'm working on German classes here.

Yes, I am informing about scholarships, organizing events. Well, now we start with other questions a little more in-depth. From your role as a representative of the DAD at the University of Cuenca, what are the main cultural challenges that Ecuadorian students face when integrating into this German academic system? What do you think? Well, what I always say in my German classes especially, right? It's like a bit of the difference in what it is, the level of freedom we have.

Because German students are more used to putting together their own studio basically, right? We know in the end if I have to finish those 10 subjects, but when, how, in what order, morning, afternoon, right? All of that we have to organize ourselves, which in comparison here is like more than, yes, here's your curriculum, follow it to the letter and everything will be fine. So I think that's the big difference and that I also heard from people who came back here again who said if that's something that cost them there. And also at least for the teachers that I'm also supporting to find contacts there, is that if I want to talk to a teacher or the secretary or something like that, it's like I can contact them directly.

This is more like the habit perhaps of starting at the highest level, right? As a contact first as the rector of the university, I am guided by the dean, I am guided by the... And in Germany it's more common to go directly to the person I want to talk to, right? Also find out that at those lower levels that we don't have as much trouble with that authority, right? We have like, you couldn't include the dean because, right? He is like the boss, the teacher. It is more, less authoritarian perhaps in this sense. Ok, perfect.

Could you tell me a little about what the events you do are about, if they are Ecuadorian, German or mix or...? Well, I organize, for example, a German café. It's more like a language exchange. So there I try to invite some Germans so that Ecuadorians who want to learn German and practice it can do so in an environment without pressure, without a teacher.

That's like the regular thing I do once a month. And from there are events like, we are currently in the second edition of the scientific café that has more to do with, or only has a relationship with, basically Ecuador. That this time we are like with the arts, with the humanitarian sciences, right? Social sciences.

With art, with gender representation. So in this event we do focus on basically one hundred percent on Ecuador. And from there there are also some events together with universities, where we already meet with representatives of German universities who visit here.

So there is like a perhaps bilateral exchange. What differences do you observe between Ecuadorian and German academic culture? What tends to impact students the most? Yes, as I said, like that freedom that Germans have in their university career, I think that also has more consequences for the general life of students. Of course, there are also deadlines for studies, things like that.

But I feel that maybe there too as the Germans are a little bit more relaxed maybe in this sense of, ah, yes, they can give you one more week of extension. Compared to what the students told me here, as well as about the courses, that is the date and that's it, how they have to do extra work. Like the whole group comes now at eight o'clock and you can't give your opinion or say that you're not going to come.

So I think that there are also German students or as there is the university culture is a little more, I don't know, fairer perhaps to the students. They don't perceive them as much as a small child that we have to educate, but they see them more as an adult who chooses to be there in their free time, let's say. So I feel that sometimes they treat him a little more with respect.

Like, yes, we're going to respect your Saturdays, we're not going to put arbitrary dates on you somewhere. Have you noticed any difference in the teacher-student relationship in this culture? For example, the level of formality, participation in class, or critical questioning in these two cultures. Well, in Germany I think it depends a lot on what kind of university you're studying at, like the big universities that are a little more anonymous.

Yes, that's how they're going to treat you too, isn't it? Because I studied at two different universities, I have a bit of experience on both sides, because in the first case I studied as a generic undergraduate basically, we had large classes, so I never had a good relationship with the professors, only someone who shared their knowledge with me, but in comparison in the state exam we had smaller classes, so there we had the opportunity to really connect with the teachers. To the point that he invited us to his birthday party at his house, and it was really like a party between friends, and not an official event. So yes, I think this part depends a lot on the style of the university in Germany, like your own involvement with the professors.

And here in Ecuador, I can only talk about what my students tell me about my German class, so they told me a lot there. From your experience, to what extent does language proficiency really facilitate academic and social integration? It also depends on it, because in Germany there is also that difference between the big cities that are more international, where there are more international students as well, or like that community that is a little more open, compared to smaller cities, which are maybe university, but not so international. For example, my state exam, I studied in Halle, which is a medium-sized city, small let's say, in the east of the country as well, which is the other difference perhaps, because in the east they are not so used to having many foreigners, so to integrate there in social life I really need a very good level of German, because people, especially those over 30, didn't learn English in their school life.

They learned Russian or other languages, but not English. So the difference between a small city in the east, where it depends 100% on German, nobody speaks English, very few people speak Spanish, or compared to Berlin, where I also had international friends who after 10 years didn't even learn German, because they can do their whole lives 100% in English, or even in Turkish. So that also depends a lot on my social environment.

In universities I would say that German is not 100% necessary, while I am studying a degree in English. Perfect. Do you think there are more cultural barriers that go beyond language? Like which ones? More barriers? Are there cultural barriers beyond language? I know that Germans are a little more distant and cold, as they sometimes bump into that.

So, yes, maybe this is something that here in Ecuador we are also perhaps more used to inviting people to say Ah, good day, we have to have a coffee! But that's not how 100% Yes, on Saturday at 3 o'clock we'll see you for coffee. It's not like this kind of Ah, good morning, we have a coffee! or Ah, we should go to the checkout! I've already received a lot of invitations, but when I really ask, Oh yes, what a day and what time! Like a bit trying to see if it's really a real invitation or it was just a social saying, let's say. There I often realize that Ah, yes, it was just a saying to maybe make you feel more invited! By comparison, perhaps in Germany, if a German tells you: Let's have a coffee! Yes, I'll see you on Saturday at 3 o'clock, 100%! But to get to this point where a German opens the doors for you, you need to do as many previous ones perhaps.

It may be that they seem more distant, colder, because we don't have like so many, I don't know, of these expressions that are 100% social. Or like the Oh yes, hello, how are you? The person who asks you that doesn't even care how you are, just a saying. But if a German asks you, "How are you in German?" Yes, he wants to know.

And you can also tell him, Oh, I don't have, I don't know, migraines! I don't know, so they really care about the answer. It's true, yes. Well, also from your experience, does adaptation depend more on national cultural factors or on individual characteristics of the students in your opinion? I think it's important to be a little attentive to these differences.

As I said, as the social invitation that is never used. But it also depends a lot on the personality of each one. Because I, for example, talking about a German abroad, I am going to get used to Latin American culture very easily, as they say in Argentina, in this very small city, so from the street they invited me to their homes to have a mate.

So for me it was like pretty easy. But on the other side I also know many Germans who could never integrate. So, yes, this personal part is a very important, very big part.

How was your adaptation experience when you came to Latin America? A different culture. Is this how was the experience in general? Yes, and how he managed to adapt as well. Well, as I said, I started traveling abroad very early.

Like me, the first time alone outside my country for a longer time was when I was 21 years old. There I was in Africa, in Benin, which is really a country not so developed to do an internship for two months, three months, something like that. So that was like I think the biggest cultural learning moment because it was really like a huge difference.

And even when I'm now learning about cultural differences, about some traditions maybe here, I still have some moments sometimes where I say, Ah, that's what they wanted to tell me back in 2012 when I was out of the country for the first time! And I didn't understand it, I didn't understand it, because I didn't have that experience or like this sensitivity to what could be perceived as a problem. Because, for example, there in Benin it is a tropical country, so it is very hot, but at the same time quite Catholic. So I got there like with my tops like that, like it has only like a mini part here, right? Yes, more or less like this.

And there sometimes I had like a host family and there sometimes as my host sister moved the little thing a little to cover a little more of my shoulder and I didn't understand what her problem is basically. And much later it was like Oh, yes! They are more used to covering their shoulders a little, not showing so much, right? And that was like a realization I think two years later. So I think they still feed off each other, those cross-cultural experiences.

So when I arrived here in Latin America I have already lived in other countries, other continents, other cultures for several years, so it was already a bit like a list. Could this be a problem here? No, it is not. Is this something else, I don't know, about the culture, the rooms, the clothes? I don't know, so I already had a kind of awareness for those things, as I say, that could be a problem before I got here with my eyes closed, I don't know.

Perfect. Well, also from your point of view I would like to know how prior knowledge about a cultural context influences the way you anticipate or manage potential adaptation challenges. Yes, I think it goes a little with what I said, right? So like having that prior knowledge of maybe not as well as in the sense of having a fixed rule, right? It's like, I don't know, a Catholic country, there you always have to cover your shoulders.

It's not going to work in every context. So I think you always have to have that balance between whether I can, I don't know, be attentive to those types of more potential problems, but without saying like, ok, in this country you always have to cover your shoulders, and I get there and see, ah, yes, but nobody does, right? So like maybe that mixture of, already, just being aware, but not so closed either, right? As my teacher gave me as an example, as well as when she, as a German, wanted to meet a teacher from Mexico, from somewhere Latin American as well. So she like, ah, yes, I know that Mexicans are always a little late, so so as not to bother him, I'm going to arrive 10 minutes early.

The Mexican teacher knew, ah, German teachers are always so punctual, I'm going to arrive 20 minutes early. So there it was like this crossover of, ah, I know Germans are like that, I know Latinos are like that, right? But always have like that open mind, and when you're 10 minutes late, well, maybe, yes, it can be a cultural thing, but also maybe there was a problem in the house and you missed the train. So, yes, this mix.

Perfect. What would you recommend to people who want to go on an exchange to Germany or German exchange to Ecuador? Recommendations? Let's see, yes, so as not to repeat myself too much, right? But yes, this awareness a little, right? As if it is the first time that I am outside my country, yes, it requires more preparation perhaps, right? Because the beauty of traveling abroad and experiencing other cultures is usually that we're going to learn as much about yourself, like, right? Those little examples, like, I don't know, my whole life, I did this thing like this, or I always said this, and now all of a sudden I'm like in an environment where this is not normal. So, there you have to have this kind of open mind to reflect on myself, right? Like just because I've done it this way all my life, doesn't mean that now that I see other people not doing it, doing it in a different way, it means it's bad or better, or not, just like this awareness that yes, I'm going to bump into a lot of things, a lot of things that I can't really actively prepare for before, no? It's how I can learn those rules that in Germany you have to take off your shoes, in Ecuador you always have to greet first with the, hello, good day, how are you?, but be aware and have perhaps as well as a personal resilience in the face of those problems, or like in those moments when I realize, ok, I'm the weird one here, Nobody understands me, and I don't know what to do because I can't talk as an Ecuadorian with the Germans because they don't understand my problem that they only say hello, I want them to ask me how you are, no, how does it feel so bad, or the other way around, that a German here is like, every time they ask her how you are, Stop on the street and tell him about his day, it's going to shock him just the same, so, that, like I think the personal resilience that we need in other contexts as well, with that open mind, an eye for those details as well, like when you see that everyone is looking at me funny, everyone tries to cover my shoulder a little bit, ok, maybe it's me, maybe that can be something that I can also adapt to feel more comfortable myself and not clash so much with my environment.

Perfect. And as a final question, I would like to know in your opinion what recommendations you would give to institutions, to mobility programmes so that they can better integrate exchange people. Well, I think that the international offices are already doing a good job, like here at the University of Cuenca, for example, I'm working, I only have my office there as well, so I see that they are also organizing many events to, not only connect as foreigners with local people, but also foreigners among themselves. Because although, of course, we usually want to connect with the culture, for example, here in Ecuador, as I said, those moments of, no, I don't understand them, how I need to talk to another foreigner who is also going through the same problems perhaps, who is colliding with the same things, is also like a very important part.

And I think that is something that institutions should take into account. I think that the biggest problem for foreigners anywhere in the world is precisely that of feeling alone, because I am like with people with whom I cannot make myself understood. So as that part for those who receive students or people from other countries and on the preparation side, do preparatory seminars to open your eyes to learn something new.

Lito, thank you very much for your time, that would be all.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Julianna Maldonado

Interviewee: Tammy Fajardo

Modality: Virtual, Zoom platform

Let's start with some general questions first. What is culture for you? For me, culture is part of people's identity. We can express our actions, we can develop within a society, with the different aspects that form our identity and that form our culture.

For me, culture is everything that surrounds us. Many times we can or are wrong thinking that culture is the typical dish, the typical clothing, but there are many other aspects beyond that that define the culture of peoples, the culture of societies and our own culture. The practices with which I manage at home, with my children, with my family, are my own culture.

How I treat animals, how I treat my coworkers, all of that is within the definitions of culture. Done. The next question would be, what is cultural identity for you? Well, it goes hand in hand with what I answer.

Cultural identity is defined by different aspects that make up my life, but well, if we want to go a little more towards the definitions given by other people of culture, then it is what is also given by the rest of society. The question was, again, cultural identity. My identity is also given by what is marked by society.

Perfect. What does it mean to you to do an exchange semester? Well, I have not personally done a semester, however, I worked for many years in the Directorate of International Relations of the University of Cuenca, so I knew a little bit what students faced when they were going to do this semester of exchange. I have studied abroad, but I have not done so in this model of student mobility, nor did I do an exchange when I was at school.

I studied a major when I finished my bachelor's degree and then studied my PhD abroad. But I was very involved with student mobility. I have always said that the opportunity to go study abroad, to face a semester of academic life abroad opens up many possibilities for us, beyond just culture understood as music, food, relationships, but beyond that experience, and especially in the academic part, because we face different scenarios that we are used to when we go only as tourists, for example.

So we are already facing different forms of communication, we are already facing different ways of understanding each other, of understanding each other, of talking about these power relations between students and teachers, about what the academic dynamics are like in a university or in a college. So a cultural exchange or student mobility opens many doors in the sense that we can go much deeper into cultures, learning, and living with other people. Perfect.

In your opinion, what does the exchange semester contribute to the student and why? Well, first on the personal side, I think there are many contributions in different dimensions. On the personal side, it is an invaluable growth. Many of the times the boys, the university students who send exchanges are still children of the house, they still live with dad, mom, with siblings.

So they have to face many times to live alone. Then they develop an independence, a very important autonomy. It's not as much as when they go on an exchange from school.

I am a little against the school exchange because they do not yet have the necessary maturity at university. First of all, they are going to face alone, they are more autonomous, they have the obligation to pass a subject, to get grades. On the other hand, sometimes in school you go and do the last year of school repeating what we do here and there is not much responsibility.

Another of the contributions I see is precisely this growth in the academic part. To be able to learn from other perspectives, even if they are going to study the same career, that they are looking for a subject that can later be homologated so that they do not lose their credits here. The perspective of both teaching and learning is extremely different in each country to which you travel.

Sometimes in a different city right here within Ecuador it can be different, not to mention in a different country. The models, for example, of understanding texts when we read. Maybe here the professor asks us in a certain way, but if we go to Argentina, for example, it will be much more philosophical.

It happened to me when I went to my doctorate, they asked me to make an intertext between what one author said with what the other author said, which were situations that they didn't teach us or didn't ask us to do here. So it does open the doors to learning in different ways, to know how studies are elsewhere, how subjects are taught, how evaluations are taken, what is required of a student. So in that sense there is also a lot of growth in the academic part.

The part of the global vision also helps us to grow in that sense, to understand that we are not a city separate from the world. Sometimes, especially the people of Cuenca, we believe that everything is perfect and that everything is here, but being able to go out gives us a much broader vision of what is happening outside, even to bring it back, to bring it, to share it, to be able to reproduce those learnings when we return and share with our colleagues, with our colleagues, and it gives us a very different view of situations. So I do think that an academic exchange experience at the university is extremely valuable.

What does it mean to you to be Ecuadorian? Well, for me to be Ecuadorian, first of all I'm a bit mixed. Yes, I consider myself a little more Ecuadorian, but I have also always defended my double cultural identity, let's talk about it like that. I have my mother Canadian and the whole family on my mother's side are Canadian, my father and the whole family on my father's side are Ecuadorian.

Even though I was born in Canada, I came to live here very early, but I've always had that connection with both places. I've never been divorced from that, so I like to call myself Ecuadorian and be Ecuadorian here, defend what is mine, defend the country, defend what is done here, value what is done here. However, I do not fail to consider that it is also important to be part of another culture, to the point that, for example, my children are currently studying there in Canada, because that relationship that has existed with that second culture has never been broken.

I value the Ecuadorian culture very much, what it means to be Ecuadorian, I think we are people of a lot of drive, a lot of work, a lot of perseverance, and people who like to get ahead and carry the name of the country, of the city of Cuenca, especially of Cuenca, very high. And I think that is precisely what makes us known, appreciated and known throughout our country, because I think that one of the things that one always does, or at least I always do is, but Cuenca is like that, but Ecuador is like that. So, the people I connect with, I take with me, always end up wanting to come and get to know, because it shows a little bit of what is done here as well.

Well, now I would like to know a little bit about what you do, what is your career in itself, working, also studying, a little bit of yourself. Well, in my academic part, I graduated from the University of SUAE with a degree in Education Sciences, but with my specialties in English teaching. Then I went to Canada to study a specialization in teaching English to adolescents and adults, I lived there for two years, and then I came back to do my master's degree, I did it at the University of Cuenca as well, in teaching English as a foreign language.

So, in itself, my career was in teaching English. I was director of the international studies program at the University of SUAE for three years, no, two years, and then the opportunity to apply for a doctorate opened up for me, and I was awarded a scholarship from the CNCID, so I studied at the University of Toronto, in Canada, a doctorate called Languages and Literacies Education. where my vision was completely opened, although true, my focus was the teaching of English, when I worked in international studies, I was dedicated to teaching the subjects of English, grammar, reading, writing, but my vision changed completely when I studied the doctorate because we went far beyond English as a thing, but rather as a tool to learn and teach other things. The four and a half years that my doctorate lasted was very enriching.

When I returned from my doctorate, I already worked at the University of Cuenca, I was also a professor at the University of Cuenca, shared with the UDA, but when I returned from my doctorate I was left alone at the University of Cuenca, I was directing a master's degree in English teaching, and shortly after I was appointed as director of International Relations at the University of Cuenca. a position in which I was for about four years. After that, well, I was in different positions at the University of Cuenca, coordinator of postgraduate studies, recently I was director of the Department of Education, it is a research department because I dedicate a large part of my teaching load, my distributive load, my 40 hours to research, I am a researcher, and currently for 15 days I have been as vice-dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Cuenca, Thank you very much. So it is a bit of my trajectory in terms of my research interests, I am within what is the pedagogy of teaching, but I no longer focus only on English, but on some approaches to English, such as the teaching of foreign language content, but I am also going a little broader towards critical pedagogy, humanizing pedagogy, and we are currently just with a project, with a partner in what is global citizenship, in which we just study issues of intercultural competence, intercultural communicative competence, where we see a little more language as a tool to be citizens, more than just in order to speak English and communicate, but how we can use it more as a tool for true effective communication that trains citizens, agents of peace, justice, etc.

So it's a little bit my career. Well, thank you very much for sharing your trajectory with me. Well, in this interview I plan to focus a little more on what you were Director of International Relations.

So, well, starting now with the questions. From your experience as a former Director of International Relations, what are the main cultural challenges that international students who came to university face or faced? Now, well, here we would have to talk a little, pretend to divide where it came from. The students who came, for example, from South America, we didn't have much culture shock, let's talk like that.

Yes, there were certain changes that we had to take into account, but we were a little closer, apart from the fact that it seemed that they knew a little more. We did see a lot of difference when European students came, above all. I think that there could be a lot of evidence of differences, for example, in terms of authority, isn't it? The teacher here, you know, many times, and especially in a public university, and I do want to emphasize that, because that sometimes does not happen at the UDA.

When I was a professor at the UDA, the relationship we had as a student, the professor was a little friendlier, within the framework of respect, but the student did get closer, talked, participated more, sometimes even to be funny, but he was a little more open. Sometimes in the classrooms of the public university one has to force students to look up. So the look at the teacher as an authority, that power dynamic is much more marked in the public university, and I speak to you because I have experienced as a teacher in both.

So, coming from a much more open society, isn't it, coming from Europe where perhaps the relationship between the teacher and the student is more horizontal, did sometimes cause certain problems, because certain teachers, especially those teachers who were much older, with much more respect, saw that the foreign student did not respect me, or that kind of thing was one of the clashes. Another one that was quite common was the issue of task fulfillment. Sometimes here there are teachers and students who are used to being behind, aren't they, missing a homework, missing a subject, missing a, I have not presented this, or the student himself is, but don't be bad, give me two more days, on the other hand, the foreigners did not present, they did not present, So there were, I remember, there were French students, especially those who found out that they had lost the cycle at the end, because they did not have a follow-up and according to them, they were not going to lose it, because obviously in their universities there was an induction despite the fact that they were made known and that obviously before the exchange took place, conversations were made, they are sent all the information they need to know, there used to be these problems, so a little bit in that academic part.

In terms of culture as such, complaints from students was sometimes punctuality, if there used to be that, I had a Japanese student who was extremely punctual, extremely punctual and I waited for the teachers looking at the clock like that at the door of the classroom and for teachers of those untouchables, then the thing came, but how is it possible that the student comes to me and judges me, but they have to understand, it is part of their culture, apart from the student had an Asperger's condition, he had a type of autism, in that sense, if there was also that part in which we had to sit down with the teachers to say, well they have to understand them, they have to understand them in that sense. I think that these are the difficulties that I can remember the most now, obviously that other European students, depending a lot on where they are from, were not very communicative, they did not like to talk much, more individualistic, so sometimes they had problems working in groups, but they were issues that could be overcome a little, talking both with them and with the students. One of the things that was very useful was to have the accompaniment, we had the accompaniment of the student welfare, so they were looking at what were the needs they had, the talks that we had to give at the beginning to the students who came and that we had to give to our students before traveling.

Perfect, a question, which students from which countries were just going on an exchange to university? Ours, which ones arrived here? Let's see, from Latin America we had Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Costa Rica, I'm talking to you until five years ago, really in recent years I haven't done a follow-up, but I understand that they have more or less the same population. The United States, many students because we have a Spanish program for foreigners that has a very strong agreement with universities in the United States. And from Europe we had students from Belgium, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Spain, the vast majority.

France, yes, but the largest percentage of our European students were from Belgium due to the same nature of cooperation that the University of Cuenca has with the Ablir program. The Ablir program is a program with countries, Belgium and the Flemish countries, so many students came from there. Yes, a lot of collaboration, many doctorates in Belgian universities and from there that cooperation remained.

But also several, as I say, from Germany, from the Czech Republic, also from Romania, students who came. The lowest percentage from Italy, but we did also have quite a few from Spain and France. Are there clear differences between students in their adaptation process? Yes, as I was saying, depending on where it was from, depending on where they were from, the Latinos kind of adapted much faster, they came a little more and it was a little more difficult for the Europeans, especially when very few came, but they did come from Asia, so they were the ones who had the most difficulty.

The social adaptation, I would say, not so much to studies, but more social and a bit of these power dynamics, as I was saying, were the French and the Germans. Let's see, the next one would be, could you tell me a specific situation that you clearly remember in which a student has had significant difficulties adapting? Let's see, the first is that but due to these very personal circumstances, when we accepted the student, we received a letter from the university indicating that he was within the spectrum of Asperger's, but in the doctor's letter he said that it was not a serious matter, but that he could adapt and it is more that he was a very good student and just like that, classes at 4, but I start at 4 and 5. Or the teacher left 5 minutes early. So that kind of thing this student did not tolerate.

Another of the problems that there was is, I remember he needed to be guided a lot, but this is because of his personal situation, because of the situation he had. He had to be guided very specifically as steps, step 1, step 2, step 3. And sometimes he went to the office, the secretary, one of the analysts, attended to him, but she didn't explain it to him that way, so he hated her attending to him. If I came and said, no, you didn't.

And he was waiting for me like this, I arrived 2 hours later, he was waiting for me to help him. But all this was obviously with the guidance of student welfare that he was telling us they have to treat him in this way, in this other way, right? That would be one of the problems. There were commonly problems when houses were found.

We as the University of Cuenca could look for host families. And depending on the agreements we had with the universities, the university also covered the broad scholarship that was called, but this was usually with Latin American universities, yes? So through a network with which we were members, which was called, is called UDUAL, we had the exchanges. I remember one occasion through this network we did an exchange with a university in Colombia, I don't remember exactly the university, a Colombian student came, we found a host family and the university pays the host family, not the student.

So we paid a monthly fee and they had to cover breakfast and dinner. Apparently the student's requirements were not being met as to what food should be given, so there was a problem. But I think that these are things that all exchange offices go through because they are precisely the individual differences that we have.

I mean, I eat this, but here you eat the other one. Then the family said, but that's how we eat. It was a bit like mediating each other, yes? You eat like this, but you're hosts, we have to help the other girl like that, but you have to be a little more tolerant.

But I think that these are things that happen at any time when two cultures, in which two worlds meet and we have to live together. But hence serious problems, very, very, very complicated or complex issues that we have already experienced due to cultural or language clashes. I remember one, this is something that was quite interesting, even from the part of the study to the racism it was interesting because a group of students from France arrived, but students from a university called Saint-Étienne came, and one of the students was of Moroccan origin, she was dark-skinned, very dark-skinned, dark-skinned.

And if you saw him walking down the street he looked like a normal person, Ecuadorian, from Cuenca, he didn't have any characteristics that this girl had at first glance. And the compañeras would side with her, the compañeras from here in Cuenca would side her because they said that what does she think is the French if she is not French, that it is enough to see the color of her skin and she is not French. And the group she came with, of course, the other French girl was blonde and the other one was redhead and the other one was... Then the compañeras from Cuenca told her no, what is it going to be, in any case they said yes, I am French, if she is French I am Moroccan.

And they pushed him aside. And we had to work a lot with that class and with this student because obviously she felt bad, she felt segregated. And she was French, that is, she didn't even speak Spanish well.

I had this drawback and it was terrible to see how we, who are often the segregated ones, were at that time. So we had to do a strong job with that group of students, with the course in which the girl was and obviously we tried to get out. She didn't finish her exchange, she couldn't, she didn't want to continue and she left earlier.

That would be, I would think that it is the only case we had, that we could not solve, let's talk like that. She decided to end early. Well, the next question is, tell me about a specific episode where you have observed a significant cultural misunderstanding in academia and how the department, you, or the professors intervened.

The example I gave him was, I think it is this issue that also happened with French students because of the issue of grades. They had a way of evaluating in France in which they passed with a lower score than ours, in which even if the students missed or nothing happened, in which they had to comply with the minimum, then the way of evaluating was very different. So the students assumed that it was the same here, so there were inconveniences.

The student did not even enter the exam, but as it is similar in the UDA, he no longer adjusted the points for the exam and went straight to the supplementary. Then the student claimed his right to take the final exam, because he planned to prepare like his classmates to take the final exam. And when he found out that no, that he could no longer enter because he did not gather the necessary points for the final exam, but that he had to go directly to the supplementary exam, that was when there was this clash.

So we had to talk, in any case it is not that he took the final exam, he went to the supplementary exam, but we helped him to prepare in such a way that he can pass the supplementary exam. So that's when it was reached, it was possible to mediate with the teacher. I remember that he mediated with the teaching assistant, he was the one who helped the student to prepare and the classmates.

But it was a problem. Here the teacher also assumed his responsibility in the sense that he never reported anything to us. There was never a partial report of the student is not coming, the student is not entering, he is not delivering grades, because as an International Relations office we always emphasized that to the teachers and that they please report to us if the international students complied or not.

And there was never such a report from the teacher. So I think that's why this agreement was reached. The student passed, passed with the minimum he needed, but he was able to pass his subject.

But he received the support of the department. Yes, there was follow-up, support, yes. In that sense, we have always tried to accompany all the students, even when I was there last year, which is the last months I was there, we had the issue of the pandemic and it was really quite strong to find these, apart from obviously seeing that they are well, that they are calm, the students who chose to stay, because not all of them stayed, but there were some who decided to stay, well, to do this academic accompaniment as well.

Perfect. Well, the next question is how do cultural differences influence the academic and social integration of international students within the university? Let's see, from the lessons learned, obviously the cultural part, the part that students are used to in their universities, excuse me for a little while, give me a second, please. Don't worry.

Already, as I said, well, it has a lot to do with it, doesn't it? How I am used to studying, to being evaluated at university, yes. I think it's an extremely strong influence. In terms of culture, the issues of the dynamics of, I insist, the dynamics of power between teachers and students, between the issue of whether cineculture is more individualistic, but suddenly here teachers like to do more group work. I, for example, precisely because of the number of students I have, I usually like to do homework in pairs and that can cause certain problems and cultural clashes when students come from elsewhere. So, that also needs to be negotiated a little, right? Also, what are the expectations? It is usually one of the doubts of students who come to the exchange. What does the teacher expect of me? So, they are matters that are different. The issue of class attendance as well, for example. Here we take the roll, the student misses the cycle if he does not attend at least 70%. In many universities around the world, attendance is not taken. The student goes if he wants to learn. If he doesn't go, there's no way to get him to take the exam and put what's down. That's a culture that we have, a part of our academic culture, isn't it? So, that is also sometimes a shock. Many of the students who come to the exchange enjoy traveling. When they are here, they like to go and get to know other cities,

other countries. I remember this student from Japan who told me that he wanted to go to Peru, that he wanted to go to Colombia, but there were not enough vacations for him to do the period of four or five months. Then it was his turn to kill classes. It would unfold and say look, you have this percentage, but yes. And why? I'm doing my homework, I'm studying, I'm complying. So, those are other issues that are also ... They can be complicated, but I think that with an initial conversation it is very important that prior to the exchange all this is explained, that there are the necessary meetings and obviously that we explain the previous agreements that are made through the international relations offices. The next question is, to what extent does language proficiency facilitate integration or not? It is very important, it is important to know the language. I would say not the domain as such, because there is always room for improvement, but you must know, I would say, an intermediate level, at least to be able to develop. Let's remember that having a competence in the language for interpersonal communication is not the same as for performing in the academic aspect, right? We have basic interpersonal competence, but we have academic communicative competence. They're not the same, are they? In a matter of a month, a month and a half, I can be talking to my friends in the university playground, in a bar, in a restaurant, without any problem, but I can't be developing adequately by taking, I don't know, a subject called philosophy. Yes, I'm inventing. So it is necessary to have good academic communication competence also to be able to develop in the academic aspect of my student mobility, which in the end is the most important objective. While it is true, it is also about making friends, getting to know the culture, the cities, but at university it is about going to study and passing the subjects. And learn it. So that's extremely important. And that's where we sometimes go wrong. One student says, I do speak English. All right, come on, you can go on exchange, but where do you go and take the subjects in English. Yes, I totally agree. Precisely my master's thesis. I was teaching at that time in international studies and I said, but why do my students up to the fourth cycle know English super well and take grammar and take reading and take writing and fon, and we had phonetics. I don't know if I'm... And I was doing well and they went to the first subject of International Relations or Crux. There was one called cross-cultural communication. All those losses. True, that's how it was. That is precisely where my master's thesis is this difference between communication, interpersonal competence and academic cognitive competence. So that's where the five levels can be. To go on a trip, they should be developed. Perfect. Interesting. Interesting, interesting. This difference is extremely interesting this proposal by Dr. Jim Cummings that makes this difference between the two levels of proficiency when we handle a language. Yes, because, well, personally I had done an exchange to the Czech Republic, I had everything in English and it was a total shock because I have a C1 level. Imagine. So in classes it is, you disconnect. Do you remember the Hadrick? What is the one in the Czech Republic? What is the university like? Well, in 1st we had Hadrick College, I think it was called the university. Now it's the Mendel. Of course, you are eight by one, but we have eight. So the truth is that it is completely different. Academic language is different. I do think that as offices of and now outside, being completely outside, I think that students should be asked that, apart from their level of English, they have some type of training, at least a couple of months in academic writing, in academic reading to be able to develop. and you will see that you can, you feel about this is international. This means that you have already taken courses in English. So imagine if for you it was a shock for a student who is, I don't know, of economics and goes to study English and has never taken a subject in English. it is even more complicated for them. So it is extremely important.

Now, the next question is, are there cultural barriers that go beyond the linguistic level? Yes, they can be. They can be both those visible barriers and barriers due to visible characteristics of culture, but as well as invisible characteristics of culture, more or less what I was telling you at the beginning, right? So, for example, I can think of clothing, food, how we greet each other, punctuality, isn't that what I was saying? But also those things that are a little not so perceptible like, I don't know, what the relationships are like between people, between couples, how I perceive animals, those different things that can be experienced within the culture, right? And since the university in the end is still its own culture, then there can be these clashes as I mentioned. Could you describe any specific experience in which you have perceived that a student's country of origin clearly influenced their academic behavior or the way they interact, as mentioned by the boy from Japan? I think he's a very, very clear example of the differences.

He, for example, had these clashes of punctuality, however, the teachers were his authority figure, weren't they? In the way we greet, in the way we treated the professor, which was a little different if we saw the French students, for example. So, I think they are key examples and they have been coming out precisely because they are the ones who showed those particularities in the moments when they were here, right? Which I could give as an example. I don't remember any other fairly clear, quite specific example that I could mention.

He was very, very strict and critical of the issue of punctuality. As you know, it can define a lot of the culture we have here, right? Of the Cuencanos, especially, although it has changed over time, but it is still a problem. Well, yes, it is understood too.

Well, have you received feedback from Ecuadorian students about difficulties related to cultural differences in countries like Germany or where they have done an exchange? Yes, we were informed by students who had traveled to Spain, yes? Sometimes they felt this burden, didn't they, of being the South American, the Latin in some places. Yes, yes, there were those reports. In Germany, very few traveled to Germany.

We had an agreement at that time with a German university, the University of Konstanz, in which students specifically traveled to do an exchange in the gender career and the social work career, I think it was the other. So, what they reported to us were the very marked and well-known cultural differences, very serious, very individualistic people, suddenly called cold, but beyond that they had no problem. The University of Konstanz has an extremely interesting internationalization program that is very open to foreign students, so the accompaniment of the office as such is impressive.

But as the boys' own experiences, that's usually what they reported to us. And as I say, a bit of segregation in Spain is a question. More in Spain.

From there here in Latin America the students who, let's see, it was very difficult to convince the children to take advantage of the opportunities that traveling within South America gave them, they wanted to go to another language, to go further, well another culture is here in Guayaquil, but they wanted to go to Europe, to go to other countries. So it was very difficult to convince them to take advantage of the opportunities they had to go, for example, to Argentina, to Bolivia. In Argentina there is a university that has beautiful film and journalism programs, and we have a film degree and a journalism degree.

So you had to convince them to tell them, but leave because it covers absolutely everything, it's not going to cost you a penny. And it's not that I want to go to Spain or I want to go to Portugal. So that was very difficult, but when they went they found realities much closer to ours, with their own differences, more visible, such as the question of food, but not so deep in other aspects.

Perfect. Well, we are already on to the last five questions. The first is, what institutional strategies work best to facilitate adaptation? Adaptation, when students are going to travel.

Or when they adapt while they're already there. Well, it worked a lot for us in the last experiences since having this multidisciplinary team that helped us train the children, preparing them to leave. So we had talks precisely about intercultural communication competence, seeing that not everything is the spoken language, trying to understand what the gestures, movements, symbols are, how I can greet in one place and how I can greet in another.

Entonces hacíamos varias charlas en este sentido. También nos apoyamos del equipo de psicología para que les den charlas en el aspecto este de que van a ir a estar solos, de que podrán llegar con familias anfitrionas o podrán llegar en el campus o tendrán que arrendar su propio lugar, pero que se van a enfrentar a un nuevo mundo, una nueva vida solos. Entonces también nos ayudaba ese acompañamiento que les dábamos desde la parte psicológica.

Trabajábamos con el Departamento de Psicología con Bienestar Universitario que tenía todos estos departamentos. Y así mismo cuando llegaban los estudiantes acá se les daba el equivalente en charlas acá y se trataba de hacer un seguimiento muy cercano. Dentro de la oficina teníamos una persona que se encargaba de la movilidad saliente, entonces era quien respondía y hacía el seguimiento de los chicos que viajaban, y teníamos la responsable de la movilidad entrante que hacía el seguimiento de quienes estaban aquí.

Entonces hacía un monitoreo semanal en el sentido de mensajes de WhatsApp, correos electrónicos, cómo estás, por favor repórtate, cómo están las cosas, cómo te está yendo. Y los estudiantes tenían la obligación de enviarnos un correo semanal en el que nos contaban cómo les iban las cosas. Justamente por eso decía, no había evidencia de este estudiante francés de la cuestión de las calificaciones, entonces nosotros no podíamos asumir responsabilidad, el estudiante tampoco, el profesor más bien fue quien nos ayudó a medir porque no se había reportado eso.

Y así mismo, así como se les pide a los chicos, se pide también al punto focal, nosotros tenemos un, bueno ahora le llaman punto focal, que es un docente en cada facultad que se encarga de hacer seguimiento a los estudiantes internacionales que están en esa facultad. En el momento en el que yo estaba era el subdecano. Entonces así mismo se les consultaba cómo están estos estudiantes, cómo están las calificaciones, si están asistiendo o no están asistiendo, hay algún inconveniente para poder hacer ese seguimiento.

Perfecto. A ver. Hay otra estrategia que nos sirvió muchísimo y que creo que luego nos copiará la Buda.

Teníamos nosotros un programa que se llamaba el Pana Cuenca. Entonces era un chico de la U que se encargaba de cuidarle, acompañarle, enseñarle todo al muchacho o chica que venía del extranjero. Entonces eso era.

Ahí justo este chico japonés le pusimos como otro muchacho que estudiaba para ser docente de inglés, pero en cambio este muchacho era loco por la cultura japonesa, o sea se sabía todo de los animes, incluso tenía una tienda que vendía sus muñequitos. Entonces hicieron un click súper fuerte, aprendieron el uno del otro, al punto que luego este muchacho se fue al Japón. Entonces era una experiencia agradable y se acercaron mucho más.

Y el chico de aquí era sumamente más sociable, se hizo amigo de los otros de intercambio, y luego ya el japonés andaba con los mexicanos. Entonces era, a ese país me olvido decir, en México también venían bastante. Se van también bastante a México.

Entonces nos funcionó muy muy bien el programa de Tupanaú Cuenca que se llamaba. Tupanaú Cuenca, ok. Interesante.

A ver, la siguiente pregunta es, ¿qué aspectos deberían fortalecerse en los programas de movilidad, o qué aspectos deberían fortalecerse en la preparación intercultural previa? Llegó a su punto de vista. A ver, yo creo que es imprescindible, creo que es una deuda que yo tuve cuando no estuve ahí, pero yo pienso que el proceso para poder trabajar con los chicos, debería empezar al menos un año antes. Un año antes porque se les necesita preparar.

Yo sí pensaría que deberían tomar algún taller, una materia transversal, una materia adicional. Yo no sé, ahora en los interciclos veo que en la UUDA tienen estas materias optativas, me parece. Entonces para el muchacho o estudiante que va a planificar ir de intercambio, pues que una de esas materias sea competencia comunicativa intercultural.

Sí, en donde aprenda todos estos aspectos que se pueden encontrar. Hay cosas muy diferentes de todas las culturas, pero en general la competencia comunicativa es común a todas. Es decir, yo necesito desarrollar mis formas de comunicarme de acuerdo a dónde voy y aprender a dónde voy, cómo se saluda allá, qué se hace allá.

Y entender que no todo es hablado, sino que tenemos otros símbolos como gestos, diferentes formas de comunicarnos. Pienso que eso es clave. También pienso que es clave asimismo un pequeño curso, un pequeño taller que muestre a los estudiantes la importancia del desarrollar también la competencia comunicativa cognitiva, la parte académica, no solamente la interpersonal.

Porque, como usted experimentó, puede haber inconvenientes. Si a mí ya me interesa irme de intercambio, y yo sé que posiblemente voy a tomar, vuelvo al ejemplo, filosofía, me voy a poner a leer algo en filosofía en inglés. Entonces tener una especie de guía en ese sentido pienso que también ayudaría un poco en la parte académica cuando se va a estudiar en otro idioma.

Sí sería clave. Y así nos vayamos a estudiar en un lugar donde compartamos el idioma si es necesaria la competencia intercultural comunicativa. Eso sí es clave.

Listo. A ver, la siguiente pregunta es, ¿considera que los programas de movilidad preparan adecuadamente a los estudiantes para el choque cultural? O si no, ¿qué es lo que recomendaría para evitar este choque? Yo pienso que no todos. Incluso nosotros, cuando teníamos estas charlas, me parece que eran muy pocas y por muy poco tiempo.

Sin embargo, en algo se les preparaba. Es necesario preparar a los estudiantes. No podemos simplemente lanzarles y esperar que naden si no se les ha enseñado a nadar.

Entonces sí es necesario. Por eso les decía, a pesar de que parezca mucho tiempo, yo sí pienso que al menos un periodo académico completo, si no son dos, se debería preparar a los estudiantes en todo este proceso. Uno normalmente ya se prepara porque es todos los papeles y todo, pero en ese tiempo también ya se debería preparar para el choque cultural que podrían tener.

Sobre todo ya cuando hayan decidido a qué país van a ir. Podrían tener, como le digo, una asignatura en estas optativas en las que quien planea irse ya la tome, ya se converse, ya se hable y luego ya cuando van a escoger el país, ahí sí las oficinas de relaciones internacionales podrían dedicarse a prepararles a los estudiantes para ese país en específico. ¿Qué estrategias institucionales resultan más efectivas para movilidad académica, sea una experiencia verdaderamente intercultural? A ver, como estrategia es la comunicación constante primero entre las oficinas de relaciones internacionales.

Tiene que haber procesos muy específicos, muy bien estructurados y las dos oficinas tienen que estar en consonancia. Eso es clave, porque a veces la información que manejamos en la oficina de la universidad de destino es diferente a la de la universidad de origen y ahí es donde pueden haber inconvenientes, por ejemplo, en homologación de asignaturas, en cuando nos pasan las calificaciones, entonces las conversaciones entre las oficinas son claves. Los convenios marcos, los convenios específicos, los acuerdos de asignaturas, los contratos previos de asignaturas que se firman antes de viajar tienen que ser muy claros.

El estudiante no puede pagar la consecuencia de que cuando llega el director de carrera o le dicen no, yo no le puedo homologar esta materia y resulta que pierden un año de clases, porque luego tienen que igualarse. Entonces los procesos deberían ser sumamente claros. Considero que una estrategia también debería ser, en nuestro caso en la universidad pública, nosotros no podemos hacer que un estudiante vaya si no se va a homologar al menos una materia porque el estudiante corre el riesgo de perder la gratuidad.

Entonces eso también es algo que se debería analizar. En realidad, ¿cuántas asignaturas deberían homologarse para que no se perjudique la cursada del estudiante y no se retrasen mucho en cuanto al tiempo que necesitan para terminar la carrera? Entonces esa asesoría debería haber, y empieza por la conversación entre las oficinas de Relaciones Internacionales. Como última pregunta, ¿qué errores deberían las instituciones, o la universidad en sí, evitar para que no crezca el sentimiento de inseguridad o exclusión de los estudiantes? A ver, los procesos tienen que ser justos, tienen que ser transparentes y se tiene que abrir la posibilidad a todos los estudiantes.

Nuevamente voy a usar este término, pero en la universidad pública las cosas son muy diferentes. Mi objetivo era que la mayoría de estudiantes pueda viajar. Yo tenía estudiantes que venían y decían, yo me quiero ir de intercambio pero yo no tengo un centavo.

Yo decía, muy bien, entonces sus posibilidades son en Sudamérica, en América Central, vamos, sí puede, hay lindos programas. Entonces como estrategia había que motivar esas posibilidades. O tenía estudiantes que venían y decían, yo me quiero ir a estudiar en la Universidad de Barcelona, pero no tenemos convenio, pero yo quiero, yo tengo la plata, mándeme a la Universidad de Barcelona.

En cambio eso como estrategia a nosotros nos motivaba a encontrar acuerdos. Y recuerdo claramente el caso de este estudiante. Gracias a este estudiante que insistió tanto, conseguimos el convenio con la Universidad de Barcelona y el estudiante se fue, y ahora la Universidad de Coimbra inició los procesos.

Pero porque había esa posibilidad. Entonces yo pienso que una estrategia es escuchar al estudiante, ir viendo las posibilidades y según eso ir analizando los espacios. En el mundo actual está mucho más abierto el asunto de la movilidad internacional.

Otro aspecto que es bien interesante, a lo mejor no es el más apetecido, pero que es muy bueno es la movilidad, mal llamada movilidad, pero a ver, la internacionalización en casa, que es la llamada movilidad virtual. Muchas más universidades están abiertas a esto, y todo esto nació en la pandemia, sí, a través de la red de la OUI, que es la Organización Universitaria Interamericana. Ellos plantearon un programa que se llamaba eMovies, que era la movilidad internacional virtual, y en este, si usted lo puede buscar, todavía existe, ahí le puse en el chat.

Entonces las universidades que querían se inscribían en este programa, y todavía lo hacen, con un listado de asignaturas que se podían cursar de manera virtual, o por las clases por Zoom. Entonces estudiantes de aquí podían matricularse en una universidad en Chile, en Argentina, en Perú, y tomar los cursos, y otros estudiantes podían acceder. Había un catálogo de asignaturas en las que los chicos hacían su movilidad sin ningún problema, y las materias estaban reconocidas, y era muy interesante.

Todavía hay el programa, todavía hay. No le podría decir si la universidad de cuenta está con asignaturas, porque son muy poquitas las que ahora tenemos virtuales, pero sí hay, nosotros tenemos ahora algunas materias híbridas, entonces asumo que algunas están ahí. Otras también, esa es una forma de conseguir también, y muchísimas universidades, esta que le decía, la Universidad de Konstanz, en Alemania, ellos tienen un programa muy bonito de movilidad, de internacionalización en casa con intercambios virtuales.

Entonces eso también abre mucho más las posibilidades para estudiantes que no tienen los recursos para poder viajar. Sin embargo pueden tener esta experiencia de intercambio académico y cultural desde su casa, ¿no? Perfecto. Esas serían todas las preguntas.

Nos dio muchas gracias, y ha ayudado demasiado, la verdad. Espero que le haya ayudado, tanto que hablo. No, no se preocupen, me ayudan demasiado y sé que la tesis me va a ayudar igual.

Cualquier cosa que necesites, si necesita algún dato, alguna cosa, pues con mucho gusto me indica nomás. Muchísimas gracias, y un gusto conocerla, ha sido una persona maravillosa.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

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Antes de comenzar, me gustaría saber un poquito sobre cuál es su cargo, qué es lo que ha estudiado y bueno, eso para añadirle un poco sobre su biografía. A ver, le cuento. Yo soy de migrador de profesión.

Luego de ello me dediqué al área de negocios, hice mi maestría en administración de empresas y luego de ello hice un doctorado en administración y emprendimiento. ¿Cómo así está ahora como director de Relaciones Internacionales? A partir del año 2021, el director de la universidad me pidió que pase a dirigir, a ser la cabeza del departamento de Relaciones Internacionales debido a la experiencia en estudios internacionales. Hablo de mis estudios, yo realicé mi doctorado en Estados Unidos en la Universidad de Florida donde estuve viviendo del 2015 al 2019.

Adicionalmente, por asuntos del deporte, yo he sido seleccionado canciller del país y he estado viviendo y entrenando y jugando torneos en muchos países a nivel mundial. Un poco esas fueron sus bases para poder empoderarme del manejo del departamento de Relaciones Internacionales. Bueno, ahora comencemos con unas preguntas base.

Primeramente, en su experiencia, su punto de vista, ¿qué es la cultura para usted? La cultura son costumbres que cada pueblo, cada localidad, cada ciudad o país pueden tenerlos arraigados en el paso del tiempo en las diferentes generaciones. Son comportamientos y actividades que realizan estos grupos de personas en unidad o individualmente que destacan, resaltan o identifican a los diferentes grupos de personas que practican este tipo de actividades. ¿Qué es la identidad cultural para usted? La identidad cultural es el poder estar orgulloso, el poder rescatar este tipo de actividades o costumbres que le dan cierta individualización, cierta diversidad y cierto reconocimiento sobre orígenes, sobre prevalencias en los diferentes áreas, costumbres y culturas.

Listo. ¿Qué significa para usted realizar un semestre de intercambio? Un semestre de intercambio para mi criterio va mucho más allá de la parte académica, siendo esta la principal razón, la academia y los nuevos aprendizajes, siendo que nuevas formas de enseñanza, nuevas redes de trabajo. Sin embargo, conlleva muchas más cosas, como por ejemplo, en los jóvenes especialmente, el poder salir de una burbuja en la cual estén viviendo, sea esta en un nivel alto, medio o bajo.

Sin embargo, les permite lograr encontrarse, pues tendrán que realizar las tareas por sí mismos. Todas las actividades que probablemente no las realizan en casa, pues una vez con el semestre de movilidad aprenden o se ven obligados a realizar actividades como cocinar, como mantener limpio su departamento, lo que es asuntos de moverse hacia las universidades en metro, en bus, en los diferentes medios que estén disponibles, dependiendo del país de destino. Adicional a eso, pienso que es una oportunidad de buscar cómo presentarse o poderse en una sociedad diferente.

Pienso que los estudiantes pueden o podrían desarrollar habilidades blandas y una de ellas puede ser la empatía, es decir, poder comprender de mejor manera a las diferentes culturas, a las diferentes formas de vida, ya que esta diversidad enriquece muchísimo. Al poder comprender a las otras formas de vida, otras religiones, otros comportamientos, probablemente pueda tenerse más claro la realidad de los diferentes países, ciudades y comportamientos a nivel mundial. Con lo que entendemos, podemos probablemente aceptar o convivir de mejor manera, y esto hace que probablemente se reduzcan, o es una esperanza de que se reduzcan guerras, conflictos, porque podemos tener mejor comprensión de los demás, somos más empáticos.

Bueno, ahora comenzamos con algunas preguntas más directas, que es desde su experiencia como director de Relaciones Internacionales, ¿cuáles son los principales desafíos culturales que enfrentan los estudiantes internacionales que llegan a la UBA? Bueno, estamos en una fase en la cual cada vez buscamos recibir más estudiantes internacionales a nuestra universidad, y lo vamos logrando gracias a que los estudiantes que van pueden mostrar lo que son, lo que han aprendido, y pueden también mostrar lo que podrían recibir si vienen a la universidad de la SUAD. Las personas que llegan acá, pues como barreras, principalmente podrían tener asuntos de idioma, en unos casos dependiendo del país de origen, en otros casos pueden ser los procesos de movilidad, dependiendo nuevamente del país de origen a que me refiero con esto, en muchos otros países, sobre todo probablemente europeos, que es de donde más tenemos estudiantes internacionales, de Estados Unidos y de Europa, los sistemas de transporte no son similares a los nuestros, en los cuales con una sola tarjeta pueden moverse en el metro, en el bus, o en los diferentes sistemas de transporte. Acá pues, digamos, se requiere uno para cada tipo de movilidad.

Adicional a eso, puede ser también la alimentación. Nuestro tipo de alimentación es diverso o diferente, sin embargo creo que hay hoy en día disponibilidad para diferentes tipos de gustos o necesidades que puedan tener. Por último está el modelo de educación que puede haber, depende así mismo del país y de la universidad de origen, en el cual sistemas de asistencia, sistemas de calificaciones puedan ser diferentes.

Entonces, creo que dentro de los convenios, cuando firmamos los convenios con las universidades, una de las cláusulas principales es que el estudiante se acogerá a los reglamentos y regulaciones de la universidad de destino. Y esto ayuda mucho para que ellos sepan que pueden o se acomodan al sistema de la universidad y buscamos cómo reducir ese impacto a través de que tenemos como Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales programas que se llama Amigo Internacional. Buscamos conectar con alguien voluntario que esté disponible para poder rápidamente involucrarle en su grupo de amigos, en las diferentes actividades y con esto ellos puedan tener una relación más directa con la cultura nuestra y con la sociedad.

Porque creemos que eso es necesario, porque creemos que nuestra cultura es buena y el hecho de estar en grupo les va a facilitar mucho aprender a profundidad sobre Cuenca y sobre la universidad. Ok, muchas gracias. ¿Notan diferencias claras entre estudiantes en su proceso de adaptación? ¿De los que vienen acá? Sí.

Pienso que sí. ¿Por qué digo esto? Porque, por ejemplo, tenemos estudiantes a veces de Brasil que vienen y un poco podríamos decir en qué sustento. Esto es en las visitas que los estudiantes internacionales realizan al departamento.

Cuando están teniendo unas fases cómodas y se han acoplado bien, probablemente sus visitas son esporádicas del departamento. Cuando tienen alguna inconformidad, incomodidad o necesidad, las visitas al departamento son más frecuentes. Entonces tenemos que interactuar o buscar solucionar las necesidades que probablemente estén pasando para darles la mejor oportunidad y que tengan una gran experiencia acá.

Ok. ¿Podría contarme una situación concreta que recuerde claramente en la que un estudiante haya tenido dificultades importantes de adaptación? Las personas que hayan venido acá. A ver, por ejemplo, tuvimos un estudiante brasileño en el semestre anterior en el cual se inscribió en demasiadas materias.

Entonces, al inscribirse en demasiadas materias, empezó a tener conflictos en horarios, empezó a tener conflictos en rendimiento, pero él decía que le gustaría y que quería seguir tomando todas ellas. Entonces, tuvimos una conversación un poco más detallada de que la movilidad no era solamente el proceso de aprendizaje, que probablemente podría traer conflictos o problemas en sus notas o en su proceso

de aprobar las materias. Por lo cual, más bien debía de buscar también un espacio para poder dedicarle a conocer, a hacer amigos, a conocer la ciudad, a viajar.

Y esto ayudó a que más o menos pueda entender la importancia de que la movilidad no es solamente la parte académica, sino también todo un proceso de verse envuelto o incluido en la cultura, a conocer y participar de ella. Perfecto. Y la misma pregunta, pero para ecuatorianos que hayan hecho la movilidad académica en otro país.

Pienso que dos cosas allí fundamentales. A medida que vamos mandando más estudiantes a movilidad semestral, más situaciones diferentes o diversas se van a ir presentando. En base a esa experiencia, hay estudiantes que a veces no, podrían ser, las situaciones exactas no las sabemos, pero podría ser que o no se acomodaron bien al país de destino, a la universidad de destino, y probablemente se sienten aislados, se sienten relegados y podrían tener una percepción de discriminación sin que ésta sea marcada, sino más que nada, de acuerdo a los diálogos con ellos cuando regresan, con muy pocos, reitero, como que no se sintieron bien recibidos.

Y la otra podría ser el proceso que tienen muchas materias, ellos eligen tomar las materias, lo mismo que en el primer caso que les mencioné cuando vienen acá, y eso hace que tengamos que explicarles que no es que tienen que tomar muchas materias, que tienen que dejarle tiempo para poder garantizar que pueden aprobar las materias que realmente son las que acaban a homologar. Y esto hace que con los chicos hasta que se acomoden en el sitio, que decidan las materias que realmente van a tomar, que ya van desde aquí pre-aprobadas, y toma un cierto tiempo y eso es parte de que ellos hagan la gestión, tomen decisiones y se acomoden los primeros meses. Listo.

Bueno, si es que se acuerda o tiene en mente algún episodio específico en el que haya observado un malentendido cultural significativo en el ámbito académico, puede contarme cómo intervino usted o cómo intervino este departamento. Bueno, nuevamente regresamos al origen que es los convenios que firmamos con las universidades. En los convenios reitero, se clarifica y se hace énfasis en que respetaremos las reglas y reglamentos de la universidad de destino, entonces por sí mismo buscamos no intervenir en ese estilo de actividades o decisiones.

En donde sí nos toca participar siempre está en los procesos de las materias que pueden tomar, en los tiempos de recepción, ¿a qué me refiero? Por asuntos de visas, los estudiantes a veces llegan algunos días atrasados al inicio de clase en los países de destino, entonces tenemos que buscar, interceder por ellos para que esas faltas no sean tomadas en cuenta, para que puedan incorporarse apenas tengan ya sus visas, sus documentos y sus pasajes de avión listos. Constantemente hacemos monitoreo de si ya los chicos están acomodados, si es que están tomando las materias que corresponde o tal vez tuvieron un cruce de horarios, por ende tienen que cambiar las materias. Es parte de la tarea del departamento y que es fundamental hacerlo y cada vez, digo, más que decir se complica por asuntos de dificultad, se complica por asuntos de tiempo, porque son cada vez más estudiantes que van y el departamento en su limitado número de personas que trabajamos dentro de él, tenemos que buscar hacer esa tarea con todos y cada uno de ellos de manera individual, revisando las materias de las cuales ellos aplicaron, las materias de las cuales han sido aceptadas, las materias de las cuales fueron aprobadas acá.

Entonces es una serie de procesos que lo tenemos bien identificado y lo vamos realizando con el departamento y el seguimiento a cada uno de los estudiantes. Perfecto. Como siguiente pregunta, que es más de la comunicación intercultural, ¿cómo influyen las diferencias culturales en la integración tanto académica y social de los estudiantes internacionales dentro de la universidad? Bueno, buscamos que informarles, además de darles su carné de identidad, mencionarles que tienen todos los derechos que cualquier estudiante dentro de la Universidad de la SUAE durante el periodo que ellos están acá, que se busquen involucrar en las diferentes actividades culturales.

La Universidad de la SUAE tiene muchas actividades culturales, semanalmente hay lanzamientos de libros, actividades de teatro, actividades musicales, coros, los estudiantes de UDAF están haciendo eventos, entonces siempre les recomendamos que traten de involucrarse, que revisen los correos en los cuales les llega esta información para que puedan ellos sentirse parte de la comunidad universitaria. Y adicional a eso lo que mencioné del programa de Amigo Internacional que facilita esta integración mucho más rápido. También a cada facultad vamos con el estudiante para presentar a las autoridades de la facultad y a los profesores que estarán siendo quienes impartan las materias.

Entonces esto, quiera que no, de una u otra manera les da una llegada más tranquila, más segura y siempre estamos con las puertas abiertas para poder resolver cualquier inquietud o duda que pueda tener el estudiante internacional. ¿Hasta qué punto el dominio del idioma facilita o no la integración en el caso de los estudiantes que vienen acá? Bueno, siempre el idioma será una barrera, tanto de los estudiantes que vienen como de los que van es una barrera, que esta barrera va a depender mucho de la actitud de la persona que está en movilidad para poder superarla. Pues las formas de comunicación siempre tienen unas barreras, sin embargo también tienen unas oportunidades de crear espacios o crear gente con la cual se puede comunicar de mejor manera o puede darse a entender de mejor manera.

Esto va a repercutir en las notas que puedan obtener las personas, en cómo se sientan dentro de la ciudad. Sin embargo, buscamos que reciban la ayuda necesaria para que puedan sentirse cómodos dentro de. Es una barrera, sin embargo es superable esta barrera.

¿Entonces existen barreras culturales que van más allá del nivel lingüístico? Sí, yo pienso que sí, definitivamente. Entre unas de ellas son la alimentación, otras de ellas son la forma de poder interactuar con las personas en muchos países, especialmente si hablamos de la región norte, no suelen ser tan fáciles de poder recibir nuevas amistades. Sin embargo, creo que el cuencano en general somos buenos anfitriones.

Y pienso que la Universidad de la Suárez se destaca en ello también, por lo cual buscamos que las personas, los compañeros, los diferentes grupos puedan acogerles como parte de la corte, como parte, como un compañero que esté inmiscuido en sus tareas, en sus actividades y en sus grupos. Bueno, según esta pregunta, ¿podría describir alguna experiencia concreta en la que haya percibido que el país de origen de un estudiante influyó de manera clara en su comportamiento académico o en su forma de interactuar con otros estudiantes? Bueno, aquí tenemos dos cosas, nosotros tenemos dos tipos de movilidad a la cual recibimos. Uno que es del estudiante que viene por el convenio que tenemos con la universidad en particular, viene un estudiante, dos, tres, dependiendo cada semestre y de la carrera que venga.

Sin embargo, tenemos otro tipo de movilidad que es el grupal, es decir, por ejemplo, de Taylor, Belmont o Central College o de SUAMI, vienen grupos de estudiantes a hacer todo el semestre. Entonces, estos grupos no reciben clases en español, reciben clases en su idioma, en este caso en inglés. Por lo tanto, se genera o buscamos crear cursos específicos para ellos, en donde el docente de la universidad de Azuay imparte las clases en inglés y es exclusivo para este grupo de estudiantes internacionales.

Entonces, si hay probablemente esa diversidad o esa necesidad de crear o adaptarnos a lo que ellos requieren, y son casos específicos con ciertas universidades en específico. Cuando reciben estudiantes de distintos países, en el caso que mencionó, ¿de qué manera el conocimiento previo sobre su contexto cultural influye en la forma en la que este departamento anticipa o gestiona posibles desafíos de

adaptación? Creo que lo que hacemos es tener una comunicación directa con el estudiante que va a venir, o con el staff, o con el profesor, porque tenemos los tres tipos de visitantes, para poder entender, comprender sus necesidades. Buscamos que nos comente si tiene algunos requerimientos específicos, como por ejemplo, es vegano, o por ejemplo, tiene algún tipo de religión específica que él nos quiera contar.

Buscamos no preguntar porque son áreas muy sensibles, pero si él nos cuenta, buscamos nosotros darle luces de cómo es la cultura cuencana. Buscamos compartir qué es lo que va a encontrar para que no sea un shock, sino para que esté preparado. Lo mismo hacemos cuando, por algún motivo, alguno de ellos busca hospedarse en las familias.

Es decir, nosotros les brindamos esa oportunidad, que en caso de que quieran, podemos nosotros buscar una familia anfitriona que les recibirá con el debido costo y que tendrán una relación directa con la familia. Nosotros solamente somos intermediarios en buscar dentro de la comunidad universitaria, con lo cual pensamos que garantizamos que va a estar en un hogar tranquilo y seguro. Entonces, creo que esa es parte de lo que nosotros buscamos realizar.

Le preguntamos si tiene alergias de algún tipo, si es que tiene alguna preferencia, por ejemplo, en el hogar o en el tipo de hospedaje que busca, para nosotros guiarle. La universidad no le ofrece hospedaje, pero nosotros como departamento le ofrecemos contactos que él tiene que directamente hacerlos para que todo sea transparente. Ha recibido retroalimentación de estudiantes ecuatorianos sobre dificultades relacionadas con diferentes culturas en países como, por ejemplo, Alemania.

Sé que no ascen directamente a ese país, pero con países con ese tipo de cultura, que son un poco más cerrados y diferente a la nuestra. Bueno, en los últimos años tenemos con Alemania, con Osnabrück, tenemos intercambios en donde en primera instancia te llevan estudiantes para idiomas, estudiantes de un mes. Nos han ido grupos grandes de 10, 12, hasta 15 estudiantes que han ido.

Ahora ya tenemos movilidad con Osnabrück semestral. De hecho, en este momento están dos estudiantes allá en Osnabrück, Alemania. Y acabamos de firmar con dos universidades más, con Kassel y con Bochum.

Y estamos aquí, este rato estaba un estudiante de Bochum haciendo el semestre de investigación de su tesis, va a estar todo el semestre. La siguiente semana llegan dos estudiantes más de Kassel. Y estamos en ese proceso.

Dentro de lo que lleva la pregunta por sí mismo, nosotros buscamos adelantarnos sobre comportamientos sociales del país de destino. Y a los estudiantes que van en movilidad les damos capacitación en todos los detalles que pueden presentarse en la movilidad. Buscamos, en base a la experiencia que ya tenemos, ser proactivos y anticipar a los chicos sobre probables necesidades, probables problemas, probables shocks, como problemas de tipo de conectividad.

Hablamos de electricidad, de accesos A, que deben llevar sus diferentes accesorios. Como el tipo y el cambio de moneda. Como el tipo y trato que podrían percibir dentro de esa cultura, que probablemente para nosotros podríamos asociar que es un poco más fría, más tosca, de ninguna manera mala, sino más bien es su comportamiento.

Y que tienen que estar preparados para poder darse cuenta de que no es una cuestión personal, que no es hacia ellos, hacia el estudiante que va en movilidad, sino es en general su comportamiento normal. Entonces, claro, el trato que la universidad de la SUAE específicamente brinda a sus estudiantes, sus docentes, la cercanía, la apertura, no siempre es lo que van a encontrar en una universidad en el exterior, y mucho más en las zonas en las cuales se comenta Alemania, Bélgica, esos países es más difícil. Sin embargo, buscamos prepararles a ellos para que eso no sea un shock.

Es más, siempre buscamos que emocionalmente las personas estén lo suficientemente preparadas para poder subsistir un semestre solos en el exterior. Perfecto. Y ahora que me comentas sobre los pequeños intercambios que hay de Alemania, ¿sabe cómo ha sido la experiencia o la adaptación que tienen los estudiantes ecuatorianos allá específicamente en este país? Bueno, la experiencia hasta el momento ha sido maravillosa.

Definitivamente tan buena ha sido que el número de estudiantes con el que iniciamos en la movilidad de idioma directamente con Osdabru, que es en el mes de julio, iba un número de 3, 4 estudiantes, luego fueron 12, luego fueron 15. Y estas experiencias positivas y buenas de cada uno de los estudiantes, y que también ha sido muy bien valorado por Osdabru, nos ha permitido abrir y ampliar el convenio a hacer ya no solamente Short Mobility, sino ya es también ahora una movilidad semestral. Este es un poco los resultados de los estudiantes que van, esa actitud positiva y que en realidad creemos que han tenido muy buena conexión con la Universidad de Osdabru en este caso, para que se abran estas puertas y las reuniones que hemos mantenido, tanto reuniones virtuales como reuniones presenciales con las personas de Osdabru.

Perfecto. Entonces, de lo que me comenta, no ha habido un gran problema en las personas ecuatorianas que han viajado a Alemania, a pesar de que este sea un país completamente diferente, culturalmente diferente a la nuestra. No, no hemos tenido las moviidades de corta duración, que es hasta de un mes, sin embargo, en este momento, como lo menciona, están dos estudiantes de movilidad semestral, entonces creemos que ellos tendrán, una vez que regresen, una mejor, tendremos una mejor información sobre cómo se sintieron.

También puede ser que la Universidad de Osdabru tenga un grupo de estudiantes, por ejemplo, que vienen del colegio alemán, lo cual a ellos, muchos de ellos ya han hecho una primera y segunda experiencia que normalmente tiene el colegio en Alemania, por lo tanto ya tienen una ventaja del idioma, y eso también les da una ventaja de comunicación y una experiencia, es decir, facilita la decisión del destino, de elegir el destino. Muy bien. A ver, ¿qué aspectos deberían fortalecer en los programas de movilidad, o qué aspectos deberían fortalecerse en la preparación intercultural previa, en su opinión? Yo creo que un poco más de tiempo y dedicación por parte de los estudiantes y sus familias para buscar acceso a la información sobre los diversos comportamientos culturales del lugar de destino.

Y dentro del mismo país puede haber diferentes comportamientos culturales, por lo cual no solamente deberían buscar como país, sino como ciudad de destino, ya que en Europa se tienen diversos comportamientos culturales dependiendo del país al cual se va internamente. Entonces, eso podría ser. Ahora, siempre es un limitante el factor tiempo.

Los estudiantes antes de irse tienen que hacer muchos papeleos, trámites de visa, tickets, conseguir el hospedaje, ver sobre las materias. Entonces, es comprensible que probablemente no le puedan dedicar el tiempo necesario para poder entender las facetas culturales del país de destino. Sin embargo, creo que esa sí es una necesidad y podría ser una ventaja para quienes están realizando movilidad.

¿Considera que los programas de movilidad preparan adecuadamente a los estudiantes para el choque cultural, o si no, qué es lo que recomendaría usted para evitar un choque cultural brusco? No entendí mucho la pregunta. La preparación para el choque cultural. Esto quiere decir, cuando hay dos culturas completamente diferentes, ¿cómo puede ayudar para que se acople de mejor manera? ¿Qué es lo que recomendaría para evitar estos malentendidos, digamos, entre nacionales y extranjeros? Lo que mencioné hace un rato, generalmente, es que las personas, tanto los estudiantes como los familiares, deberían revisar los comportamientos, costumbres, gastronomía, que normalmente se suceden en la ciudad donde la universidad de destino está asentada.

Porque esto va a facilitar cosas que sean, por ejemplo, los saludos, el tipo de alimentación, ciertas costumbres en el momento de alimentarse, ciertas costumbres que pueden estar arraigadas en esa ciudad sobre transporte, movilidad, ceder asientos, el respeto hacia los mayores o hacia los niños, todo ese estilo de cosas, que aunque parecen generales, pueden facilitar mucho la aceptación de la persona en la cultura. A veces pequeños detalles, pequeños errores, podrían dar a entender dentro de esa sociedad o esa cultura que no nos hemos preparado para ello. Como universidad, nosotros, como mencioné, damos la capacitación y buscamos pedirles sobre esta preparación y buscamos dar ciertos tips, de manera general, sobre los diferentes países a los que va.

Pero es necesario que cada estudiante y sus familiares mucho más estén mucho más involucrados en este estilo de vida, de costumbres, alimentación que tiene la ciudad donde está asentada la Universidad de destino. ¿Qué estrategias institucionales resultan más efectivas para que la movilidad académica sea una experiencia verdaderamente intercultural? Yo creo que poder lograr que los estudiantes puedan ponerse de acuerdo en las materias y horarios que van a tomar en la Universidad de destino, porque esto les da la parte fundamental y pueden ellos distribuir sus actividades, tareas y tiempo disponible para poder estudiar, para poder inmiscuirse en la cultura, para poder viajar y para poder generar redes de trabajo y buscar involucrarse en las actividades de los estudiantes universitarios del país de destino. Y como última pregunta, desde su experiencia, ¿qué desafíos culturales se enfrentan los estudiantes ecuatorianos cuando realizan movilidad en el extranjero? Yo creo que hasta por también como cada estudiante dentro de su familia o de su ciudad. Para mí, lo que más he escuchado de los estudiantes que han regresado de movilidad son la alimentación, ¿sí? Extrañan mucho nuestra alimentación y en ese sentido, pues, creo que todos cuando vamos al exterior, después de unos días, porque a veces movilidad de cinco o seis meses, no es corta cuando se decide que me quedo sin comer algo. Más bien es este estilo de alimentación nuestro el que más extraña. uno. Y dos, creo yo, los sistemas de enseñanza y calificación y contacto con los docentes en las diferentes universidades. Pues muchos de los que van regresan amando a la Universidad de la Suai, no porque ha tenido una mala experiencia, sino porque el modelo que se maneja acá es mucho más accesible que el estudiante sepa cómo está en su desempeño a través de las notas, a través de nuestra alimentación, a través de los diálogos con el profesor. y no se da sorpresa que la nota final aparezca y sea lo que para el docente y la universidad de destino es el desempeño del estudiante. Entonces, hay muchos pequeños detalles que generan estos desafíos en la movilidad que tienen los estudiantes.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: EUE1

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

Listo, a ver, las primeras preguntas van a ser generales y bueno, lo primero que es, ¿qué es cultura para ti? Cultura es una mezcla de tradiciones, comida, ropa, o sea, vestimenta, fauna, flora, todo lo que implica como las características de un grupo. Exacto, puede ser un grupo pequeño de amigos, familia, ciudad, país, etc. Perdón si mi español no es tan bueno.

¿Qué es la identidad cultural para ti? La identidad cultural, como su nombre lo dice, es como una persona se identifica con un tipo de cultura, ¿no es cierto? Puede ser en la que nació, en la que creció, o en la que en algún momento adapta, sí. Perfecto, ¿qué es para ti ser ecuatoriano? Haber nacido en Ecuador, haber crecido en Ecuador, haber crecido con las tradiciones, con la gente, con el idioma, con la comida, sí, nacer y crecer. ¿Qué opinas o qué es para ti ser alemán? Para mí, una persona alemana es una persona que nació en Alemania, que se crió acá, igual, que vivió su vida acá durante su infancia y adolescencia, sí.

Ok, comenzamos ya con las preguntas un poquito más elaboradas, y es, me gustaría que me cuentes cómo surgió tu decisión de estudiar en Alemania, y qué expectativas tenías antes de viajar. Yo decidí estudiar en Alemania porque la educación es gratis acá, y porque la verdad Alemania es un país seguro, es un país desarrollado, y exacto, mi expectativa era venir acá, un lugar donde yo pueda estudiar gratis y tener una educación excelente, con gente excelente y profesionales del primer mundo. La segunda pregunta es, ¿podrías contarme brevemente tu experiencia de estudios en el extranjero o con estudiantes extranjeros? ¿Cómo describirías el contexto al que llegaste? Digamos, la universidad, la dinámica de las clases, el ambiente.

Bueno, en mi universidad, mi ciudad es una ciudad muy internacional, por lo que de los 500 que somos en mi semestre, unos 200 son internacionales, probablemente, y bueno, yo llegué al inicio, era coronavirus, entonces solo teníamos clases virtuales, pero a día de hoy tenemos seminarios todos los días, y lecturas, y en las lecturas el profesor habla todo el tiempo, en los seminarios sí son un poco más interactivos, pero bueno, con el coronavirus era un poco diferente, ahora es mejor. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas o llevaste en este contexto académico? Cinco años, casi. Cuatro años y medio, cuatro años y medio.

Si tuvieras que describir tu experiencia en una palabra o frase, ¿cuál sería y por qué? Duro, porque no es fácil salir de tu país siendo tan pequeño, no es fácil acostumbrarte a tantos cambios del idioma de la gente, del clima, no es fácil dejar todo y empezar de cero, pero ha valido la pena, sí. ¿Cómo fueron tus primeras semanas en el país? ¿Cómo te sentiste? Triste, triste, el inicio fue bastante triste, llegué, estaba frío, oscuro, no me gustó eso, y el contacto también, era difícil mantener contacto en casa por la diferencia de horario, y que las clases hayan sido 100% en alemán fue duro al inicio, por más que tenía el idioma, me costó un poco. ¿Recuerdas alguna situación que te haya resultado particularmente difícil o sorprendente? Cuéntame alguna.

Creo que justamente en este contexto, mi primera clase era de sociología, del desarrollo demográfico de Alemania, en alemán, y cuando salí de esa clase salí llorando porque me di cuenta que no entendía muchas palabras técnicas del idioma, por más que había aprendido el idioma, me faltaba mucho eso, entonces sabía que iba a ser, ahí me di cuenta que me tocaba duro. ¿Qué aspectos culturales te llamaron más la atención al inicio? Creo que el orden, la puntualidad, el silencio, y que la gente está concentrada en lo suyo, y por ejemplo en la calle tú puedes ir gritando y llorando, nadie se va a voltear a verte, es como cada uno está en lo suyo, eso es lo que más me chocó. Entonces considerarías que son más individualistas allá.

Más individualistas y cerrados, es muy difícil que un alemán se abra en el primer minuto contigo, sí. ¿Cómo percibiste la relación entre estudiantes y profesores, o personas mayores a ti, en comparación a Ecuador? Acá en Alemania eres un número más, un estudiante más, ningún profesor nunca va a conocer tu nombre, las clases son enormes, son clases de 500 personas, 600 personas, es una relación, no hay relación entre el alumno y el profesor, el profesor es una persona a la que le tienes sumamente respeto y como digo es muy difícil que lleguen a saber quién eres. Y bueno las personas mayores también, bueno hay que también saber que las personas mayores por el contexto histórico de Alemania han vivido bastante, entonces es un poco difícil, pero es una relación muy grande de respeto, sí.

¿Y en comparación de Ecuador cómo es, cómo lo percibiste en Ecuador? En Ecuador nunca estuve en una clase universitaria, tal vez el primer universitario que hice y la verdad es que el profesor era mucho más tranquilo, relajado, o sea como que no había de verdad ese espacio tan grande entre una figura académica completamente y el estudiante, o sea era mucho más tranquilo, sí. ¿Sentiste diferencias en la forma de dirigirse a figuras de autoridad académica, como cuáles? Justamente eso, o sea al profesor le tienes demasiado respeto, eres uno más, no hay tanta empatía digamos por parte del profesor, o si es que en alguna prueba te faltó un punto no es que puedes decirle oye a profe que puedo hacer algún trabajo o algo así, o sea aquí de verdad es todo legal, es todo esto o esto y ya. ¿Cómo describirías la forma de trabajar en grupo allá? En mi carrera no hay muchos trabajos en grupo, pero los que hay es como, no te reúnes a hacer el trabajo, o sea cada uno hace lo suyo, luego se une y nunca se repasa juntos o algo así, no, cada uno está en lo suyo y cada uno ve por su lado.

¿Notaste diferencias en el apoyo entre compañeros o en la vida social universitaria, como cuáles? Bueno, como dije nunca he estado en la universidad de Ecuador así que no sé cómo es, pero acá la verdad es que cada persona igual ve por sí misma y no hay ese apoyo, no, cadón, cadón y hay bastante competitividad, o sea todos quieren ser mejores que el otro y es muy difícil encontrar a alguien que genuinamente te quiera apoyar y quiera ayudarte. ¿Cómo percibiste el sistema de normas, fechas, límites de organización académica u organización de trabajos? Excelente y muy organizado, nosotros recibimos la fecha de nuestras pruebas dos años antes, o sea tú sabes qué fechas vas a tener, qué exámenes vas a tener en dos años, por lo que puedes organizar tu vida dos años en anticipación y las fechas se mantienen y no se cambian por nada, entonces es muy organizado, es muy firme, no hay, si es que te faltaste una fecha o no entregaste el trabajo, no entregaste, punto, no hay flexibilidad en eso. Listo, ¿hubo momentos en los que la falta o exceso de estructura te generó tensión? Sí, porque si a veces te olvidas la fecha de algo, de anotarte, de registrarte alguna prueba, algún examen, alguna materia, perdiste un año, un semestre, la oportunidad, entonces siempre tienes que estar muy pendiente y acá se espera mucho que uno sea muy autónomo y que uno por sí mismo organice su vida académica, o sea la universidad no te dice, este semestre tienes esto, esto, esto, sino tú activamente tienes que informarte qué deberías tomar para tu carrera en tu semestre, es muy autónomo y sí.

¿Cómo describirías tu actitud frente a estas reglas y cumplimientos de normas? Pues al inicio fue difícil entender de verdad que la estructura era así, que es tan rígida y no puedes salirte de eso, a día de hoy creo que estoy muy bien integrada en eso y me estreso o me tensiono cuando algo no es así de ordenado y así de estricto, lamentablemente. Eso era más. ¿Qué rol jugó el idioma en tu proceso de adaptación académica y social? Yo creo que fue muy importante, yo llegué a Alemania con un nivel C1 en papel que me permitió integrarme de una manera mucho más rápida a todo mi entorno alemán, sin embargo también notaba mucho que las palabras de la vida cotidiana me faltaban bastante y eso generaba a veces en compañeros impaciencia porque hasta que yo no terminaba la frase ya se aburrían, ya no querían.

Pero bueno, fue importante que llegué con el idioma, sí. ¿Sentiste diferencias en los estilos de comunicación? ¿Digamos, han sido más directos o esperaban que asumieras una situación? Mucho más directos, 100%. Un ejemplo fácil, cuando estás comiendo y te ofrecen algo, tú dijiste que no una vez, no te volvieron a ofrecer nunca, en cambio en Ecuador te ofrecen tres veces más.

Son muy directos con lo que quieren y es algo que a día de hoy también aprecio mucho, que indirectamente si tú estás haciendo algo malo o no les parece bien, te digan de frente y la comunicación es mucho más abierta y menos hipócrita. ¿Hubo malentendidos culturales relacionados con la comunicación? Sí, sí. Al inicio me costaba mucho, cuando los alemanes eran directos conmigo, cuando algo no les parecía bien y me decían de frente, me costaba mucho entender que tampoco lo hacen con una mala intención, sino porque simplemente no les parece lo que estoy haciendo.

Yo no estaba acostumbrada a que la gente haga eso, así que me costó mucho al inicio esta comunicación directa que yo no conocía antes. Ahora ya puedo. ¿Qué te ayudó más a adaptarte a este nuevo contexto? Ser abierta a nuevas experiencias, entender también y no tomarme todo tan personal y entender que ellos no se van a acostumbrar a mi contexto, sino que yo estoy entrando a un nuevo contexto, por lo que yo tengo que abrirme y entender que yo soy la nueva y por lo tanto yo me tengo que acostumbrar a ellos, no como uno pensaría.

¿Recibiste apoyo institucional, académico o social? Sí, la universidad ofrece varios cursos para estudiantes internacionales que apoyan al idioma, al mismo tiempo la universidad tiene un grupo de estudiantes internacionales que se unen, que se ven de vez en cuando. Y por temas económicos también he tenido la suerte de que el gobierno alemán me da una beca para estudiar y la universidad también me apoya económicamente con una pequeña cantidad para estudiar. ¿Qué estrategias desarrollaste con el tiempo para sentirte más integrada? Justamente abrirme un poco más de mente, también no tomarme todo tan personal, intentar hablar con la gente y también entender los límites que tienen acá los alemanes.

¿Sientes que esta experiencia cambió tu forma de ver otras culturas? ¿Cómo? Sí, no solo porque aprendes a conocer a todo lo que pasa a tu alrededor, sino también porque cuando sales tú de tu zona de confort aprendes también a conocerte a ti mismo y cómo tú reaccionas en otros contextos. Y estando aquí, como digo, es muy internacional mi ciudad, mi grupo de amigos, tengo una persona que es de India, una persona que es de Turquía, yo soy de Ecuador, de Brasil, de verdad conoces muchos diferentes países y gente de diferentes países, y por lo tanto también abres mucho tu mente frente a todas las, no sé cómo se llama esa palabra, pero es como que la gente de acá es así, la gente de acá es así, ¿cómo se llama? No sé la palabra. ¿Hubo cambios en tu identidad personal o académica? ¿Cuáles? Sí, bueno ya voy cinco años viviendo acá y sí siento que, algo que no me gusta pero que ha pasado es que me he vuelto mucho más fría con la gente, me he vuelto mucho más estricta con el tiempo, con la puntualidad, siempre fui bien decidida con lo que quería ser y eso también me he dado cuenta que esto de ser como decidida y disciplinada, por más que yo creía que era una, pues no, acá la gente es mucho más disciplinada y por lo tanto siento que me he vuelto mucho más disciplinada en eso, sí.

¿Qué aprendizajes interculturales te llevas de esta experiencia? Ay, muchos, sí, no sé, estar con gente de otras culturas, estar con gente que habla otros idiomas, que han vivido cosas tan diferentes y te encuentras en la vida, te hace aprender mucho, como digo, no solo de ti sino también de los demás, te vuelves mucho más flexible, te abres mucho de mente, conoces otras realidades, sí, mucho. Listo, ya tengo las cuatro últimas preguntas que es, ¿qué recomendarías a futuros estudiantes que quieran estudiar en Alemania? Es importante saber el idioma, porque sí siento que eso te facilita mucho integrarte, no solo con gente sino también en el día a día, para comprar, para pedir, para el doctor, para lo que sea, eso es importante y nada, o sea, saber que por más que salir de Ecuador suena muy chévere, es duro emigrar, es duro salir, es duro entrar a un nuevo contexto con gente que es completamente diferente, así que sí, saber, ser flexible con eso y saber que tú tienes

que acostumbrarte a nuevas cosas y que tú tienes que ser la persona que sea flexible. Ya, en tu opinión, ¿qué crees que se podría mejorar en las universidades o en estos programas de movilidad o el que puedan ayudar a integrarse estudiantes de intercambio en tu universidad? Tal vez hacer más eventos donde los estudiantes se puedan conocer, facilitar un poco, socializar, porque es difícil como persona nueva llegar y hablarles a todos, no todas las personas lo hacen.

¿Crees que la preparación intercultural previa es suficiente y por qué? Yo siento que no tuve una preparación intercultural previa buena, por más que hice un intercambio antes a Alemania, siento que no estaba preparada para la realidad que es venir solo a un país y tener tantas oportunidades, así que yo siento que uno no sabe lo que es hasta que está acá. Ya, y la última, si comparas tú y yo de antes, después de estudiar y el antes, o bueno ahora que sigues, ¿qué diferencias encontrarías? Wow, muchas. Siento que he crecido mucho, que he madurado mucho, que cuando uno vive tantas situaciones difíciles y de verdad estás solo, aprendes a resolver, a enfrentarte a los problemas y apreciar todo lo que tienes y cuando estás tan lejos y ves lo que tienes seguro en tu país de origen o así, te das cuenta de las cosas que valen.

Sí, creo que he cambiado mucho. Gracias mi Jose, eso ha sido todo. De nada, me ha servido.

Sí, sí me sirvió pleno, muchísimas gracias y por formar parte de la entrevista. Y perdonarás mi español. No te preocupes, entiendo que eso uno se puede olvidar.

Estereotipos, estereotipos, esa era la palabra que quería decir. Aguántame. Eso me refería, porque es lo que la gente dice que es, pero no son estereotipos, esa era la palabra que quería decir.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

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Entrevistado: EUE2

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

Voy a comenzar con algunas preguntas que son generales y la primera es, ¿qué es cultura para ti? Uy, ¿qué es cultura para mí? Creo que es difícil de definir. O sea, creo... Aguanta, aguanta, déjame pensar. Creo que es algo un poco difícil de formular porque creo que cultura es un cúmulo de factores en los que se engloba costumbres, tradiciones y se manifiesta en una forma de carácter, ¿me entiendes? Entonces, no sé, por ejemplo, te podría dar ejemplos prácticos en donde entraría cultura, pero la definición como tal me cuesta un poco más.

Pero tipo, no sé, por tradiciones y la manera de vivir que tiene un lugar, luego puedes tener problemas en otro porque funciona de una manera diferente, no sé. Definir un poco así, no sé si te sirve o necesito algo un poco más concreto. Todo sirve, no te preocupes.

Respuestas largas, correcto, todo sirve. ¿Qué es la identidad cultural para ti? El cómo te identificas en relación a dónde vienes. ¿Qué es el ecuatoriano para ti? Uy, solo me están llamando.

Uy, sorry, me llamaron, pero yo creo que todo bien. Solo voy a poner la lunita. Ya, ahora sí, sorry.

¿Cuál era la pregunta? ¿Qué es el ecuatoriano para ti? La cultura ecuatoriana. La cultura ecuatoriana, ¿cómo definiría yo? No sé, de hecho para mí hoy en día es una pregunta un poco más difícil, ¿sabes? Porque ya no me identifico tanto con el ecuatoriano, de hecho seguramente tus preguntas vayan para allá más en un futuro, pero yo siento que hoy en día estoy en un limbo, porque en el momento... Ok, siento que esto no va tanto con qué es ser ecuatoriano, siento que esto va más con la idea de cómo te identificas tú, porque por ejemplo la gente que crece, vive y muere en un lugar, como se identifican con el lugar en el que son, y de hecho extrapolan eso al resto de su visión del mundo, ¿me entiendes? Seguramente cuando tú hiciste tu intercambio acá o cosas acá, te habrás dado cuenta que la gente de Cuenca piensa que como las cosas funcionan en Cuenca, funcionan en todo el mundo, y no es así, ¿me entiendes? O sea, a la final en Cuenca las cosas funcionan de una manera y no están ni bien ni mal, solo funcionan y son hasta allá. Y al igual que sería en Alemania, funcionan de una manera y no están ni bien ni mal, solo funcionan porque son.

Ahora volviendo a cómo definiría ser ecuatoriano, no sé, una persona que se crió, se crió, o sea, no sé, como que entiende el contexto de Ecuador, o sea, más allá de un contexto político, como por ejemplo, entiendes los memes de Ecuador, conoces las series de Ecuador, todo lo que engloba como... Claro, sería cultura, ¿me entiendes? No sé. Puta madre. Sorry, sorry, me están llamando como loco, pero todo bien.

Eso, no sé si te sirvió, es un poco complejo. Son preguntas, de hecho, un toque más filosóficas, ¿sabes? Un poquito, pero bueno. Ahorita me gustaría que me cuentes un poco de ti, qué es lo que estudiaste, qué es lo que estás haciendo, qué es lo que hiciste en Alemania, un poco de ti en general.

Ok, o sea, bueno, en relación de lo que he hecho en Alemania, o sea, yo vine aquí a... Ok, empezamos. O sea, inicialmente vine aquí con el fin de solo realizar mis estudios o sea, básicamente solo mi licenciatura y regresar a Ecuador y hacer mi vida allá y de pronto continuar mis estudios acá en Europa, tal vez máster o algo así, pero en fin, solo de hacer mis estudios. A día de hoy el panorama cambió, tengo una perspectiva más en la que me quiero quedar acá y es justo por lo que te dije antes de que... Al inicio cuando vine acá ya era como regresaba cada tres, cada cuatro meses a Ecuador o alguna cosa así y era porque como, por definirte de algún modo, me identificaba como que fuera de allá, pero el identificarse al soy de allá es más como estoy acostumbrado a cómo funcionan las cosas de allá.

La cosa es que después de vivir tanto tiempo acá tienes dos opciones y eso es lo que le pasa a muchas personas. O no te acostumbras y te regresas porque lo conocido siempre es más cómodo, de hecho así funciona en el cerebro humano, o sea, por ejemplo, si tú te ves todos los días del espejo y luego te toman una foto en la que no es como... tú te ves en el espejo, te choca un poco porque el cerebro no es... No busca lo mejor, busca lo que estás acostumbrado. Así, entonces si en algún punto te llegas a adaptar acá igual no te vas a adaptar del todo, porque yo estuve en relación a lo que tú decías de cultura, no crecí acá, entonces hay muchas cosas que a pesar de que me acostumbré a Alemania, en qué sentido, soy más ordenado, soy una persona más puntual, pero por ejemplo no tengo el humor de los alemanes, algo muy estúpido, pero por ejemplo cuando narran fútbol a mí no me gusta cómo el alemán narra fútbol, yo necesito que estén hablando del tiempo, sueltándose cosas, y como somos los latinos un poco más abiertos y hablar.

Y en cambio al alemán le gusta que el narrador, el locutor esté callado todo el tiempo. Entonces eso va más con lo de hoy en día de que estoy en un limbo que obviamente no soy 100%... No, no soy para nada alemán, pero estoy acostumbrado a vivir acá con mi esencia latina,

pero al mismo tiempo también si regreso a Latinoamérica, específicamente a Ecuador, no me sentiría cómodo viviendo allá porque hay cosas que tengo aquí que no podría tener allá y también hay cosas que tengo... Hay cosas diversas, ¿me entiendes? Pero sí, a día de hoy preferiría hacer mi vida acá porque si hago como un trade-off, la balanza sale ganando acá, sí. Todos te van a decir lo mismo, básicamente, de personas que vienen de otros lados.

Es verdad. Todos tienen luego esa pérdida de identidad. Es verdad.

Perdón, solo te agregó algo más ahí que no sé si te sirva, pero también lo bueno es que cuando ya pierdes tu identidad y no estás acostumbrado a un único lugar, sino como que estás más abierto a otras cosas, también ya te da igual dónde vivir y de hecho solo buscas lugares donde te sientas más cómodo y con lo que valoras más. Por ejemplo, no sé, yo cuando vivía en Ecuador no me importaba la seguridad a día de hoy. También puede ser un toque por edad, no sé, pero valoro mucho más la seguridad, valoro mucho más el orden, valoro mucho más que haya una economía con oportunidades laborales, quizás la comida, mi familia, cosas así que a pesar de que la familia es importante, termino valorando esas cosas.

O no sé, pero pendejadas pequeñas. Yo ya no podría vivir en un país que no haya amas, ¿me entiendes? O sea, cosas así. Pueden parecer tonteras, pero... Hacen la diferencia.

Una pregunta, ¿cuándo habías ido a estudiar tu carrera y cuál es el nombre de tu carrera en que te graduaste? O sea, verás, mi carrera empecé en 2021 y estudié en inglés y en alemán sería Business and Economics, Economía y Negocios. ¿Estudiaste en alemán? Sí, o sea, mi carrera es en alemán, pero también tuve muchas materias en inglés. O sea, fue 25, 75.

Ok, perfecto. Pero sí, mi carrera empezó en alemán, solo que había algunos módulos que yo quería elegir que sí hacían en inglés, no había otra opción. Y te graduaste recién, ¿no? ¿En 2025? Sí, sí, me gradué en 2025, en octubre.

Perfecto. A ver, me gustaría que me cuentes cómo surge tu decisión de estudiar en Alemania. Digamos, ¿qué expectativas tenías antes de llegar allá también? Aquí creo que va a diferir un poco.

Creo que va más contextual, por ejemplo, seguramente alguien como la Pocho, había una man que estaba en mi colegio que se llamaba Pablo Ochoa. Hay gente que ya viene con expectativas de, tengo que hacer una carrera y como que tengo que lucirme allá y vivir la vida. Casi como si fuera el American Dream, pero en Europa, ¿me cachas? Algo así.

Yo no venía con esas expectativas. A mí lo que me impulsó a estudiar acá solo era como el quiero algo nuevo, quiero salir de mi casa, como, no sé, también como que ya hice todo el colegio. O sea, también como que mi colegio me condujo allá.

O sea, solo como que ya había una corriente que me empujó acá y terminé viniendo acá. Entonces mis papás me impulsaron un poco y fue como el, más que nada, en mi mentalidad de 18 años, pero como libertad, así. De hecho, eventualmente, o sea, yo cuando acabé, porque, o sea, por eso te dije que mi carrera empezó en 2021, pero yo llegué acá en 2019 e hice un año de propedéutico, porque lo que pasa es que nuestro o sea, el bachillerato, con lo que nosotros nos hablamos, el título no es válido acá, entonces tienes que hacer un año de propedéutico para revalidar tus conocimientos.

Y por ejemplo, después de que acabé eso, yo me quería regresar a Ecuador y como que, ay, mis papás me empujaron a quedarme acá y fue un día de ya no quiero regresar allá, pero es más porque me acostumbré aquí, lo que te decía antes, ¿me entiendes? Perfecto. ¿Podrías contarme brevemente tu experiencia de estudios en Alemania o con estudiantes también extranjeros? ¿Cómo describirías en el contexto en que llegaste? Sorry, si quieres que te diga cómo fue mis estudios en el tema como relaciones o así. Sí, académico y social.

Académico, ok, voy a ser honesto, académico, la verdad, Europa o los países de primer mundo suelen tener una reputación de que es más difícil porque son de primer mundo, sin embargo, diría que en contenido, en dificultad, yo te voy a mentir, o sea, a mí me pareció mucho más difícil algunas cosas que vi en mi colegio que cosas que terminé viendo en mi carrera, ¿sabes? Pero bueno, también está en el alemán, que no voy a negarlos al alemán, si es un colegio difícil, entonces por ahí no sabría decirte, pero sí, o sea, en tema académico le vi igual, quizás solo lo que le pasa a cualquier persona en la universidad, cuando vas del brinquito de colegio a universidad, en el colegio te demorabas, lo que ves en la universidad en una semana, en el colegio te demorabas tres meses, capaz solo es eso, que te hacen acelerar el ritmo, pero también como había hecho en el bachillerato internacional, como que estaba un poco acostumbrado a ese ritmo, de hecho en el bachillerato internacional terminé escogiendo muchos más trabajos y cosas así, entonces de hecho yo sentí que cuando vine a Alemania, aunque me metía en información más rápida, se sentía más light, no sé cómo decirlo, en tema académico más light, y de ahí en tema relaciones sí hubo un poco un problema, porque yo empecé la carrera con COVID, entonces obviamente al inicio solo tenía como el grupo de amigos que hice pre-COVID cuando hice ese pre-universitario, pero de ahí, o sea, ya con el tiempo en lo que me fui adaptando más, se fue rompiendo COVID, como sí fue haciendo más amistades, pero específicamente aquí en Alemania, y eso sí ya va un poco más con tema de cultura, como te decía, hay sociedades que te, y por ejemplo es que también la cultura es lo que te hace un cúmulo de factores, entonces por ejemplo en la cultura también te ves influenciado por el idioma, entonces el alemán interpreta las cosas de una manera un poco más práctica o cuadrada, porque es un idioma justamente práctico y cuadrado, por ejemplo, para decir ambulancia juntan dos palabras, para decir lo que sea siempre juntan dos palabras, y de hecho a día de hoy cuando hablo alemán, como que pienso de una manera más cuadrada, y por eso como que me logro conectar mejor con ellos, pero siento que aquí en las relaciones en Alemania te demoras más en hacer un amigo, cuando por ejemplo en, te pongo un ejemplo en el gimnasio, aquí te ves un año con la misma persona y después de un año eventualmente como que ya eres más pana de tanto chitchat, yo siento que en Ecuador, o sea, los tres días ya man, que viviste dos veces en el gimnasio y eres tu pana, ¿me cachas? ¿Cuántos años llevas ahí? ¿7? ¿8? Yo estuve, este es mi sexto año, porque o sea sí, o sea, vine en 2019, pero vine como a finales, y también en COVID, entonces estuve como un año en Ecuador, y de ahí empecé acá de nuevo. 6 años. Si tuvieras que describir tu experiencia en una palabra o en una frase, ¿cuál sería y por qué? Yo creo que sería la adaptación.

¿Y por qué? Solo porque, nada, o sea, no hay lugar malo o bueno, todo es contextual y todo depende de lo que tú buscas, ¿me entiendes? Entonces lo que te decía antes, o sea, si te logras adaptar y como que cambias tu forma de ser, porque igual a la final una persona no es algo estático, sino una persona es algo más dinámico, como que sí, o sea, a la final sería un poco de materialismo dialéctico, ¿me cachas? En un tema de dialéctica, de que a la final tu entorno te termina modificando, entonces obviamente el Josué de Ecuador ya no es el mismo Josué de Alemania, ¿me cachas? Entonces como que sí, me terminé, o sea, en mi relación con mundo en torno a esa retroalimentación terminé siendo lo que soy hoy en día y me adapté y estoy bien, pero hay gente que por ejemplo no se termina de adaptar y también está bien, prefieren regresar y se sienta más cómodo allá. Porque, por ejemplo, yo soy tedibalo y esto es una opinión muy mía, pero no siento que, o sea, obviamente a día de hoy, por todo lo que viví, prefiero quedarme acá, pero si nunca hubiera venido acá, siento que igual seguiría

siendo súper feliz en Ecuador, ¿me entiendes? Perfecto. ¿Cómo fueron tus primeras semanas en el país? O tus primeras semanas también en el tropeodéutico allá.

Ok, voy a decir que mi casa es un toque más especial, porque igual, o sea, como me vine con un montón de mis amigos, las primeras semanas fueron puro fiesta, conocer personas. Voy a ser honesto, no conocí casi nada de alemanes, porque obviamente como el tropeodéutico era más de gente internacional, terminé siendo más que nada amigos de Latinoamérica, y ahí es donde, con el hilo narrativo que tenemos manejando de cultura, te das cuenta que la cultura latinoamericana es prácticamente lo mismo. Estás donde estés, solo cambia un poco el dialecto, pero de ahí en sí, como que la esencia es la misma.

Entonces, por ejemplo, amigos de México, amigos de Colombia, amigos de todos lados, porque es lo mismo. Y como estás acá, también sientes cercanía, porque se vuelve más relativo, porque le sientes a un grupo más lejano, ¿me entiendes? Entonces, ahora sí, no sé si decirlo, pero por ejemplo, un caso más convencional, que también he tenido amigos, que no es que solo vienen a estudiar, sino vengo a trabajar, o por ejemplo, voy a hacer un máster y no vine con gente de mi colegio, literal, me vine solo. Sí siento que esas personas, las primeras semanas, es un poco, ¿y ahora dónde carajos conozco gente? Entonces, siento que son semanas un poco más solitarias.

Por eso te digo que el mismo es contextual. Perfecto. ¿Recuerdas alguna situación que te haya resultado particularmente difícil o sorprendente? Sí, pero sí, sí, igual, no sé si es, no, es que no sería cultura, pero bueno, no sé, pero es un poco más el tema de costumbre.

Yo siento que como latino, una de las cosas que más afecta es el clima. ¿Por qué? Porque nosotros estamos acostumbrados a un único clima todo el año, casi sin variación, ¿me entiendes? Y cuando llegas acá, tiene un impacto sí, o sea, termina siendo psicológico, porque también es fisiológico el hecho del clima, ¿me entiendes? Alemania es un país casi sin sol, y allá en cambio estamos con UV de 13 casi que todo el año, ¿me entiendes? Entonces, por ejemplo, incluso te dicen los doctores, pero el hecho de que no puedas sintetizar tanta vitamina B3 por el sol, hace que te deprimas. Y de hecho, si sientes en el invierno al inicio, es que te deprimas, ¿me entiendes? Y también, por ejemplo, tú no estás acostumbrado a que como hace frío, ya no puedes hacer actividades afuera, cosas así, o sea, te resulta raro, es un shock.

Y también fuera de eso, por ejemplo, justo con clima, también aquí se mueve mucho más polen, entonces puede ser más propensia a alergias, entonces yo siento que el clima es uno de los dos más fuertes porque te impacta como psicológico y fisiológicamente. Perfecto. ¿Qué aspectos culturales te llamaron más la atención al inicio? No sé, voy a ser sincero, yo creo que nada me llamó tanto la atención, porque también como ya había hecho un intercambio y como que crecí, viví en un colegio alemán, como que ya tenía una imagen súper clara de lo que era Alemania, entonces como, no sé, siento que no me sorprendió mucho, pero como te digo, es mi caso, porque ya tenía como la big picture, así, o sea, como que ya tenía una idea.

A ver. Sí, sí, no sé, máximo lo que te podría decir sería, de pronto, pero ya sabía el orden, o sea, cuando llegas a casa y te das cuenta que vivimos un poco más en caos, pero sí, el orden, eso sí me sorprendió bastante. ¿Cómo percibiste la relación entre estudiante y profesores o personas mayores de ti en comparación con Ecuador? Ok, siento que eso aquí cambia, pero también vuelvo, y sigue siendo contextual, porque la universidad, en la manera en la que yo hice, es como si fuera una película gringa, me entiendes, o sea, en la universidad eres una persona más de un habla con 500 estúpidos, ¿me entiendes? Entonces, obviamente, la relación con el profesor es casi nula, casi que eres un número más en la carrera, porque obviamente, son 700 personas, entonces no puedo hacer mucho, no hay como que una interacción tan cercana con el profesor o así, pero eso es porque yo estoy en una universidad y ese es el formato más común en la universidad en Alemania.

Ahora, acá también tienen algo que es la universidad de ciencias aplicadas, que es lo que sería la Hochschule, que es, por ejemplo, lo que está haciendo ahorita mi novia, Yu, y ahí son clases más pequeñas, es más como el formato de la UDA, que es como tienes el A, tienes el B, tienes el C, son cursos de, no sé, creo que 50, 60 personas, entonces ahí sí hablas mucho más con tu profesor y es más cercano como el colegio, ¿me entiendes? Entonces, sí, eso. Es lo que te digo, es igual a Ecuador, si haces la universidad de formato Ecuador, pero si haces la universidad de formato película gringa como yo, sí sientes más lejanía. Eso.

¿Sentiste diferencias en la forma de dirigirse a figuras de autoridad académica? ¿Cuáles? Ok, aquí de nuevo no sabría decirte, porque no hice la universidad en Ecuador, entonces más bien te voy a preguntar a ti, ¿tus profesores, si son doctores, quieren que les digas doctor, o sea, como sí o sí? Ya, ok, sí y aquí es lo mismo, entonces es exactamente igual. Y también se entiende, o sea, al final si te mandaste los 5 años, pero bueno, eso. O sea, solo como que tienes que ser muy respetuoso con el título de la persona.

A ver, ¿cómo describirían la forma de trabajar en grupo, si es que lo hacen? Eso te puedo decir, te firmo, es exactamente igual que en Ecuador. Vas a tener personas que quieren trabajar, personas que no quieren trabajar, gente que es más baja, gente que es menos baja, se involucran más o menos, pero eso es exactamente igual. No, no cambia para nada.

Ok. ¿Notaste alguna diferencia en el apoyo entre compañeros o en la vida social universitaria? O sea, digamos, ¿eran más individuales o más colectivos comparado a Ecuador? Ok, sí. Yo siento que aquí sí son más individuales, siento que en Ecuador es algo mucho más colectivo.

O sea, al final todo el curso se termina llevando. De hecho, por ejemplo, en Ecuador tengo mucho esa noción de cuando se termina el colegio, muchas barreras sociales que te creas por la adolescencia, como que se rompen y es más esa amistad de sí, todos somos curso, todos somos tal, y obviamente tienes tu grupo más cercano o lo que sea, pero todos se van bien. En el formato en el que yo hice la universidad, como te digo, o sea, al final son 200 personas.

O sea, hay veces que llevo una clase y salía sin hablar con una persona, y sin eso no tenía ningún amigo o algo así. Y de pronto en el recreo me tocaba con un amigo y conversábamos sobre alguna cosa. Bueno, por ejemplo, en el de mi novia, que como te digo, es un formato más con el de Ecuador, de clases más pequeñas y cosas así.

Igual ella tiene su grupo, pero no es como que toda la clase se llegó. Y sí siento que hay una cuestión más de unión en Ecuador. Muy bien.

¿Cómo percibiste el sistema de normas, fechas, límites de organización académica o la organización de los trabajos a diferencia de Ecuador? Aquí son súper claros, específicamente en Alemania con la puntualidad y el orden. Una fecha es una fecha, te pasaste, así sea un minuto, un segundo, no hay plazas extras, no hay nada. O sea, de hecho, por ejemplo, tengo el caso de un amigo que había mandado un trabajo creo que un segundo después, y ya lo aceptaron.

O sea, súper marcantes con las fechas. Ok. ¿Qué rol jugó el idioma en tu proceso de adaptación académica y social? Sí, ahí sí jugó un rol súper fuerte.

A pesar de que crecí en un colegio alemán, obviamente aprendes alemán, aprendes la gramática y tienes vocabulario para situaciones estándar, como si te preguntan del clima, cosas así. Ahora, obviamente, en el aspecto social, ningún alemán habla alemán estándar, o sea, hochdeutsch, ¿me entiendes? O sea, al final sí necesitas un poco de slang, un poco de... Sí, un poco de slang, un poco de... se me fue la palabra, pero umgangspach, o sea, como que un poco más informal, ¿me entiendes? Porque sí no, no te vas a lograr... O sea, obviamente vas a poder hablar con la persona, pero no le vas a poder transmitir las cosas de la manera en la que tú quieres. Y, de hecho, algo... No diría que es un problema, pero sí es como puede ser así una dicotomía.

Mi yo hablando en alemán no es lo mismo que mi yo hablando en español, y ahí es donde sí te quería marcar súper fuerte de que el idioma juega mucho en cómo piensas, porque cuando hablen... Obviamente se conserva una parte de mi esencia, pero cuando hablo en alemán, igual como estoy pensando de otra manera, no es lo mismo. O sea, no llego a ser el yo que hablo en español. O sea, pienso, de hecho, de una manera un poco más estructurada y cosas así.

Y a pesar que sí tengo amigos y ya hablo de una manera informal y todo, no es lo mismo. Entonces sí te diría que es como una versión mía, pero un poco más alemana, ¿me entiendes? Y de ahí, en el tema académico, en el tema académico al inicio sí costó por ejemplo, en Ecuador sí tenía materias y todo en... En el colegio tenía materias y todo en alemán. Y fresco, no había problema, todo bien.

Siempre entendí todo. De hecho, desarrollé full skills en alemán y todo, pero cuando llegué acá, el problema era que había muchas palabras que yo no entendía, y o sea, aunque hables alemán o no, el vocabulario es súper importante. Entonces, y por ejemplo, en ese tiempo no había IA, entonces también era mucho más difícil entender lo que quiere decir una palabra, porque por ejemplo, en Ecuador, cuando tú dices ventas, ventas significa 500 cosas diferentes, y acá tienen una manera de decir ventas, pero ventas es para este tipo de ventas específicas, este es más para facturación, cosas así.

Entonces, al inicio, no era que no entendía por alemán en sí, sino más por vocabulario, ¿me entiendes? Y era súper difícil encontrar vocabulario concreto para lo que querías definir. Y siento que hoy en día no hay tanto esa barrera, porque tienes IA y en dos segundos te dice específicamente lo que dice una palabra, pero sí. O sea, sí, sí dificultó un poco al inicio.

De hecho, tenía las notas de mi final de carrera no tenían nada que ver con las notas de mi inicio de carrera, ¿sí? Eso fue un brinco estúpido. ¿Sentiste diferencias en los estilos de comunicación, digamos más directos, o personas esperaban que asumieras? Sí, sí, es que 100% sí, pero es lo que te digo, eso por ejemplo va, es que es lo que te digo, adentro de cultura, la cultura se ve influenciada por el idioma y es el mismo argumento que te venía manejando, pero el alemán por cómo está estructurado es un idioma práctico, un idioma directo entonces también como la gente se relaciona es una manera directa, entonces por ejemplo, no sé si ha pasado que por ejemplo si un amigo alemán está enojado conmigo por X o Y razón me va a decir, oye, estoy enojado por tal y yo no me resiento, ¿me entiendes? Es, ah, ok, entiendo, dale, todo bien, solucionamos y sí, siento que por ejemplo nosotros como latinos, por un tema ahí sí no tanto de idioma, capaz un poco más de costumbre, cultura, como que a veces, si confrontas algo de manera directa tienes más riesgo de perder una amistad que si votas para abajo del tapete cada quien se soluciona por su lado y como que todo bien, entonces sí, siempre sí ¿Hubo algún malentendido cultural relacionado con la comunicación? Eh, ahora, o sea en esta fase universitaria, o sea yo que me vine de grande, no, pero por ejemplo en los institutos yo sí tuve malentendidos eh, fue cuando hice un intercambio en 2015 que igual de pronto es porque sirve para otro trabajo pero por ejemplo ahí no sabía tanto alemán, o a veces me expresaba de una manera, o tenía otras, también tenía una personalidad más marcada porque era más joven. ¿me entiendes? no conocía nada del mundo, extrapopular más pero ahí sí tuve como malentendidos especialmente o sea todos son un poco ridículos, pero tipo, tema de coqueteo o sea si era un toque diferente, o sea a veces una persona entendía algo, otra entendía otra cosa entonces era un poco raro pero más cuando tenía 15 años de edad adulto era como todo más chill Ok ¿Qué te ayudó más a adaptarte al nuevo contexto? ¿Quién me ayudó más a adaptarme? Eh No, yo creo que como todo en la vida, al final es resiliencia, o sea como todo en la vida es prueba y error. ¿me entiendes? No simplemente tu personalidad o simplemente seguías No, no, o sea yo creo que lo que más ayuda es resiliencia ¿En qué sentido? Por ejemplo, ah ok, esta materia tal vez no entendí, pero me quedo con lo que me sirvió y ajusto para lo siguiente o sea como que se vuelve cíclico de cierto modo, como que vas pivotando entonces no sé, en cualquier aspecto de la vida, por ejemplo básico no sé, un grupo de personas, tal vez en ese tiempo no hablabas tanto alemán, tuviste de pronto un choque cultural por ahí y por acá y no sé, por ejemplo chocabaste porque no eras puntual y ese grupo inicial de amigos se enojó contigo porque siempre llevabas media hora atada de pronto te alejas un poco pero las siguientes personas que conozcas ya sabes que tienes que ser un poco más puntual entonces eso me refiero un poco con resiliencia, o sea como que aunque al inicio hay un poco de rechazo como ser perseverante y o sea que aprendas de lo que ya viviste, en cualquier aspecto también en la universidad en todo, sí, literal Entonces básicamente Sí, sí, resiliencia, o sea como prueba y error ¿Recibiste algún apoyo institucional académico o social para poder integrarte a la sociedad o a la cultura en sí alemana? No, de hecho eso es algo que por ejemplo como extranjero si no tienes una beca porque, o sea sí quise en su momento aplicar una beca, el problema es que mi nota al inicio, o sea mis notas no eran o sea no eran malas pero tampoco eran las mejores porque al final, o sea como que sí, terminé ponte tesis, nota perfecta cosas así, como eran mis notas, no sé si es sincero, pero por ejemplo en el colegio o sea, no es que era alumno ejemplar, pero sí tenía buenas notas, o sea tipo mi promedio era 9.50 para arriba, o sea súper bien Luego cuando llegué acá, por ejemplo hice su propio óptico, también nota excelente, o sea que hubo un 90% Pero luego cuando empecé la universidad al inicio, como sí me estaba costando entonces mis notas no eran tan buenas, que eran como 70, 75, que o sea para como yo normalmente aprendía sí me costaba, pero yo al final como que sí tenía mejores notas, entonces por eso yo no pude aplicar una beca Pero con tipo la Jose, que siempre tuvo buenas notas, creo que ya sí pude aplicar Pero de ahí, eso te pasa si eres latino Y si ves el shock por ejemplo con los alemanes, porque aquí sí tú eres alemán, y estás estudiando en la universidad, y eres menor de cierta edad tú puedes reclamar una cosa que no me acuerdo ahorita el nombre, pero creo que le dicen el BAFG que es como una ayuda estatal que te pasa mil euros mensuales, solo por estar estudiando Pero como latino, o como extranjero, no te brinda nada Solo, o sea, beca por notas pero necesitas muy buenas notas Ok, ¿y en la parte social? En la parte social, no O sea, creo que si creo que las universidades te brindan apoyo o sea, como que tienes grupos de acá anda y conoce gente pero honestamente nunca fui, porque también siento que la mayoría de personas que van a ese tipo de cosas o sea son, puta no quiero decirlo de la manera que suene feo, pero es gente que no tiene un skill social muy desarrollada entonces si vas a ese tipo de cosas, hasta tú te terminas sintiendo más de incómodo, porque no es como que te estás encontrando con gente que busca conocer más gente, sino que te estás encontrando con gente que quiere desarrollar las habilidades para conocer más gente ¿me entiendes? Entonces no recibí tanta ayuda, yo creo que cuando terminé conociendo más personas, fue cuando se terminó COVID en el gimnasio, era como ah sí, caminamos en una máquina tal, y terminé haciendo amigos o por ejemplo, también hay un bar que me gusta full empecé a ir ahí, como que ya me volví regular y como que terminé haciendo full amigos o había fiesta de tal hablabas con alguien, o sea, como en Cuenca ¿me entiendes? Pero, o sea, sí te brindan, pero no creo que es tan útil, así que no ¿Sientes que esta experiencia cambió tu forma de ver otras culturas? ¿Cómo? Sí, cien por ciento, de hecho te voy a dejar una frase que es

súper fuerte, pero a día de hoy soy una persona más relativista en el sentido filosófico de la palabra de que, por ejemplo que, te pongo un ejemplo con el bien y el mal, o sea no existe el bien y el mal el bien y el mal son palabras contextuales ¿me entiendes? o sea, por ejemplo algo un poco fuerte, pero por ejemplo hace 200, 300 años en Sudamérica era bien visto tener un esclavo pues bien hoy en día no, ¿me entiendes? o sea, es contextual contingente a y siento que en la cultura es lo mismo, o sea, no hay culturas que estén bien o mal, por ejemplo uno como ecuatoriano tiende a pensar como, no, pero al europeo le falta sazón o por ejemplo, también la típica imagen de que te pintan de que las mujeres viven súper restringidas en Oriente Medio, cosas así y sí, pero eso no es nuestra perspectiva ¿me entiendes? o sea, al final todas las perspectivas son válidas, es solo como tú vives con la tuya y eso es lo que te hace lo que le da sentido a tu mundo pero todas son válidas, ¿me entiendes? ninguno está bien o mal, todas son válidas, solo es como la gente entiende las cosas ya la actitud de todos es el penalti pero todas son válidas a ver, déjame ver otra pregunta todo bien. ¿Qué recomendarías a futuros estudiantes que quieren estudiar en Alemania? Sí, en cambio acá en universidades es muy como, ok, eso es lo que vemos ahora, no hay deberes, no hay más notas, no hay nada. Literal la única calificación que tienes para la materia es bien el trabajo que tenías que entregar, mantienes asistencia y no tienes nada más, o el examen. Eso es literal una nota única. y ya cómo organizas tú tu vida depende de ti. Entonces eso de que tú tienes que desarrollar responsabilidad por ti mismo es algo que me gusta mucho de acá, pero eso es como que es justo lo que decías, nace de ti mismo, no tanto de ellos. Y la idea, yo creo que ponen a hacerlo mejor para que te adaptes, porque, por ejemplo, Estados Unidos, o sea, obviamente la idea de los Estados Unidos está súper complicada y todo, pero es muy histórico y el país en el último siglo, el país que más extranjeros ha aceptado es Estados Unidos y el segundo es Alemania. Entonces aquí sí, la cultura también es relativamente abierta a recibir personas. ¿Me entiendes? Pero si no se mueve como que si desaparece en la universidad, no hay nada y vas a ser mejor la pena a ti. hay muchas personas que terminan fracasando en la universidad acá porque no llegan a desarrollar ese sentido de responsabilidad propio. Por ejemplo, tengo una amiga que el día de hoy le cuesta estudiar. No tienes aquí nadie que te va a dar un lugar donde no te vas a hacer nada. Perfecto. A ver, ¿crees que tuviste preparación intercultural previa suficiente o crees que esta preparación es importante? Sí, sí, creo. A ver, pues son las dos. Una es importante y la otra es importante. Si no vives no pasa nada, igual de alguna manera lo vas a lograr. Tengo amigos que, por ejemplo, tengo un amigo de 30 años que viene a México. No conocía nada de la cultura alemana y ok, llegó, se terminó adaptando, aprendió el idioma, tiene amigos alemanes, de la mayoría no que latinos, cosa que también me pasó a mí. a pesar de que hablo alemán y todo, la mayoría de mis amigos que siguen siendo latinos, pues obviamente más social más con personas latinas que con alemanes. ¿Pero bueno, y tengo una pregunta sobre algo que ibas a decir? Ah, um No, creo que sí. ya respondiste. Que si crees la preparación intercultural. Ah, sí, sí, lo que me parece necesario, pero sí es útil. Por ejemplo, me decían recursos intercambios, que es lo que los intercambios me unían, porque ya más o menos entendía cómo funcionaba Alemania. También mis créditos siempre fueron diciendo, por ejemplo, en Alemania hay tal regla, por ejemplo, con el nivel de intercambio, tu edad me decía, no creo que era de 14, pero hay un límite dado para estar en la calle hasta las 10 de la noche. Entonces sí, ya básicamente como todo bien, pero si tampoco sabes, de alguna manera te terminan entendiendo. Si comparas tu yo de antes y el yo de ahora, ¿qué diferencias encontrarías? Yo, ok, estamos aquí. Creo que las diferencias más fuertes van en relación a contexto en el que viví. No es necesariamente toda la gente que tenga alemanos inmigrantes va a vivir eso, pero la más fuerte, por ejemplo, yo creo que es que tienes que ser una persona muy organizada. Antes era una persona muy desorganizada. Y falta un minuto, por eso te pregunto si deseas añadir algo más o si no, te agradecería mucho, en serio. Gracias por ayudarme en esta entrevista

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: EE 1

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

Listo, primero voy a comenzar con algunas preguntas generales, por ejemplo, ¿qué es cultura para ti? Cultura yo creo que es parte de la identidad de un lugar o de una persona que puede cambiar mucho dependiendo como de tu propia percepción, porque para mí la cultura ecuatoriana es una cosa y para otra persona puede ser totalmente algo diferente, entonces yo creo que eso. ¿Qué es la identidad cultural para ti? La identidad cultural para mí es esa parte de la cultura que está como establecida que tú tomas, y te identificas como tal, como me apodero, o sea no me apodero, sino como como esa parte como mía, de la cultura. ¿Qué es ser ecuatoriana para ti? ¿Qué es ser ecuatoriana para mí? No importa si no es rápido, ¿verdad? No, ok, a ver, para mí ser ecuatoriana es ser latina, tener un montón de historia, es lo que yo soy, porque obviamente, bueno, toda mi familia, no tengo padres ni abuelos de otras partes, todos son de aquí, entonces yo soy ecuatoriana, o sea, yo soy la persona más ecuatoriana del mundo, literalmente, entonces, no sé, pero ¿ser ecuatoriana yo o ser ecuatoriana como el ser humano ecuatoriano, las personas ecuatorianas? ¿Cómo tú te sientes ecuatoriana? ¿Eso? Ok, ahorita quiero que me cuentes un poco qué es lo que estás haciendo, cuándo hiciste tu intercambio, cuéntame un poco de eso, para ponerte como biografía.

Ah, ya, buenísimo, a ver, el intercambio lo hicimos en el 2022, ¿a comienzos de 2022? 2021. Ay, fue que nos fuimos, y volvimos en el 2022. Sí.

Es millón. Hace cuatro años. Es millón.

Hace menos. A ver, ¿qué estás estudiando ahorita? Yo ahorita estoy estudiando Psicología Organizacional, comencé estudiando Psicología Clínica, pero me cambié, porque la gente estaba bien loca, yo vi, bien loca, me tocaba ir al Hospital de Neurociencias de Guayaquil, que tenía pacientes mal, o sea, que tenían esquizofrenia, bipolaridad, así, y me encantaba, lo peor es que me encantaba, y yo iba feliz a la vida, pero luego me daba miedo. Me daba algo, o sea, yo llegaba a mi casa mal, o sea, como a, no sé, tenía que llegar a bañarme porque me sentía horrible, como, ay, no, horrible, horrible, entonces por eso me cambié a Organizacional, que es más de empresas y tal, entonces ya no veo tanto eso de gente loca.

Perfecto. Ahorita me gustaría que me cuentes un poco cómo surgió tu decisión de estudiar en Alemania, de hacer el intercambio. Leer el intercambio surge porque justamente esta pandemia no estaba teniendo clases presenciales en el colegio, porque yo estaba en el colegio, leía solo cuando estaba en el segundo bachillerato, por eso yo, como soy régimen... Costa.

No, pues, ¿cuál somos el régimen? Nosotros somos régimen Sierra, ¿o no? Somos Régimen Costa, pero bueno, no sé. Sí, tienes razón, somos Régimen Costa. Ya, pues, entonces, este, bueno, la cosa es que yo, este día se me ocurrió en el segundo bachillerato porque ya estábamos en pandemia, ya estábamos teniendo clases en línea y en tercero, pues, yo ya no entré a tercero ese año, yo ya me fui al intercambio.

Entonces, esto salió y surgió porque, primero, no estábamos teniendo clases presenciales, yo vivía encerrada en mi casa y yo vi en redes sociales, en TikTok específicamente, una chica que ella iba a una boarding school en Canadá y me pareció increíble, me pareció lo más

increíble de mi vida y yo quise, como que dije, yo también quiero eso. Entonces, dije, mamá, me quiero ir allá, esta niña sigue teniendo clases, como que solo puede estar en su colegio y no puede salir, pero al menos vea a más gente, ¿no? Entonces, se me ocurrió este día y dije, como que qué increíble. ¿Qué pasa? Que para eso tenía que renovar la visa norteamericana y no había citas, no había citas para nada, o sea, sí te daban cita, pero como que dentro de un año.

Y yo dije, no, pues imposible. Entonces, mi mamá me dijo, andate a Europa. Y dije, como que, bueno, pues que nunca fue mi idea, para empezar, nunca fue mi idea ir a Europa, como que menos a Alemania.

Entonces, a mí se me ocurre, como que sí, ok, voy a aprender otro idioma y ta, ta, ta. Pero ya, obviamente, la boarding school quedó de lado y fue como, me voy directamente a intercambio porque sí estaban haciendo intercambios y no todo el mundo, creo que EF no estaba haciendo, por eso como que terminé en YFU. Por lo que aún era pandemia, pero había países que ya estaban como súper más relajados, como que con las normas que había que seguir.

Entonces, yo pues ahí, este, entre todos los países que escogí, escogí Italia, ya, ese fue el primer país que escogí. ¿Qué pasa? Que luego me dijeron, como que no, imposible, que Italia no se puede, no se puede, imposible. Luego para Francia y Suiza se necesitaba cierto nivel de francés, que yo no tengo ni idea del francés, entonces dije, ok, no se puede.

Ajá, el segundo que dije fue Suiza, 100%, vamos, Suiza, Suiza, Suiza, Suiza, Suiza, y bueno, no se puede. Y ya luego me dijeron, como que Bélgica o Alemania. Y yo dije, bueno, ya Alemania, porque ya tenía amigos que se habían ido de intercambio a Alemania y me habían contado que las fue increíble.

Entonces yo dije, como, y en cambio en Bélgica, yo no digo que sea feo, pero como que no había tenido ninguna, como, persona que me hubiera contado su experiencia que yo hubiera dicho, ok, quiero ir. Entonces, por eso fue como que la, ya dije ya, Alemania. Ok.

Podrías contarme brevemente tu experiencia de estudios en el extranjero o con personas extranjeras, que en este caso serían alemanes, y cómo describirías el contexto al que llegaste. ¿Cómo fue la experiencia? A ver, iba a una escuela, estaba en el primer año de bachillerato en Alemania. Mis compañeros eran, tenían, la mayoría tenían mi edad y la otra parte tenían, eran un año menores, entonces no había mayores a mí.

Yo, bueno, eso es una comparación que yo hice, que la educación en mi colegio de Santo Domingo, de Ecuador, un pueblo, no es tan deficiente como yo me imaginé cuando estuve estudiando ahí. O sea, yo cuando estuve en Alemania me imaginé que iba a ser mucho más deficiente mi propia educación, pero me defendía súper bien en cosas como inglés, física, matemáticas, historia, un montón más que ellos, incluso historia de Europa y del mundo. Obviamente ellos sí sabían más de temas sociales como el comunismo, el socialismo, el feminismo, que obviamente eso no, o sea, al menos en mi colegio no se hablaba mucho, que lo que yo sabía era ya por cultura general, por, ya.

Pero eso, eso, ¿cuál es la pregunta? ¿Cómo describías el contexto al que llegaste? O sea, ¿y cómo fue tu experiencia más o menos? O sea, ¿fue linda? No. Me hubiera gustado mucho más haber estado como en esa, como en IEF, que van como a esas escuelas a las que van directamente a aprender el idioma, en vez de como que de una ir a un colegio con alemanes. Porque, pues, sí fue difícil adaptarme.

Para mí sí fue difícil adaptarme. Primero que todo porque yo llegué sin ninguna base de saber alemán. En el colegio había cosas que, había materias, por ejemplo, que yo no tenía acá en Ecuador que, bueno, tú podías ya escoger las materias, ¿no? En el colegio.

Y había materias, como, bueno, pero, por ejemplo, no recuerdo, Yuli. Bueno, pero había materias que yo no tenía, entonces, como que mi madre era de Ecuador. Entonces, para mí sí, eso fue como diferente.

Pero, sobre todo, como que lo más diferente era la gente, pues. Tenía compañeros, un montón de compañeros musulmanes que sí se llevaban con los alemanes súper bien en la clase y tal, pero, por ejemplo, a la hora de salir el break o a la hora de irse a almorzar no estaban juntos, o sea, no salían juntos. Y de ahí, sí, o sea, la educación bien, las participaciones en clase, todos participaban, todos se llevaban bien.

O sea, como en un colegio cualquiera, ¿sabes? Si tuvieras que describir tu experiencia en una palabra o en una frase, ¿cuál sería y por qué? ¿La experiencia de la educación o de todo el intercambio? De todo el intercambio. Madurar. ¿Por qué? Porque yo no sabía, o sea, ni siquiera cruzar la calle sola.

Nada. No tenía idea de cómo hacer nada. Yo no tenía idea de cómo comprar un vuelo sola, o sea, que siempre que tenía, yo le decía a mi mamá.

Incluso en los momentos de intercambio, o sea, de que yo le llamaba a amigas, les entregaba mi tarjeta y les decía, compre el vuelo, ayúdenme a comprarme este vuelo a este lugar porque yo no sé cómo. O les decía a mi familia de intercambio, les decía, ayúdenme, es que yo no sé cómo. No sabía hacer absolutamente nada.

No sabía hacer ni pancakes, no tenía idea de cómo funcionaba una tarjeta de crédito. O sea, de cómo, nada. O sea, de cómo sacar plata de una, nada.

Absolutamente nada. Entonces, creo que fue como full aprendizaje. Full aprendizaje, aprendí un montón de la vida.

Y pues de madurar también. Fue la primera vez como que estaba literalmente lejos de mi casa. Ok.

¿Cómo fueron tus primeras semanas en el país? En Alemania y en la escuela también. A ver, en el país fueron increíbles porque justo llegamos en verano. Entonces, estaba en vacaciones.

Y, bueno, yo, claro, llegamos de vacaciones. Y fue increíble porque el clima era espectacular y yo no llego a la casa de mis hosts, familia, porque ellos me dijeron como que justo cuando ya iba a viajar, me dijeron como que no, no te vamos. ¿Sí te acuerdas? Que me dijeron como que no, no te vamos a aceptar, o sea, no te podemos recibir porque no se iba a intercambio y no se podía ir, entonces no te podemos recibir.

Entonces, a mí me tocó ir a la casa de esta otra señora que tenía otro estudiante. Ella tenía otro estudiante de intercambio de Tailandia. Entonces, ella ya tenía, que ya ya llevaba ahí como ocho meses.

Unos seis, siete, ocho meses. Y entonces, ella ya tenía su propio grupo de amigos de Alemania, de la misma ciudad en la que yo vivía. Entonces, fue super chévere porque yo llego a esta casa donde había otro estudiante de intercambio que estaba en la misma situación que yo.

Y que ya tenía sus amigos. Entonces, para mí fue como que de una, ya tenía un grupo de amigos, ya tenía una amiga también de intercambio, y ya fue más fácil adaptarme. Y de ahí, las primeras semanas de clases, el primer día fue horrible.

Llegué a la casa llorando. Porque yo nunca había sido, o sea, como que nueva en un colegio, nunca porque en el colegio de aquí había estado desde los tres años. Entonces, yo me acuerdo que llegué y no sabía qué hablar, ni cómo hablar, ni nada.

Porque estaba super perdida. Y nadie me habló ese día. Como que solo se me acercaron a preguntarme cosas de como, oye, ¿de dónde vienes? Pero de ahí como que en el recreo y tal, una chica que era católica, que dijo que estaba haciendo obras sociales, se me acercó y me comenzó a contar eso de las obras.

Entonces, yo no sabía si yo era su obra social. Pero yo me sentí así. Entonces, yo llegué a mi casa llorando.

Ya, entonces, llegué llorando. Y fue horrible. Y me acuerdo que lloré.

O sea, yo oré y le pedí a Dios, por favor, ayúdame, porque no sé qué hacer. Entonces, ya como que el día siguiente me levanté, me focalicé, volví a rezar, me miré en el espejo y dije, por favor, si ya va a salir bien. Y ya fui ya, obviamente, con una actitud más como que, si no me lanzo, de que yo, a mí nadie se me va a acercar.

Entonces, fui como que directamente a hablar, a preguntar, a acercarme, a tal, tal, tal. Y ahí fue de hecho también, cuando comencé a fumar cigarrillo así normal, porque era la única manera que yo conocía de socializar en ese momento. Era como, me acercaba así en el recreo, ¿fumas? Me decía, sí.

Y yo, ay, yo también. Me decía, ¿quieres? Y yo, sí. Y ahí me quedaba.

Entonces, esa fue lo mejor. Así, entonces, ya ahí como que poco a poco, las primeras semanas, esa fue mi manera de aprender a relacionarme. Y ahí comencé a hacer amigas, pues, del colegio y tal.

Y luego comencé a invitarme a reuniones, a las discotecas que iban y tal. Ok. ¿Recuerdas alguna situación que te haya resultado particularmente difícil o sorprendente? Un montón.

Yo creo que, primero, o sea, mi familia, mi familia creo que fue lo más difícil. Porque eran, yo tenía un grupo de amigas alemanas y tenía un grupo de amigas que eran, que eran de mi colegio, que ellas eran de una rusa y las demás eran árabes. Y, pero no musulmanas, solo alemanas, o sea, no sabían hija ni nada.

Y eran increíblemente, o sea, eran, siento que lo más cercano a gente latina que conocí porque no tenía una sola amiga latina. Entonces, era súper chévere, como que, cuando ibas a sus casas, de que la mamá se ponía a prepararte comida y tal, así como súper latino. Entonces, mi familia era, no les gustaba eso.

Eran súper racistas, eran súper, no, clasistas. ¿Qué es lo contrario al clasismo? Eran muy socialistas, muy socialistas, odiaban el capitalismo, lo odiaban. ¿Y qué pasa? Que, o sea, yo siento que ahí fue cuando me di cuenta que tal vez, o sea, la forma en la que yo vivo, o tal vez, no sé si Ecuador es quizás un poco más capitalista que el norte de Alemania, que obviamente estuvo liderado por los niños soviéticos, ellos eran comunistas casi.

Entonces, sí, eso era feo, porque, por ejemplo, ellos iban súper y de que hacían una lista y solo compraban mermelada, queso y papel y ya, nada más. En cambio, yo era como, yo compraba de todo, o sea, por ejemplo, si ya sabía que me iba a enfermar y compraba bolsitas de té, ibuprofeno, compraba snacks para tener, o sea, para, en general. Y eso, otra cosa que no les gustaba era que, por ejemplo, yo iba a comprar, yo no tenía ropa de invierno y yo no, aquí hace calor en Santo Domingo.

Entonces, cuando yo iba a comprar de que medias largas, nuevas chompas o buzos, me decían como que, ay, ¿por qué sigues comprando? Que no sé qué, que no sé cuándo, yo, pero es que, ¿qué? Que me muero de frío. Entonces, esas cosas, yo creo que eso fue lo más difícil, la familia, que siempre eran comentarios así, súper feos, o me decían como que, ay, no, pensamos que, ay, yo creo que eso fue lo peor, me decían cosas como que, ese es tu papá, ese es tu papá, y yo como, sí, ¿por qué no es blanco como tú? Y yo, yo no soy blanco. Y eran cosas que a mí sí me hacían morir de iras, morir de iras.

Y me acuerdo que también, yo creo que eso fue lo peor, o sea, de verdad, ellos también llamaban a su hija que estaba de intercambio todos los días, y mis papás no me llamaban todos los días, porque la hija de ellos estaba de intercambio en España, mis papás estaban en Ecuador, el cambio de horario, todo era diferente. Yo no hablaba todos los días con mis papás, y siempre me decían como que, ay, tus papás no te llaman, ay, ¿no te han llamado hoy? Ah, nosotros ya llamamos a nuestra hija. Eran cosas que yo, eso me hacía llorar, pero yo no le decía nada, y yo me acuerdo de llorar y decir como que, yo soy demasiado tonta, yo me sentía tonta por llorar por cosas así.

Pero luego me di cuenta que sí, era súper feo, o sea, sí, verdad, realmente era feo. Pero ya luego, o sea, que con los años de que ya, ahora, yendo al psicólogo, o sea, de verdad, había cosas que ellos decían que sí eran súper feas, y yo solamente decía como que, ay, yo estoy exagerando, que no, que sí era, no sé si racismo, o xenofobia, o qué era, no sé, pero hay un montón de comentarios que no, que no iba. Está bien.

¿Qué aspectos culturales te llamaron más la atención al inicio? Yo creo que la comida. Yo creo que, sí, la comida. Mira, yo en Oldenburgo, la mayoría de la gente era vegetariana o vegana.

Habían de hecho súper mercados chiquitos que eran sólo de comida vegetariana y vegana. Entonces yo me terminé volviendo vegetariana, no vegana porque era muy difícil, pero vegetariana sí, porque era más fácil ser vegetariana que no serlo. Entonces, obviamente en el intercambio en algún punto sí debí haber comido algunas cosas que sí tenían animales, pero de que mi día a día normal era sin animales.

Sólo huevos, leche, o sea, y queso. Pero de ahí todo lo demás no era animales. Ni nada, ni desde el shampoo, todo era una vida vegetariana.

Yo creo que eso fue lo que más me impactó, porque mi familia en la que yo vivía, ellos, el papá era vegetariano. De ahí los niños y la mamá se comían animales. Pero de ahí como que todas mis amigas eran vegetarianas o veganas.

¿Cómo percibiste la relación entre estudiante y profesor o personas mayores a ti en comparación a Ecuador? ¿Crees que era igual? ¿Difirió en algo? Yo creo que era igual. Eso sí, era igual. Trataban a su abuelita que tenían, la única que tenían, que aún estaba con vida.

Igual, o sea, igual que como yo trato a mis abuelos. Trataban a sus papás igual que como yo los trato, pero el papá no trataba... bueno, el papá también era muy frío. Yo creo que eso era lo más raro.

Pero de ahí, súper sí. Algo que sí me impresionó mucho, el trato, era que ellos, para los papás, la mayoría de papás, alemanes sobre todo, porque obviamente los árabes no pensaban igual, pero de los papás alemanes casi la mayoría era como súper normal de que tú llegaras con tu pelado, pelada a la casa, hola, ¿cómo estás? Y que se quedara a dormir. Eso creo que para mí sí fue lo más grande, como que cambio el trato de los papás y los papás, porque ya era normal.

Pero eso como que de que fue tan normal, eso me parecía muy loco. Eran más liberales. Súper sí, o sea, de que yo nunca llevé a nadie, a ningún man, así que... porque me parecía horrible, me hacía demasiada vergüenza porque en mi casa no se hubiera permitido algo así.

Sí, sí. Sentiste diferencias en forma de dirigirse a figuras académicas de autoridad, en comparación a acá en Ecuador, por ejemplo, los profesores, ¿cómo eran? ¿Con respeto? ¿O eran más amigables? En mi caso, en mi colegio al menos, y mi mamá que era profesora, era igual, para mí era igual. No más que obviamente ahí le decían por el nombre, lo cual yo no había visto porque en mi colegio le decíamos como profesora, profesora.

Y obviamente ya en la universidad ya le decimos a los profesores por el nombre, pero en el colegio les decían por el nombre no más. Eso, pero ahí igual, o sea, de hecho siento que... bueno, también mi clase en Ecuador eran bien terribles. Entonces, eran mucho más irrespetuosos, mucho más irrespetuosos.

Súper mal, o sea, que los profesores les insultaban, no les daban bola, salían de la clase cuando les daba la gana, en cambio ellos eran más educados. Ok. ¿Cómo describirías la forma de trabajar en grupo? Digamos, ¿notabas algún apoyo entre compañeros? ¿O eran más individualistas en comparación a Ecuador? ¿Cómo opinas? Sí, eran más individualistas.

Súper, sí. Pero también había esto más de que, por ejemplo, cuando se pedían hacer grupos, era siempre... En algunos de mis colegios hacían como grupos de niñas y niños, como los niños se unían en grupos, pero nadie les decía, era como podías hacer mixto. O había un grupo de niñas y un niño, pero como que sí, eso había.

Pero de ahí sí, eran formas individuales, como que... Eso está chévere, esa actividad en grupo, porque hasta conversas con todos y todos ponen de parte, y ta, ta, ta. Eso sí, totalmente. Ok.

¿Cómo percibiste el sistema de normas, digamos, las fechas límites y organización académica? Digamos, sí, las reglas y el cumplimiento de normas. ¿Eran más estrictos que acá? ¿Más rectos? ¿O cómo? Eran más flexibles. Súper más flexibles.

Para mí eran más flexibles. De hecho, hacían una cosa que era cada parcial, que el profesor era, por ejemplo, era todo un día eso. Por ejemplo, llegaba tal materia y comenzaban a sacar a cada uno de los estudiantes, o sea, de que afuera de la clase ponían un pupitre y sacaban, por ejemplo, dueñas, salían, se sentaban y hablabas con el profesor de esa materia.

Y así cada uno de los estudiantes en cada hora de clase. Y les decías como su feedback y su, como que qué deberían mejorar, o qué están fallando, ta, ta, ta, ta, ta, ta, qué tareas faltan. Entonces ellos se ponían como que al corriente de todo, las tareas que les faltaban las presentaban, y ya.

O sea, en mi colegio era como que, no, te sacaste cero. Qué pena, te sacaste cero. Ni modo, te toca mejorar al ciento por cien.

A ver, ¿qué más? ¿Cómo describirías tu actitud frente a estas reglas que dices que eran más flexibles? Yo era feliz, ojalá hubiera sido así toda mi vida. Te lo juro, a mí me encantaba. Ok, a ver la siguiente.

Ah, ¿qué rol jugó el idioma en tu proceso de adaptación académica y social? En la académica fue mucho más difícil porque obviamente era calificado y tenía que cumplir las expectativas de las calificaciones. Entonces ahí por lo general yo no sabía nada, o sea, usaba totalmente traductor y todo porque no tenía ni idea. En cambio en el ámbito social siento que era más fácil porque al final yo casi siempre hablaba inglés, y cuando trataba de hablar alemán, pues las personas de alguna manera, pues no era como que, si no le dijiste, o sea, si te entendían ahí medio a medio, como que igual lo tomaban.

Entonces sí, esa parte de la sociedad fue más fácil. Ok. En la académica.

¿Y en la social? ¿Igualmente solo con traductor? ¿Sabes? Que no, o sea, decía lo que sabía y lo que podía decir en alemán, y lo que no podía decir en alemán lo decía en inglés, que era la mayoría de cosas. De ahí, obviamente, por los adultos mayores ahí sí era más difícil. O sea, la gente mayor, porque ellos no te aceptaban de que te comenzaras a poner a hablar en inglés, te decían como que no.

Y me pasó un par de veces, como que me dijeron no, no, no, no hables en inglés, como que habla en Alemania, si estás en Alemania, habla en alemán. Y yo era como... Muy estrictos. ¿Sentiste diferencias en los estilos de comunicación, digamos, han sido más directos en comparación a Ecuador o esperaban que asumieras tú la situación? Sí eran más directos, o sea, súper sí eran más directos.

Pero los adultos, los adultos te decían directamente, como que te decían, oye, lo que hiciste estuvo mal, no te decían, oye, deberías que... No, eso estuvo mal, o me decían como que, ok, si vas a salir a la discoteca y vas a tomar, no fumes, así me decían directo. Eso sí era como diferente, porque en mi casa era como, ni siquiera lo decían, era obvio que no tenías que hacerlo, pero nunca nadie me había dicho como que no lo hagas. Simplemente sabía que no debía hacerlo.

Y en cambio yo era como, oye, vas a salir, o sea, vas a fumar, puedes ir a comprar mis cigarrillos, como que directo así. Ok. ¿Sentiste...? A ver, no, mejor.

¿Hubo malentendidos culturales relacionados con la comunicación? Ay, de ley, Julie, pero no me acuerdo de ningún ejemplo, pero de ley que ha sido. O sea, hay momentos en los que yo... Sí. Por ejemplo, a veces los profesores me decían algo, y yo les decía como que según yo, obviamente, les estaba respondiendo bien en alemán, y como que toda la clase se reía, entonces ahí me di cuenta que yo era una estúpida y que no estaba entendiendo nada.

Entonces, eso sí me sentía mal, porque pensé que estaban burlando de mí por ser ignorante. Entonces sí, sí hubieron malentendidos, pero de ese tipo, nada más grave. Ok.

A ver, déjame ver las siguientes preguntas. ¿Qué te ayudó más a adaptarte al nuevo contexto? Las amigas que tuve. O sea, las amigas que tuve, más que la familia y que todos, fue mi grupo de amigas.

Que eran las árabes y... Sí, yo creo que las amigas que tuve. Entonces yo no tenía amigos varones, ¿sabes? Eso sí era... Sí tenía, pero poquitos. De ahí tenía dos grupos de amigas niñas.

Y yo creo que eso fue lo más... Por ejemplo, porque si las conocía a ellas, conocía amigos de ellas, o me invitaban a como que sus casas y conocía más gente. Y pues con ellas salía, me enseñaban los lugares, ahí, tan, tan, tan. Entonces yo creo que eso.

Ok. ¿Recibiste algún apoyo institucional, académico o social para poder adaptarte de mejor manera? Realmente no, no. ¿No? Ok.

¿Qué estrategias desarrollaste con el tiempo para sentirte más integrada? De aprender a fumar, lo de lanzarme, o sea, no tener pena. O sea, como que yo decía igual, yo me voy de aquí y esa gente lo más probable es que no me va a recordar. Entonces lanzarme, como que yo iba a comenzar a hablar, o sea, sin pena.

Y obviamente a veces sí pasaba que algunas personas, o sea, algunos alemanes sí me quedaban así como... Y yo así como, ah, ok. Pero, o sea, eso. Eso fue como perder la vergüenza, porque yo vivía con demasiada vergüenza al comienzo, pero horrible, así una vergüenza inexplicable porque me daba demasiada vergüenza.

O sea, todo, o sea, todo, todo, todo. Luego ya como que dije ya, ya fue, o sea, tengo que tomar la iniciativa de hablar, o de todo. Entonces eso, eso.

Ok. ¿Sientes que esta experiencia cambió tu forma de ver otras culturas? Sí, totalmente, totalmente. ¿Y cómo te ayudó eso? Primero que todo me abrió la mente, totalmente.

Me hizo entender que obviamente tenemos conceptos súper arriesgados de las culturas, como es que la gente nórdica es súper fría, es que los hindúes son súper, hindúes o indios, no sé cómo se dice, son súper sucios. Y mentira, porque yo conocí a gente de todas partes y eran gente, o sea, de verdad que sí. A ver ya, todos culturalmente tenemos cosas que nos diferencian, pero todos somos demasiado iguales. Sobre todo cuando eres adolescente siento que todos estamos en el mismo tren, sabes quién es queremos ser. de que somos lo mismo. Aparte como que eso es las redes sociales. Todos tenemos, sabemos lo mismo en todo el mundo. Todos tenemos la misma influencia de todo. Entonces yo creo que eso fue lo más como ¿Tuvo cambios en tu identidad personal o académica? académica, sí. Sí, totalmente. o sea, como te decía, si vamos más sociales, pero lo que me dije académica también porque cuando yo estaba, o sea, en el colegio era, o sea estudiante me quedaba un supletorio todas las materias. y ya luego como que después del intercambio y como salí a la universidad y fue un cambio total. o sea de que todas las materias, de que super promedio, no sé qué, entonces, sí. ¿Qué recomendarías a futuros estudiantes que quieren estudiar en Alemania? O sea, otra cambio. que no vayan, que elijan otro país. Pero, honestamente, eso les dije. Pero como que si ya de verdad han decidido estudiar para Alemania, nada, que practiquen alemán, que no tengan pena, vergüenza, que se abran a conocer, que no se cierren, que mantengan sus ideales súper firmes, que no, que alguien les diga, ay, no, pero en Ecuador eso no es así. Y yo, claro que es así, es mi país. y estoy seguro que yo vengo a eso en mi país. porque no vas a decirme cómo es mi país. Entonces, nada de eso.

¿Qué crees tú que podría mejorar estos programas de intercambio de movilidad para que una persona se pueda adaptar mejor a ese nuevo contexto? Este, no, no, no quiero resolver tu problema. Yo nunca tengo claro como que nadie me cuidaba o realmente sí alguien, o sea, siempre decíamos que mis best friends, generalmente me habían hecho algo malo, malo. Nunca sentí ese apoyo que tenía para nada. y nada, o sea, compañía y acompañamiento. O sea, de que yo me acuerdo que yo literalmente me decía que yo sentía mal, o sea, que realmente me iba como estando allá y que nadie me importó. O sea, eso es súper feo. Más ahora que ustedes me decían que usted es terrible que una persona pueda llegar como que a ese nivel tan bajo de salud mental y que nadie me importa. O sea, que Pues tengamos acompañamiento. Sí, de verdad. Pues eso sería todas las preguntas.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: EE 2

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

Vamos a hablar sobre el tema de mi tesis que es adaptación cultural.

Primero comenzamos con unas preguntas generales para ti. ¿Qué es la cultura? La cultura es como la identidad de cada individuo, de cada país o incluso de cada pueblito. Entonces valores, costumbres, todo eso que define a cierta población.

¿Qué es la identidad cultural? ¿A ti tiene alguna diferencia? La identidad cultural diría que es más lo que a uno le identifica, por ejemplo en este caso lo que me identifica a ser ecuatoriana o cuencana. Entonces obviamente va a ser diferente alguien identificándose como quiteño a que cuencano. Tienen sus diferencias a pesar de estar en el mismo país.

¿Qué es ser ecuatoriana para ti? Ser ecuatoriana es compartir un montón de costumbres que a la final son tan diferentes pero se conectan entre sí, entre cada región del país. Es muy diverso pero pues eso hace la cultura ecuatoriana. Bueno, ahora comenzamos con lo que son las preguntas de la trayectoria personal.

Tú dijiste que fuiste a Alemania. Me gustaría que me cuentes un poco cómo surgió tu decisión en estudiar allá en Alemania y qué expectativas tenías antes de viajar y cuándo fue. Cuéntame un poco eso.

Bueno, la idea de estudiar en Alemania surgió porque yo estaba en el colegio alemán y ahí nos incentivan bastante para estudiar en el extranjero, especialmente en Alemania, y nos dan cursos y charlas para poder ir allá. Entonces, no sé, a mí me llamó la atención. Incluso a mi familia también me apoyó.

Y bueno, aún así no estaba muy segura de ir, decidí ir, hacer la prueba. Entonces, bueno, fue más que nada gracias también al colegio. Ajá, y lo que esperaba ahí, bueno, sabía que iba a ser un poco difícil porque es otra cultura, pero no sé, tenía buenas expectativas sobre que me iba a ir bien y todo porque ya tenía previos conocimientos de su cultura.

Ok. Bueno, entonces tenías expectativas no altas, sino ya sabías un poco por lo que estabas haciendo. Ajá, como voy un poco neutra.

Ok. Sí. Bueno, ¿podrías contarme brevemente un poco de la experiencia de tus estudios o lo que hiciste allá en Alemania? O también si es que tuviste contacto con los estudiantes alemanes o de otra cultura.

Sí, a ver, ahí fui a hacer el Estudio en Colegio, que es como un pedagógico, cursos diferentes que se siguen para poder estudiar. Cada curso es enfocado según el área de conocimiento de las carreras, por así decirlo. Entonces yo estudié en un curso de Humanidades porque me interesaban temas de diseño, de arte, de comunicación.

Ahí la mayoría de estudiantes son extranjeros, pues son la mayoría de Latinoamérica y había algunos rusos y ucranianos, pero eran poquitos. Ajá. ¿Y qué tal la experiencia? ¿Interactuaste con ellos? ¿Saliste con ellos? Sí, con los... Bueno, los rusos eran más cerrados.

Siempre están entre ellos, pero nosotros, los latinos, pues siempre estábamos juntos apoyándonos. Entonces sí, sí era chévere. Bueno, ¿qué te motivó a estudiar en Alemania? ¿El colegio o...? Fue más que nada el colegio, sí.

Y claro, el colegio presenta como que estudiar en Alemania es así una opción súper buena. Entonces nos incentivan a aplicar allá y tienen bastantes programas y como que reuniones para poder hablar sobre eso y cómo sería todo el viaje allá. Bueno, ¿cuánto tiempo llevaste en ese contexto académico? Bueno, yo estuve allá 10 meses, pero estuve un semestre entero con el estudio en colegio.

Cuando terminé me dediqué a armar la carpeta para aplicar en universidades allá, pero fue un proceso bastante difícil. Si tuvieras que describir tu experiencia en una palabra o en alguna frase, ¿cuál sería y por qué? Yo creo que capaz impredecible, porque uno no sabía qué iba a pasar. O sea, a veces pensaba que todo estaba bien, pero luego habían problemas, había una mala racha, luego todo bien.

Entonces siempre habían así como subes y bajas, pero es parte de la experiencia. Ok. ¿Cómo fueron tus primeras semanas en el estudio en colegio en Alemania en general? Fue un poco difícil, porque salir de una a otro país completamente diferente y estar sola como que sí es complicado, pero al fin y al cabo uno, o sea, yo me terminé acoplando un poco porque ya habían personas que conocía antes y amigos cercanos del colegio incluso.

Y el hecho de estar con latinos pues uno ya se siente más así en casa. Ok. Y con el estudio en colegio igual sirve un poco diferente, pero igual, o sea, era fácil y entendible, no habían mayores complicaciones.

¿Recuerdas alguna situación que te haya resultado difícil o sorprendente? Si te acuerdas, ¿me puedes contar? O sea, realmente no. En general como que es medio complicado el tema del idioma para procesos en general como ya más legales o trámites ya así como de residencia, del banco y esas cosas que dirían que son como más de adultos, pero salir de una y no saber nada de eso pues sí, sí se te hace bastante difícil y más en otro idioma. Ajá, entiendo.

Bueno, ¿qué aspectos culturales te llamaron más la atención al inicio? Yo creo que son más cerrados y mucho más directos y con más fríos. Entonces en comparación nosotros somos así más cálidos y se siente como en casa, en cambio ellas son mucho más directos y es un poco complicado eso. Ok, bueno, seguimos.

¿Cómo percibiste la relación entre estudiantes y profesores o si no personas mayores a ti? Es con puro respeto. O sea, saben los estudiantes perfectamente que el profesor es el profesor y punto, no es como aquí que podemos hacer chistes o ser como que más amigables, sino es relación estudiante-profesor y punto, igual con personas mayores. Siempre se les trata con respeto así directamente y ya.

Perfecto, sí, sí, sí pasa. Sí. ¿Sentiste diferencias en la forma de dirigirse a figuras de autoridad académica? ¿Cuál es? Bueno, eso ya me comentaste que es con mucho más... Claro, ajá, más directos y con respeto.

Bueno, ¿cómo describirías la forma de trabajar en grupo? Si es que tenían trabajos en grupo así. Normalmente no, no tenía trabajos en grupo. Casi todos eran individuales y yo me solía reunir con mis compañeras para hacer trabajos porque como ya hablábamos el mismo idioma era más fácil y así nos podíamos ayudar un poco más, pero de trabajos en grupos normalmente no, era todo individual.

Interesante. Bueno, aquí hay otra pregunta que es, ¿Hubo momentos en los que la falta o exceso de estructura te generó tensión? Es decir, cuando hubo mucho respeto o se dirigían de esa manera a personas mayores. No, para mí siempre estuvo bien porque, o sea, es lo lógico, yo siempre a mayores como que les he respetado, a menos que ellos me permitan como que ser un poco más amigable o así como los profesores acá, pero allá siempre era la misma estructura, entonces ya uno se terminaba acostumbrando, pero no causaba mucha diferencia.

Y en referente a normas, por ejemplo, ¿Cómo describirías tu actitud frente a reglas o cumplimiento de normas? Yo no tuve problema en eso porque siempre he seguido reglas, sí, sí, pero no ha habido problema. ¿Qué rol jugó el idioma en tu proceso de adaptación académica y también social? El español, ¿no? ¿O el alemán? Ambos. El español bastante porque siquiera el 90% del tiempo yo hablaba español allá, porque todo mi círculo social hablaba español, entonces no tenía necesidad de hablar otro idioma, solo en casos como irme a hacer compras en el supermercado, ir al banco y temas así, pero más no.

¿Y el alemán? El alemán solo para hacer compras o ir al banco, o sea, no era normalmente que hablaba ese idioma, a menos que hay alguna fiesta en alguna residencia estudiantil y estén alemanes o alemanas y ya surge alguna conversación, pero casi no hablaba mucho alemán. ¿Sentiste diferencias en los estilos de comunicación? Por ejemplo, ¿Han sido directos o esperabas que asumiera una situación? Los alemanes sí son mucho más directos, o sea, ya sea personas adultas de mi edad, o sea, sí son súper directos. Aquí uno espera que adivinen así o sobreentiendan las cosas, pero no allá sí me he dado cuenta que les gusta ser directos.

¿Hubo algún malentendido cultural relacionado con la comunicación en algún punto de tu intercambio? No, eso no me ha pasado, no. Siempre he entendido las cosas, me he entendido, entonces no, ningún problema. ¿Qué te ayudó más a adaptarte al nuevo contexto? El hecho de intentar hablar con gente, salir, tener amigos, eso me ayudó bastante porque si no, cuando uno está completamente solo en otro país, es muy complicado hacer las cosas.

Yo necesité ayuda en un montón de situaciones, hasta para trámites, como digo, en el banco necesité ayuda porque no tenía idea de nada, entonces eso es estar socialmente como que integrado. Y digamos, ¿los alemanes te ayudaban o hacías fácilmente amistades con ellos? ¿Ellos son los que te ayudaban? No, con alemanes, no, más bien con otros latinos que estuvieron igual conmigo en el estudio, en el colegio. Ajá, o si no, gente que ya conocía y estubo conmigo en el colegio que también se fue allá, pues estuvimos en contacto y me ayudaron, pero con alemanes no he tenido esa oportunidad de que me hayan ayudado en algo o socializar como que conectar más.

Y ¿puedo saber por qué? O sea, digamos, ¿es porque la cultura era muy cerrada o te sentías más cómoda con los intercambios, con los de nuestro mismo país? Pero más que nada es porque el estudio en colegio, como es para extranjeros, ahí no hay ningún estudiante alemán, entonces a no ser que yo haya entrado en la universidad, no podía estar como que con alemanes en un contexto así académico o social, porque todas las fiestas o reuniones hacíamos entre latinos, entonces por eso no tuvimos contacto con alemanes. A no ser que en alguna reunión estén en el mismo lugar pues alemanes y se acerquen y hablen, pero eso pasaba poquitas veces porque lo que me di cuenta es que los alemanes cuando ya tienen un grupo, pues no les interesa como que abrir su grupo y conocer más gente. Ajá.

Bueno, ¿recibiste algún apoyo institucional, académico o, bueno, en este caso social que me cuentas que fueron los latinos? Claro, social con los latinos y académico pues por parte de mi colegio que me ayudó con toda la información y todo lo que necesitaba para poder viajar. Ajá. ¿Y para adaptarte a su cultura de eso no te ayudaron? Bueno, eso claro, en todo el transcurso del colegio, desde la escuela y el colegio nos hablaban, pues siempre se combina la cultura alemana y ecuatoriana, pero es muy diferente ya llegar a Alemania y ver cómo es en verdad la cultura y vivir su cultura, más que saber lo que les gusta o cómo son, sino es diferente ya vivirlo.

A ver, ¿qué estrategias desarrollaste con el tiempo para sentirte más integrada? Con la cultura alemana, eso no sabría decir porque no tuve contacto con alemanes, o sea, nosotros ya tuvimos nuestro grupo de gente latina, colombiano, mexicano, igual más ecuatorianos, entonces ya no teníamos la necesidad de hablar con alemanes porque ya nos sentíamos bien entre nosotros. Perfecto. A ver, ¿sientes que esta experiencia cambió tu forma de ver otras culturas? En ese caso, ¿cómo? Yo creo que un poquito, porque ya de por sí en el colegio sí nos abren bastante la mente con el tema de otras culturas, pero el hecho de estar allá pues sí te cambia un poquito como que ese chip, como decía antes, el hecho de vivir es mucho diferente que solo aprender y conocer.

Ajá. Entonces, claro, uno ahí ya se da cuenta de cómo son, ya uno aprende sus costumbres, sus formas de hacer las cosas, entonces ya se acoge un poquito. Ok.

¿Hubo cambios en tu identidad personal o en la académica? ¿Y cuáles fueron? Yo diría que no, capaz solo ser un poquito más abierta, por ejemplo ya no tener como que vergüenza a preguntar si no entendía algo o que me expliquen algo si es que no entendía por el idioma, a veces tenía que incluso hablar inglés porque no me entendía en alemán, entonces más es el tema. ¿Qué aprendizajes interculturales te llevas de esta experiencia? Yo diría que capaz, o sea que el hecho de estar en otro país, o sea Alemania es un país que tiene un montón de habitantes, digamos así, tiene mucha población en muchos países, entonces el hecho de que Alemania pues tiene su cultura fija de ser alemana, por decirlo así, también tiene ese toque variante, digamos, que le da a todas las demás, hay un montón de turcos, de árabes, de latinos, entonces eso también tiene un poco de esencia, porque a pesar de que ellos son de otros países, van a ese país, pero se acoplan, pero además de acoplarse, pues le dan un toque especial, digamos, a ese país. Ajá.

Bueno, entonces te llevas más de conocer otras culturas. Claro, como que de conexión, de complementarse. Perfecto.

¿Qué recomendaciones a futuros estudiantes que quieran estudiar en Alemania? Yo recomendaría principalmente que sepan más sobre los trámites que tienen que hacer y en primer lugar que estén 100% seguros de que quieren estudiar allá, no que tengan ciertas dudas, sino que completamente estén seguros y se vayan de una. Y que ya sepan qué trámites se tienen que hacer y no llegar ese rato y enterarse que tienen que hacer algún trámite allá y al último momento, cuando uno llega, ya tiene que volverse loco haciendo un montón de cosas. Ok, y en temas de adaptación cultural, ¿qué recomendaciones tendrías para personas que quieran? Capaz que siempre tengan la puntualidad en cuenta, porque ahí en Alemania siempre son muy estrictos con eso y si uno llega un poquito tarde, pues ya sienten que es una falta de respeto.

Ya me pasó eso una vez a mí y fue el último haber hecho eso, porque yo una vez entendí mal tener una reunión para un trabajo y entendí que me podía ir al restaurante que iba a trabajar entre las 4 y 5 de la tarde, yo entendí eso. Pero ha sido que me dijo, venga a las 5 de la tarde y yo llegué un poquito después, o sea, claro, yo pensé que era a las 4 de la tarde y llegué más de las 4 y él quería que yo llegara a las 4. Ajá, y yo llegué y están en la puerta, me dijo, no, yo te llegué a esta hora, si no vienes, chao. Entonces me tuve que ir.

Guau, sí es complicado, entonces ahí son más rectos. Sí, la puntualidad. Ok, según tu opinión, ¿qué crees que podrían mejorar las universidades o programas de movilidad, o en este caso el trámite que habías hecho? ¿Qué es lo que crees que podrían mejorar para que ellos se puedan adaptar de mejor manera los estudiantes? Yo creo que en los programas que sirven para viajar y todo eso, incluso las escuelas o colegios deben incluir alguna forma de enseñar a los estudiantes a hacer trámites que son la vida real, que eso normalmente no se enseña, trámites para residencias, de economía, impuestos, banco, todo ese tema uno llega y no sabe absolutamente nada.

Entonces eso sería súper bueno que se enseñen, o al menos que introduzcan brevemente para tener una idea. ¿Crees que la preparación intercultural previa es importante o es suficiente? ¿La qué? La preparación intercultural. Claro, siempre estar preparado es bueno, entonces cualquier cosa sirve incluso más si se trata de ir a un país donde la cultura es completamente diferente a donde uno está acostumbrado a estar.

Y por último, si comparas tú y yo de antes y después de este estudio en colegio, ¿qué diferencias encontrarías? Diría que soy más responsable y más madura en casi todos los ámbitos y más estar al tanto de las cosas que tengo que hacer y no pasarles por alto, sino estar más pendiente a todo y planificación en especial. Eso sería todo, Dome. Muchísimas gracias.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: EA 1

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

Y listo, vamos a comenzar con algunas preguntas generales. Para ti, ¿qué es cultura? Buena pregunta. Cultura, o sea, no solo es, no sé, las cosas que están haciendo la gente, también son la gente, o sea, cómo se tratan y también, o sea, cómo es la vida en general, o sea, cómo vive la vida y, o sea, qué importancia tiene la familia y los amigos y todo eso.

Creo que eso es la cultura, la comida obviamente también. No solo es una cosa, sino son todas las cosas, o sea, juntos, o sea, todas las cosas son cultura. Creo que son demasiadas cosas, o sea, creo que es difícil decir una cosa que es cultura, son muchas cosas que definen eso, creo.

Perfecto. ¿Qué es identidad cultural para ti? Creo, como, o sea, creo que cómo creces y, o sea, cómo creces, cómo tu familia, no sé, está viendo las cosas. Creo que eso es lo más, lo que aprendes cuando estás chiquita.

Creo que eso es lo más importante y con eso, sí, sigues viviendo toda la vida. Perfecto. ¿Qué es para ti ser alemana? Creo que, o sea, para mí es tener suerte, porque aquí tengo todos los, o sea, puedo hacer todo sin preocuparme de algo, o sea, que no hay guerra, no hay nada, entonces puedo hacer todo.

Tengo todas las opciones, no hay, no sé, la pregunta, ¿puedo hacer eso? Si no, puedo hacer todo lo que quiero y ajá, tengo mucha seguridad, o sea, es seguro aquí. La salud y todo, no tengo que preocuparme porque el estado paga la salud y no tengo que gastar plata en eso, entonces creo que ser alemana es tener seguridad y, ajá, creo que eso, y suerte también, que nací aquí. Perfecto.

¿Qué es para ti la cultura ecuatoriana? La cultura ecuatoriana, eso es todo, o sea, tengo que, tranquila. La gente son, o sea, como digo, full calientes, ¿me entiendes? O sea, tienen un pensamiento full diferente al, por ejemplo, alemán, no sé. La familia es muchísimo más importante y los amigos tienen una forma diferente de pensar, son más abiertos, o sea, son como que llegan y todos son así, como que hola y todos te saludan y sí, o sea, creo que son abiertos, calientes y siempre, no sé cómo se dice, pero siempre te saludan, y no, o sea, por ejemplo, yo llego y no conozco a una persona, pero igual le saludo, creo que eso también para mí es una parte gigante, para mí como alemana, porque aquí no es así para nada.

Perfecto. Bueno, ahora sí comenzamos. Bueno, primero quiero que me cuentes un poquito de ti, qué es lo que tú hiciste, qué es lo que estás haciendo, y cuándo fue que hiciste este intercambio.

Ya, yo vine para un intercambio en el 2022 a Cuenca, Ecuador, y me quedé un año para aprender español, para irme al colegio, y también para aprender sobre la cultura, y mi abuelo es del Ecuador, entonces por eso, no sé, tenía la idea de irme al Ecuador, porque todo el mundo se va a Estados Unidos, pero yo quería conocer la cultura de mi abuelo, entonces por eso pensaba que era una buena idea, y era una buena idea. Sí, un intercambio, vine también para ver cómo es el colegio, cómo vive la gente en un país tan lejos. Sí, ¿qué era la otra pregunta? ¿Qué es lo que estás haciendo ahorita? Ah, ya, ahorita, o sea, me cambié la casa, ya vivo con mis abuelos, y estoy haciendo un hospital, creo que esa palabra no es bien en español.

No, pero no pasa nada, yo puedo... Sí, ya, estoy haciendo eso para, estoy, o sea, preparándome para estudiar odontología en la U, y la hospital, o sea, me prepara, y, o sea, está bien, o sea, era una idea para ver si me gusta odontología, me gusta full, entonces voy a estudiar eso, y me voy a quedar un año más, o sea, hasta el próximo año, julio, agosto, y de ahí me voy a estudiar en la U. Ahora sí, comienzo con las preguntas un poquito más del tema. Me gustaría que me cuentes cómo surgió la idea de estudiar en Ecuador, qué expectativas tenías antes de viajar también. O sea, en general, siempre me ha interesado América Latina, y, o sea, obviamente, específicamente Ecuador, por mi abuelo, y quería conocer, o sea, otra cultura, como ya dije, cómo vive la gente en otros países, y me encantó antes, y también después, y durante, el Ecuador como un país muy abierto, caliente, y su diversidad cultural, pero también la naturaleza, y todo, y creo que antes, o sea, pensé, sí, pensé que la gente muy diferente, que tiene una vida full diferente a la de Alemania, que tienen un pensamiento full diferente, pero también sabía que hay diferencias, por ejemplo, en el colegio, cómo aprende las cosas, cuándo aprende las cosas, y también qué cosas aprende, en general, porque eso también era diferente, y obviamente la vida diaria también era, o sea, pensaba que era diferente a la de Alemania, en Alemania.

¿Y diferente en qué aspecto? O sea, las cosas, o sea, la vida, por ejemplo, aquí, no sé, te levantas, te vas al colegio, regresas, y, no sé, haces tus cosas, todo el día lo mismo, en el fin de semana sales con tus amigos, todos los días, eso es como que más o menos la vida de aquí, o sea, es similar en el Ecuador, porque obviamente también se van al colegio, pero lo que creo que es diferente, que en el fin de semana, obviamente sales también con tus amigos, pero también la familia tiene una, o sea, tiene otra forma, o sea, la gente, o sea, al menos en mi familia era así, que siempre hicimos algo en el fin de semana, nos fuimos a comer, o no sé, nos fuimos a pauta, lo que sea, o sea, hicimos algo con la familia también, aparte de salir con tus amigos, y eso obviamente también depende de la familia aquí, pero es diferente, o sea, muy jóvenes solo salen con los amigos todos los días, y la familia es, o sea, es ahí, pero no hace nada con la familia, y creo que eso sí es diferente en la mayoría de las familias en Ecuador. Perfecto, ¿podrías contarme brevemente tu experiencia de estudios en el extranjero, o con estudiantes extranjeros, o con los ecuatorianos, con lo que estuviste en tu año de intercambio, y cómo describir, describirías el contexto al que llegaste? Creo que la relación era más, como ya dije, como que más abierta, y más cercana, que los estudiantes son, todos éramos amigas más o menos, obviamente con los, unas más y con las otras menos, pero todos nos conocíamos bien, y nos reunimos, y todo eso, creo que eso es también lo que me gustó full, y creo que la, o sea, una diferencia mayor era la relación con los profesores, porque aquí es siempre el apellido, o sea, siempre es el apellido, y al menos en Las Gatas, siempre era el, o sea, el nombre del, el primer nombre del profe, para mí era full diferente, o sea, una relación full, cercana, abierta, con los profesores también, y obviamente eran todavía los profesores,

y todo teníamos respeto, pero era más cerca, más personal, y en las clases también son full diferentes, porque solo los profes, o sea, al menos en Las Gatas, solo los profesores estaban hablando, todo la hora, y nosotros estábamos anotando y todo, pero no estábamos hablando mucho, en Alemania tienes notas orales, o sea, tienes que participar, y eso era full diferente también. Ajá.

Perfecto. Ah, el motivo también. Creo que para mí era, o sea, siempre me gustó el extranjero y viajar, eso era el, o sea, hacer algo que, o sea, toda mi vida quería hacer, y obviamente aprendí español. que era, o sea, el punto por, para que me fui a un país donde hablan español.

Perfecto. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevaste en este contexto? Bueno, creo que dijiste un año, ¿no? O sea, un año, o sea, un año escolar. Si tuvieras que describir tu experiencia en una palabra, en una palabra o frase, ¿cuál sería y por qué? Creo que como crecimiento personal, creo que era la palabra, porque, o sea, aprendí full cosas para mí, para mi vida, o sea, adaptarme a otra cultura, a otra forma de vivir, y, ajá, desde otra perspectiva, o sea, para, o sea, pude ver cómo la gente vive en otro país, y yo también viví así, o sea, no viví como una alemana, no sé, me adapté a la vida ecuatoriana, y eso creo que ahora también me ayuda full de ver a la gente como una forma diferente.

Seguimos. ¿Cómo fueron tus primeras semanas en el país y también en esta institución que estudiaste? O sea, las primeras semanas fueron difíciles, porque no hablé nada de español, o sea, no sé, pude decir que tengo 16 años y cómo me llamo y todo, pero, o sea, nada más, aparte de eso, entonces fue demasiado difícil comunicar, porque no podía hablar, y entonces sí era fuerte, o sea, todos los días hablé con mi mamá, porque sí, no sabía cómo, o sea, cómo vivir un año en un país sin español, pero obviamente, o sea, aprendes con el tiempo, pero en las primeras semanas era como que no tenía la fuerza para seguir, porque pensé, nunca voy a aprender, porque todo el mundo estaba hablando rapidísimo, todo eso, entonces, ajá, fue un proceso de acostumbrarme hasta que pude vivir así una vida sin preocuparme sobre el idioma y todo eso.

¿Recuerdas alguna situación que te haya resultado particularmente difícil o sorprendente? Creo que me sorprendí sobre la educación de historia y también cómo, o sea, que aprenden cosas full diferentes, o sea, temas completamente diferentes a los que aprendimos aquí en Alemania, y obviamente tiene que ver con que, por ejemplo, Ecuador es lejísimo de Alemania, entonces, obviamente, sólo hablan de la historia alemana un poco, o sea, sí, pero no tanto, como aquí, y hablan más sobre otras cosas que en Alemania no tienen, o sea, no las vemos mucho allá, o sea, aquí, creo que eso, y también la forma cómo, o sea, por ejemplo, en Mata, algo así, que vimos cosas que ya vi hace tres años aquí en Alemania, por ejemplo, eso creo que también me sorprendió.

También aprendí nuevas cosas, pero cosas full ya aprendimos aquí, y obviamente lo que ya dijo con la familia, que tiene más importancia en Ecuador, o sea, más, sí, tiene más importancia. Ok, ¿y en el ámbito social alguna situación difícil o en la parte familiar, en la parte adaptación? No, todo bien, nada, eso sí no. Perfecto.

¿Qué aspectos culturales te llamaron más la atención al inicio? Creo que cómo nos saludamos en el Ecuador, o sea, es con beso, entonces eso sí era full diferente, a mí me encanta, pero obviamente al inicio era como que, o sea, no, al inicio siempre me gustó, pero eso es full diferente. En Alemania ni te saludan, o sea, ni un hola o algo así, y allá es con beso, y o sea, como ya dije, no importa si conoces a la persona o no, igual les saludas, o sea, la mayoría del tiempo al menos. Y también que la gente son impuntuales, eso también es un punto que es full diferente, aquí son puntuales y 10 minutos antes llegan, y allá no sabes si llegan o no sé, te vas a comer a las cuatro, y no nos vamos a las cuatro, nos vamos a las cuatro y media o algo así, eso también es full diferente.

¿Cómo percibiste la relación entre estudiantes y profesores o personas mayores a ti? Con respeto, obviamente, pero más cercanos y más, o sea, como que familiar. Sí. Perfecto.

¿Sentiste diferencias en la forma de dirigirse a figuras de autoridad académicas como cuáles? A comparación de Alemania, obviamente. Pues, repite la pregunta. ¿Sentiste diferencias en la forma de dirigirte a figuras de autoridad académicas diferentes a las de tu país? ¿Una estructura como que digamos, aquí está el profesor y el estudiante está por debajo, o eran como que más, o sea, sí, obviamente, con respeto, pero no había tanta esta estructura de poder?

Sí, creo que eso, o sea, había respeto, obviamente, pero, ajá, lo que tú dijiste, o sea, aquí es más como que los profesores están, o sea, te están viendo desde, no sé, arriba, sí, eso creo que sí es diferente, o sea, obviamente, sí hay esa diferencia, pero creo que menos. Ok, o sea, básicamente, sí, sí hay esta figura de autoridad. Sí, sí hay.

Perfecto. ¿Cómo describirías la forma de trabajar en grupo en las clases? ¿Aquí o en Ecuador? En Ecuador. A comparación de Alemania.

Ajá, creo que en Ecuador sí trabajamos full en grupo. Eso era la única parte de clase donde estábamos hablando sobre el tema, creo, y, ajá, creo que en todas las materias era, y a mí me gustó full porque podías, no sé, hacer los ejercicios con todos juntos, o al menos con un parte del curso, y aquí también, o sea, también hacemos ejercicios en grupos, pero no tanto, porque tenemos, como ya dije, las notas orales, entonces, igual estamos hablando toda la clase, entonces, los trabajos en grupos, o sea, sí hay, pero poquito, o sea, solo a veces, los profesores no tienen nada más que hacer. Yo creo que en Ecuador es más, no sé, el programa diario, sí hacen los trabajos más.

¿Notaste alguna diferencia en el apoyo entre compañeros o en la vida social universitaria? Ah, vida en la que tú subiste del colegio, no universitaria. O sea, no sé, o sea, siempre nos apoyamos en todo, entonces, ajá, si alguien tenía un problema siempre estuvo, o sea, siempre estuvieron ahí para ayudarme. Para mí, especial al inicio, cuando no, o sea, cuando no entendí todo, me ayudaron full, o sea, me ayudaron en inglés, en todo.

Creo que eso sí es, intentaron hacer todo para que yo entiendo, y eso creo que es el apoyo que, no pensé que es así, o sea, pensé que, no sé, no se van a dar cuenta o algo así. Y aquí, o sea, sí, sí te apoyan, no sé, porque no sé cómo es, si eres un estudiante en el intercambio, también creo que aquí te ayudan full. Depende de las personas, creo que es más o menos igual.

Ok, la siguiente pregunta es ¿cómo percibiste el sistema de normas? Es decir, tipo fechas límites, organización académica u organización de trabajos en Ecuador comparada a Alemania. ¿Puedo repetir la pregunta otra vez? No te preocupes. ¿Cómo percibiste tú el sistema de normas? Es decir, las fechas límites de entregar el trabajo, organización académica, o también organización de trabajos.

Digamos, si son más flexibles o son más estrictos comparados a Alemania. Creo que en Ecuador son más estrictos y tienen más, o sea, es como que tienen más trabajos que tienen que hacer en la casa. Por ejemplo, no sé, entrevistas o no sé, algo.

Y tienen que hacer mucho más en la casa y entregar las cosas, no sé, en línea, algo así, a los profesores. Y creo que es más estricto. Creo que en Alemania, al menos en mi colegio, pero creo que también en otros colegios no es tan estricto.

O sea, sí hay los trabajos y todo, pero la mayoría hacemos en el colegio. Creo que eso sí es una diferencia. Y también que tienen otra importancia en Ecuador, que te dan una nota para, no sé, un trabajo y que es muy importante y todo eso.

Creo que en Alemania eso sí no hay tanto. Pero digamos, las fechas límites de entregar trabajos, por ejemplo, aquí si pasaba algo te entendían. O en Alemania, no sé, eran un poco más estrictos.

No se cambia la fecha y igualmente son entendibles. O sea, creo que en eso, o sea, no sé, pero creo que en Ecuador te entienden más y creo que son más así como que, no sé, si murió tu abuela, bueno, tienes una semana más o algo así. Creo que aquí es similar, pero creo que no estoy segura si cambian la fecha de entrega solo porque te pasó algo.

No sé, creo que no. Y creo que en Ecuador sí, creo que sí te cambian la fecha. Depende del profesor, pero creo que más que aquí.

¿Cómo describirías tu actitud frente a estas reglas y el cumplimiento de estas normas? ¿Son diferentes a lo que te estabas acostumbrada? ¿Lo aceptaste? O sea, lo acepté igual en el colegio al inicio y bueno, o sea, todo el año no hice hasta todos los trabajos. Tenía que hacer todo, entonces para mí igual era como que no tengo que hacer nada. Pero a las cosas que sí hice, solo me adapté, o sea, no me... no pasó nada.

Listo. A ver, dice, ¿qué rol jugó el idioma en tu proceso de adaptación académica y social? ¿Cómo fue? O sea, ¿cómo fue la adaptación? ¿En el idioma? En los primeros, creo que en los primeros cuatro semanas era que... No sé, en las primeras dos semanas no entendí, o sea, algunas palabras, pero nada más. Y de ahí fue como que, o sea, fue difícil porque solo al inicio, las primeras así cuatro o ocho semanas, solo entendí.

Y, o sea, fue más y más y más que entendí, pero no podía responder hasta, no sé, bueno, hasta como que dos meses y empecé a usar Google Translate. Y, o sea, puse hola en alemán, o sea, me salió hola en español, y leí en la aplicación lo que, no sé, lo que significa la palabra. Y eso, con eso fue hablando, o sea, no es hablar, pero ajá.

Y de ahí con mi ñaña también en inglés, y ajá, creo que después de un medio año podía hablar, o sea, no solo responder algunas cosas, pero sí podía hablar. Entonces, para mí, los últimos seis meses fueron, o sea, el mejor tiempo porque podía entender todo, y responder, y hablar, y todo. Entonces, antes sí era difícil con los amigos también porque hablan inglés, pero no les gusta hablar inglés.

Entonces, ajá, creo que después de un medio año podía todo, o sea, ya no tenía problemas. Perfecto. ¿Sentiste alguna diferencia en los estilos de comunicación, digamos, han sido más directos, o ellos esperaban que asumieras tú algo en una situación? No son, creo que no son más directos, pero siempre es como que, creo que es más como que una persona habla y todos están escuchando, pero también cuando, por ejemplo, estamos con cuatro amigas y estamos hablando, todo el mundo está, no sé, poniendo otros pensamientos y todo, y estamos hablando todos al mismo tiempo, pero así se entiende full bien, y ajá, eso sí me gustó full, que no es como que escuchar a una persona media hora, sino todos están poniendo sus ideas, y sus experiencias, y todo eso.

¿Hubo malentendidos culturales relacionados con la comunicación en algún punto? O sea, ¿cómo? Digamos, a ver, yo qué sé, a ver, te pongo un ejemplo, que no, te digan, yo qué sé, estate a las cuatro de la tarde, y tú estás a las cuatro de la tarde, y no sé, era a las, tenías que llegar más tarde, o si no, uy, no sé, ahorita no se me viene a uno la mente, pero que no hayas entendido algo que querían decir, que para ellos significaba algo diferente, y tú lo tomaste de diferente manera. Creo que no. Ok.

O sea, solo que al inicio no sabía que, por ejemplo, cuando, no sé, nos fuimos a comer, y me dijeron a las seis, y yo estaba en el restaurante a las seis, y me dijeron ya, ya estamos llegando, y llegaron 20 minutos después, esa es la única cosa, me pasa una vez, y después, o sea, ya sabía que no vamos a estar a las seis en el restaurante, esa es la única cosa, pero no como que más graves. Perfecto. ¿Qué te ayudó más a adaptarte a esta nueva cultura, este nuevo contexto académico en el que estuviste? Mis hermanas, o sea, me explicaron todo, tenía preguntas, mis amigas, porque por suerte hice amigas, o sea, en los primeros meses, que me ayudaron con todo, con el idioma, y siempre, o sea, cuando dije algo mal, siempre me corrigieron.

¿Recibiste algún apoyo institucional, académico o social? No. ¿Solo tú solita? Sí. ¿Qué estrategias desarrollaste con el tiempo para sentirte más integrada a la cultura ecuatoriana? O sea, siempre pregunté a mis amigas y todos si puedo hacer algo o cuando salieron siempre me fui para ver cómo es y para conocer a más gente. Y creo que ya cuando ya podía hablar un poco más, intenté hablar. O sea, siempre intentar hablar el idioma para aprender más rápido. ¿Sientes que esta experiencia cambió tu forma de ver otras culturas? ¿Y de qué manera? Sí, porque creo que tengo un pensamiento diferente, porque siempre veo como que el... o sea, creo que es bueno en la gente, porque nunca es como que cuando dicen algo y, no sé, mis amigas dicen, ay, no me gusta cómo habla o algo así, o cómo hace las cosas. y yo creo que, o sea, estoy más abierta y estoy pensando que tal vez es su cultura o tal vez es su forma de vivir y no sabe mejor. O sea, no sabe cómo funcionan las cosas aquí y obviamente está viviendo su vida como siempre. Entonces creo que eso sí cambió cómo veo las cosas y también a gente si están haciendo cosas que no entiendo, por ejemplo. ¿Qué aprendizajes interculturales te llevas de esta experiencia? O sea, que todos son diferentes y que es difícil. Creo. O sea, creo que siempre tienes que ser abierta y tienes que, o sea, a mí no me gusta cuando ya tienes un pensamiento así full cerrado y solo hago mis cosas y como yo hago las cosas. creo que tienes que ser una persona muy abierta y para vivir la vida, para conocer a más gente, para conocer al mundo, para conocer, no sé, a otras culturas. Creo que eso sí me ayudó full para aprender nuevas cosas.

¿Qué recomendarías a futuras personas que quieran venir a estudiar acá en Ecuador? Que aprendan el idioma muy rápido, o sea, lo más rápido posible, que no hablan inglés, que intentan y que siempre, o sea, a cada cosa que los amigos quieran hacer, o no sé, que siempre se van, o sea, siempre decir que sí, porque el tiempo sí es limitado y no tienes toda la vida, sino para mí era un año, tal vez para ellos son cuatro, pero es poco tiempo. Entonces, que hacen todas las cosas que puedan y que siempre, o sea, estar abierto, ser una buena persona siempre y conocer lo más todo, o sea, intentar conocer todo, del país, de la gente, de la ciudad, que, ajá, o sea, conocer a lo más que puedas.

A ver, ¿qué podrías mejorar en estos programas de movilidad, en estos programas de intercambio para que una persona se pueda adaptar de mejor manera? ¿Qué crees tú que falta? Pues creo que en mi programa ya era full bueno, porque nos teníamos un camp hace de preparación y ahí sí nos explicaron cómo funcionan las cosas cuando llegas, que no puedes vivir en tu vida alemana o no puedes seguir esa vida porque es diferente. y nos enseñaban full cosas y no sé, cuando nos pasa algo o cuando tenemos un problema, ¿qué puedes hacer?

y creo que eso solo no hay, ha sido un campo de preparación, no hay en todos los programas y creo que eso sí es full importante que te expliquen las cosas bien antes que llegas, porque sí es... Eso y también creo que tal vez cuando llegamos en el Quito también teníamos así un campo de tres días donde nos explicaron más cosas del país, nos fuimos a un mercado y aprendemos, no sé, diferentes cosas básicas, frutas y todo eso, pero creo que eso fue importante que aprendes, o sea, las cosas básicas de un intercambio antes de que llegas y también después. Teníamos un campo cuando regresamos a Alemania, también teníamos un campo donde estábamos hablando sobre nuestras experiencias y todo eso. O sea, creo que eso sí es muy importante

Listo, muchas gracias por tu tiempo. Que te vaya muy bien.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: EA 2

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

So first I will start with some general questions. The first one is what is culture for you? Oh, hard question. Culture is like, oh my English is so bad.

I will try it. Culture is not all, not just the food or language, it's just people who live together in a country who work and create culture with their language, with their food, how they react to each other. I don't know if that makes sense.

It's okay, I can answer it, it's okay. Okay, perfect. The second question is what is cultural identity for you? Wow, what's your identity? For me, I'm not a German girl, my parents are from Russia, so I always identify as a Russian girl because I grew up with the, how do you say it in English, like with the food, with the language, with how do you say it in English? Do you know what it means in German? A little bit, but it's okay.

Yeah, so cultural identity for me is like how, I don't know, so hard questions. It's okay, it's okay. I identify myself not as a German girl because German people are really unfriendly, really strict, really racist, so I always don't say I'm a German girl.

I always say in Germany, like in Germany it's fair to say you're not from German because German people are a little bit weird here. If you're German, everyone thinks you're racist or you're weird, so I always say I'm Russian because I like my traditions, I like my language, I like my food much more, so I like the people more in Russia, I think, yeah. Okay, perfect.

So, you told me your parents are from Russia, but you were born in Germany, right? Yeah. Okay, you're raised. So, what is it for you to be a German? What do you think? To be a German, like German people are really on point, like they're really strict, they're really, they're not really open, I think.

Like in Germany, we have a lot of problems with racism, especially right now, because of the political situation is really hard. German people are, to be a German, you need to be on time, you need to be perfect, you have a lot of stress, you need to work the whole time. Like for German politics, you should work the whole day and you have a really stressful and strict day.

But on the other side, Germans are on so many other sides also really open, like if they see you as a German, if they see you as a German guy, they're really friendly, but if they know you're not from Germany, it's really hard that they will open to you and they have a lot of Vorteile. I don't know what, you know? Okay, so they have pretty much Vorteile. To be German is really, really stressful, like the whole world hates Germany.

Really hard when you visit a new country, you say you're from Germany, it's always like, oh my god, you're Hitler, you know, this and this. It's always, they, other people think German people are all racist and that's not true because we're really, really open, open country. We are more immigrants than German people in my state right now.

So, I don't know, I think, I, like as I was in Ecuador, they always come with Hitler, they always come with Nazi signs and it was really hard because it's really strict and forbidden to make all the high hatamu for something and other people make fun about it and it's really hard to even in Germany. You don't really speak about it here because, I don't know, it's really hard. I understand, no worry.

Can you tell me a little bit about your experience here in Ecuador? What did you do and what are you currently doing right now? Something about you. So, I was in a boarding school near Leipzig and we had like the exchange year in Ecuador. I have a really, really nice family.

I love my exchange sister. We are still in contact, like we're texting every day. But I was in Ecuador, like my family was really, really, friendly.

They were really open. They spent a lot of time with me. But like other people, like it was really hard to make some friends because I thought, like in Germany, it is if you're poor or if you're rich, that doesn't matter.

And it feels like in Ecuador, it's a much more thing. We were in this German school and sometimes there were Ecuadorian people who were not that rich or on this level of my family and I couldn't spend time with them. And it was like, oh, now they're like not on our level.

They're not like rich like us. They don't live in a good side. You can't meet them in your free time.

So, we traveled a lot with my exchange family. We were in Galapagos Island. Yeah, it was really nice, but it was so hard.

We were like walking the whole time. I was so burned on my whole body. We were in Quito because like the other side of my exchange family lived in Quito.

My family, it was really important for my family that I learned the language and the dishes, the national dishes. So, every Sunday, we were on the country side of the family. I don't know exactly anymore where it was, but it was like on the mountains, really away.

And it was like they had like a little farm. So, every Sunday, we tried national dishes and everything. It was really cute.

We were in restaurants and tried Ecuadorian food. And with the school, we had like a project like we learned Spanish for like every day, two hours. And we had like, we drive in the city and our teacher told us a lot about the city, about Cuenca, about the politic, about the dishes, about the museum.

But then there was the earthquake, so we didn't visit the museum. But I found it really hard. Like, Ecuadorians love alcohol and they love party.

And I also really love party and alcohol. But they were like, especially the guys knew when you were a girl and you were a German exchange sister, they tried everything to make you drunk and to take you in a room or something. So, they didn't have really much respect of you.

They weren't really respectful. They tried everything to touch you, to do something with you. Because the others told me like, if you're German, they think you are easy to have.

So, they did everything to be on your side the whole time, especially when you're drunk. And with my exchange sisters was really hard because when we were outside and we were on parties and we were like every weekend on another party, she was with her friends and I was really for my own. And I was alone and with some random people.

And some of them are really friendly, they were really nice, cute girls. But with the guys, it was sometimes really dangerous because they really didn't respect you as a girl. And one time I was alone in the city in Cuenca and I had a lot of problems, especially with guys, because my Spanish was not good at that time.

And the tourists don't really know English, they spoke Spanish and my Spanish was terrible. So, I didn't know how to speak with them and ask something. And when I wanted to have help, like if I would come to a person, I was like, oh, can you please help me? And it was a man.

They were really touchy, they were really friendly. So, they were really open. They were like, oh, you look like European.

And it was a really weird thing. Like, I don't know. I really don't find me comfortable there.

Especially when I was alone, it was a really weird situation. But I liked my time in Ecuador really much because I had a really, really nice exchange, this wonderful family. We were in Salinas and everything was nice.

I learned much more Spanish. And right now, I did my Abitur and I will start my, you know what Jura is? I started Jura's studium in April in Bielefeld, maybe not. Okay.

And when did you do this exchange here? Was last year? 2024 or? Four years ago. Four years? Oh, when? I was 16 at that time. Like, as they come to us, I was 15.

And then we, like they were by us at October. And we were in February 2023 there. Yeah, three years.

Oh, yeah. Okay, perfect. So, we continue and I would like you to tell me how your decision to study in Ecuador came about.

Like, what experience or expectations did you have before traveling to here? It was a big thing in our boarding school, the Ecuadorian exchange. It was like, oh, we don't have very much exchange projects. And I was in a class, we had like different classes, like language class, science class and music class.

And I was in a language class. So, I had French, Spanish and English. And I needed to say in which country I'm from.

And we don't have a partner school in Spain. I think right now we have, but at the same we had one. So, I knew that there was not so much places to get into the Ecuadorian exchange.

But I wanted to try because I love traveling. I love meeting new people. I love, I also wanted a really little break from my school at that time because I was like, oh, I don't want anymore to study.

I want to go and cheer. And my expectations were to traveling, to see how South America is like. In Europe, you always think South America is really poor continent.

There's nothing, there is a hard life, but a wonderful culture. The people are really friendly, good atmosphere, good music, good food. This is another life.

And I wanted to see how is this another life. Yeah. Okay, perfect.

If you had to describe your experience in one word or phrase, what will it be and why? If you have one in mind. I think about interesting. It was a really wonderful time, but also a really hard time.

It wasn't I missed my country or that I missed my family that much because I was in a boarding school. But my expectations were different and there were really much good sides, but also sides of this exchange I don't want to experience again in my life. So, I learned a lot about myself.

I learned about South America, about Ecuador. It was interesting. I would just say it was interesting.

Okay, thank you. Then the next question is, how were your first weeks here in the country or also here in the school that you have been? How it was? Yeah, the first weeks in Ecuador and also in the German school. So, my first week was really nice.

My exchange family picked me up from the airport with a big letter, like, welcome Emily. And they were so open. They were so cute.

They took me to the whole family. They showed me everything. It was so amazing because I imagined Ecuador, especially Cuenca, where a poor city, different things.

And then I saw there's this one donut land. I don't know how it is in Cuenca. I don't know that much the word, but if you describe it, then it's okay.

There is a store. And as a worst time, I was shocked that the store is also in Ecuador. I always thought Ecuador is a really poor country.

There is nothing really much. And then it was wonderful. It was just a beautiful city, so wonderful.

And on the first day, my exchange sister took me to a party and I met everyone, the other exchange people from Germany. It was really nice, but also really hard because of the weather, because I had really much headache because of the highness. It was a big jet lag.

So, the first week it was really, really, really tired at first, but everyone was very friendly and open. And the school, it was nice, but the teachers didn't really socialize us in the class. They didn't care about us, if we were there or not.

There were classes that were in German, like biology and history. So, these teachers, they always come to us. They were like, oh, do you want to help me to teach or you can make group projects? And that was really cool because they were like, oh, you're a part of this class right now.

And the other teachers really don't care. We just sit there and didn't do anything because they don't really care about us or give us letters to do something or explain it to us, especially when they wrote an exam or when they did letters or some exercises. They didn't give this to us.

We just sit there as German people and the whole time, we just try to fly faster. Okay. Do you remember any situation that was particularly difficult or maybe surprising for you? Difficult.

I think the traditions were a little bit difficult, like Carnival or Valentine's Day, because I was really scared and no one told me how is Carnival in Cuenca. It's a nice experience if you are like ready for that, but we didn't know about it. And then I was there with the other German friend of mine and people are screaming and chew water and slime and earth.

And it was a little bit strange because when I needed help one time, no one helped me, especially at Valentine's Day. It was a really difficult situation. There was a guy and I was really, really, really drunk at this time and I didn't want to be alone.

This guy was really touchy and the other one recorded me when he was touching me and no one really helped me because they were like, oh, this is just a German girl. She maybe did it before also with another girl, so you don't really care. And I didn't get help.

My ex-friend, she was at this time not in this house. She was on the street with other people. As I screamed and needed help, no one really helped me.

Also in the city, like when it was Carnival, if you needed the help, no one really helped you. Okay, I understand. Which cultural aspects caught your attention the most at the beginning? The food.

As they told me, like guinea pigs. I was totally shocked. I didn't really want to eat, but it was just so different to others.

A lot of corn. I ate so much corn in the first time and so many sweet things. I liked it, but it was not really with many, you know, Gewürze, like flavors.

Maybe it was just my family. But with the food, I was a little bit shocked because it was so much different to what I know. Okay, perfect.

Thank you. Wait a second, I will check for the other questions. Okay, how did you perceive the relationship between students and professors or maybe people older than you? In Ecuador especially? Yeah, in comparison to Germany.

I found there was much more respect in Ecuador to the professors, because in my school or in the school I was before my boarding school, we were more than friends, than teacher and student. And I had a feeling in Ecuador it was more like, oh, he's a professor. They were much more strict than in Germany, especially in everything.

But all the people were really cute. They were really, really cute. Like, I met, as an example, the great aunt of mine.

Actually, she was so friendly. I couldn't speak because my Spanish was really, really bad, more bad than right now. But she was also always really helpful, really cute, really sweet, really open, tried to speak with me to know more about me.

When I was shopping somewhere, the people were really cute. But in the school there was much more, I had the feeling there's much more fear about the teachers, because they were really strict and they controlled everything. And in Germany, we are like, especially when you're older 16, you have much more friendly, umgang-friendly, how you speak to each other, more like on the same level.

The teachers were much more helpful in Germany than in Ecuador. Did you notice differences in the way people, like, addresses academic authorities, figures? Can you maybe repeat the question? Okay, like, did you notice differences in the way people, like, addresses academic authority figures, for example, if they are more respectful, as you said, or maybe they are more friendly, or yeah, in general, like, do you have to respect more the authorities more than in Germany? Yes, yes, yes. Okay.

I, the feeling you, you must respect them more, because you are always a little bit scared that they say something. Yeah, they're really strict, especially with clothes. We had a big, yeah, we had a big fight with one teacher, because of one girl.

She was, like, top, like, belly free, and there was so much to say, and she was so angry and screamed at us. We were like, what the fuck? What happened? Okay. I think you don't have a school uniform, right, in Germany? No, no.

Okay, that makes sense. Okay, thank you. I forgot that.

Okay, yeah, how would you describe the way people work in groups? Working groups? Yeah, for example, in a classroom, when you have to do something, and they form, like, a group, like, they work individual or maybe in a collective way in that group? I don't really know, because I'm honest, most of the time in the school time, the teachers sent us outside, because they were like, oh, you don't understand Spanish, you don't need to be here. My, like, class with Germans will stay outside, so I don't really know that much, but as example, in German, we, there was, like, more individual, and, but in, we had, like, biology or history, there were a lot of group, group projects, and we worked as a group, but it was always the same group. Everyone has the friend group, and they stayed in this friend group, and not really other people, and then there were, like, other people, they, but I think it's in every country like that.

You have your friends, like, to work with them more, so. Okay. Oh, how did you perceive the system of rules, deadlines, and academic organization or organization of assignments compared to Germany? I would say it's the same, like, it was strict, but in Germany, it's also, like, you have some teacher who say, oh, I will give you more time, and you have teacher who say, if you don't give it at this time, you will fail, and the same was in Ecuador, like, if the teacher was friendly, you could speak with him, but there was, like, no one in Ecuador who, like, really passed the time, and you need to give it, so I think it's just the same, you know.

Yes, okay. Okay, so what role did the language play in your academic and social adaptation process? Which language, Spanish? Spanish. Spanish.

How it was to speak for me there? Yeah. Oh, it's terrible. My exchange family just spoke English at home, like, also before me, they, like, my exchange sister was raised up with two languages, and their mom just speak with them English, and with their father, they spoke Spanish, so, like, we spoke a lot English more than Spanish, so I really didn't learn Spanish by my family, but that was by many exchange families like that, because it was more easy for everyone to just speak English, and in the school, it was okay, we learned much, learned a lot in this classroom with this private teacher, but the other teachers didn't really include us to their lessons, so we didn't have really the chance to speak Spanish there, and because my family was really strict with going outside, I didn't have, like, the choice, like, I didn't have the opportunity to go outside and speak with other people, like, in a, in a shopping mall or something, I didn't have the chance to, the opportunity to speak with someone in Spanish, because I couldn't go outside with them, and when we were outside all together, my parents, my exchange parents spoke the whole time with them.

Okay. Did you notice differences in communication styles, for example, if they were more direct or maybe they expect you to infer situations, like, you understand what's going on, they are not, they were not being direct as usual German do? I think German people are more direct than Ecuadorian people, that's my opinion, like, I, I don't know if it was just in the friend group of my exchange sister, but they were really, really fake, like, it was really fake also, and I had a lot of problems with my exchange mother sometimes, and I think it would be more easy when they would just be direct, but Ecuadorian people is trying to be friendly, but don't be direct, and there is, that's why so many conflicts are there, because in Germany, we, we look unfriendly, but we are really direct, if we don't like you, or if you make some mistake, we will tell you, and they don't, they don't, didn't tell you, they told, they told other people what you did wrong, but not to you, and that was sometimes really hard, especially with my exchange mom, because I didn't understand the problem, because she was never really direct, and with other people about it, but not with me, so. I agree.

Were there cultural misunderstandings related to communication at some point? Yes, a lot. I was really sick, as example, in Ecuador, I ate something wrong, and I was puking all the time, and I was in the hospital, and I couldn't really explain the doctor what's happening with me, and there were a lot of problems to speak, or like, if they tried to understand me in English, they didn't really, they didn't really understood, so if I had a question, they didn't, couldn't really answer, or didn't really could react in English, and it was really hard to speak about it, and everything, yeah. Okay.

What helped you the most to adapt to these new contexts? Um, to speak with my exchange sister, because I knew when I there were problems or to understand something, I think in any situation for me I could go to her and stay with her body, and she was all there and made comfortable because she was that big. She was the foreign German and she was, I asked that you and I make it help you. And sometimes it really helped with some other German friends of my school that were really straight people, so we just saw each other in school, but it really helped me to have like my friends and my exchange sister. Did you receive institutional, academic, or social support? Did you have like, did they help you with something and to help you better in this new context? Yes, my exchange family specially, they always looked to not make me uncomfortable or my exchange sister always took me with her friends, she always asked me how is my day and helped me with the language.

What strategies did you develop over time to feel more integrated? However, I tried to be more open. I tried to learn new things. I tried to understand the culture, and I tried to understand what's important for people like some of them have friends. It was really important to just listen to them and just be there and speak with them. And I just tried to be really open to talk

Did this experience change the way you see other cultures and if that changed you in a personal way, in an academic way also? So that experience definitely helped me in my academic way. I know the language certification because I was in the exchange in the spring. 10 minutes left, and I have two more questions. And, okay, so I will ask you the last ones that are, what would you recommend to future students who want to study in Ecuador? What would you recommend? Be open and enjoy the life, try new things all the time. I don't know, in the first beginning try to eat like guinea pigs or something, because that's Just try to be calm and try to enjoy, because I think Ecuador is a very beautiful country.

There's so much you can see. And if the people can understand the language, if you can speak with each other, the people are really, you can have a really, really great time in Ecuador if you have the right people on your side. Okay, perfect. And the last question is, what could these mobility programs or maybe academics or schools can improve to make you adapt better? It would be much better with especially teachers who are more open, also who don't understand English or something, and especially the science class today in Cook, German people more. We are sometimes about, they thought we don't know the same level, but we were so much. If I start a night with Korea, kitchen, so we could have, but it matters, so I think more and cook German people. Maybe it was really nice when we also as German people learned more about the aspect about the political situation, where we drive together. And maybe also like try in the school to learn

more these things, like we learn more like economic works or economic words. It's Spanish, but I think like this daily, the daily conversations should more be trained to learn. Yes. Thank you so much.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: EUA 1

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

Well, we'll be around like 25-30 questions and it will take like, it depends how long do you answer. So the first questions are a little bit general and it's what's culture and cultural identity for you? Okay, that's the first question? Yes. Well, I'd say culture is what makes or what kind of describes people living in different places, you know.

Culture is something you can identify with, something you grew up with, just kind of describes your heritage, I'd say. And every culture is different because, people grew up in different places. So yeah, that's all in my description, short version.

Great. And identity, cultural identity? I'd say, yeah, each country has a different identity because some countries, let's say here in Europe, cultures go back so far. I mean, there's been a lot that's documented, so that's kind of what stayed.

And I'd say that's kind of identity we have, for sure. Let's say in Germany, it's, I don't know, like a Christmas market or it's the whole beer culture. I don't know, it's like stuff that, you know, I've been going on for hundreds of years and I'd say that's pretty much like part of the identity then.

Perfect. What does it mean to be German for you? See, that's where it gets tricky nowadays, you know. Now I'd say like 50 years ago, there'd probably be a very different picture or different image of Germans, but I think that's changed a lot since we've had a lot of migration over the years.

So I don't even think there's a typical German anymore. I'd say it's kind of like you could take the US, for example, the United States of America. That's kind of like a melting pot, you know, a lot of different people from different cultures coming together and creating something new.

And I'd say Germany is kind of undergoing that similar process. So we have a lot of different cultures coming together. And of course, we still have like that very traditional German part that we have people coming from Asia now.

We have people coming from or we had a lot of immigrants coming from Turkey. So a lot of people from the Middle East and I think it's all kind of mixing together. We have a couple people that are here for a couple generations already or at least one generation.

So yeah, that's kind of how I describe it. Great. And now I would like you to describe what are you doing right now? Like, what did you do here in Ecuador? What are you studying? So I finished my degree in January.

I studied architecture. And now I'm looking for work. And what were the other questions? Oh, and what did you do here in Ecuador? Like, did you study? Yes, I did a semester abroad at Universidad de Cuenca.

And yeah, that was my main reason for visiting was just that I've actually, it was a partner university and I've never been to Latin America before. So that was a possibility and I was very interested in the country and the culture. And yeah, that was a, I was lucky to go there.

Okay. And what year did you go? Like, did you come here to Ecuador? From 20, September 2024 until January 25. Oh, okay.

Perfect. Could you briefly tell me about your experience studying here and also with foreign students? Like, how would you describe the context you arrived? Like the university class dynamics and stuff like that? I'd say it was very different than what I knew. Because let's say in our university, at least in Germany, or I'd say most of Europe, it's very, just very different how the, how the classes work.

So we'd have like lecture halls with a couple, sometimes over a hundred people sitting there. And in Cuenca, at least at the university, it seemed very small. So each class had maybe maximum of like 20 to 30 people.

So that was very different. It was also very different that you had to attend the classes, that it was mandatory because also for us, it isn't really mandatory. You could basically do what you want.

So that was something that I definitely noticed pretty early on. Okay. If you had to describe your experience in one word or phrase, what it will be and why? It was, I'd say, exciting.

It was a new experience. It was at the same time challenging because I had to improve my Spanish because I couldn't speak that much English. But I don't know.

I think it was an enriching experience in total. Just got to see a lot. I was lucky to do it.

Okay. How were your first week in Ecuador and also in the university? The first week, let me think, is kind of, we're kind of lost. I was there with a friend and yeah, we kind of had to settle in at first.

Also kind of get settled in into the different classes because they had to pick professors that were able to speak English. So, yeah, it was a little chaotic and yeah, but it was interesting. Great.

Okay. Do you remember any situation that was particularly difficult or surprising for you? I'd say the whole thing overall was difficult because, I mean, a lot of, most of the classes were in Spanish. So, it was difficult for us to understand, but we managed somehow.

We talked to the professors, of course, sometimes in between. We talked to classmates and some people could like translate. We could understand a little bit.

Yeah, I'd say that was our main challenge. But, I mean, we knew we were going to go in a country that was mainly Spanish speaking. So, I don't think it's the fault of the university, but I do think probably would have made stuff easier for us too.

Yeah. Okay. Which cultural aspects caught your attention the most at the beginning? Let me think.

The food was really interesting. Never seen, it was very new to me. So, just a lot with platano.

Yeah, it was different. Yeah, that's probably the first thing that came to mind when we got there. The clothes, the poncho.

Yeah. Great. How did you perceive the relations between students and professors or people older than you in comparison with Germany? I'd say it was, it seemed similar, at least what we understood.

Like, there was a certain respect towards the professor. I thought it was very interesting that they didn't call the professor professor. They usually call them architect, which we wouldn't do.

We just always call our professor professor and it'd be formal and it seemed formal here too. Yeah, that's at least the impression we got. Did you notice difference in support or in university social life? Like, maybe another question.

How would you describe the way people work in groups in comparison to Germany? It depended on the group and communication at that point. But, I mean, I thought the dynamic was pretty similar. We had to do a lot of group work and that worked pretty well.

So, I'd say it was similar than it was in Germany. How did you perceive the system of rules like deadlines and academic organizations or the assignments in comparison to Germany? I'd say it depended on the professor. What I thought was really great is one professor, he did a lot of excursions, which I think helped us, but I think the other students as well to really understand the subject or maybe like the background of why you're learning certain things.

We definitely didn't do that as often in Germany. But, there were other professors that just wouldn't explain that much. So, I think there wasn't like anything general I could say was different.

It always depended on how each professor would teach, which was very different. During your academic mobility experience, did you perceive differences in how success or academic performance were valued in the university? For example, was there more emphasis on competition in achievement or more in collaboration and well-being among students? I think it was more collaboration. Didn't seem like a lot of competition, although I did get the impression that a lot of people wanted to make a good impression on the professor.

But yeah, we were treated very kindly and I think sometimes we kind of were automatically the favorites of the professors, which in this regard, I don't think was that fair because we weren't treated as equals all the time. Let me see. Oh, yeah.

What role did the language play in your academic and social adaptation process? The language. Or the communication styles also, like if they were direct or they expect you to infer situations in comparison to Germany. Does that make sense? No, kind of confused.

I will explain it. The first question is what role did the language play in the social life, the academic? You told me a little bit that at first it was a little bit difficult and your classmates explained you. And what about your social life, like the language? Did you speak in English? Okay, yeah, yeah.

Got it. That was actually a big barrier for me in the time I was there because my Spanish really wasn't good. And we did have a booked Spanish class, so we did like improve our Spanish, but it was actually very, very hard to, let's say, socialize a lot just because it was actually just hard to talk to people.

And English really isn't a huge option there. So we did find friends, but it was mainly more in the English circle or a couple other Germans that were there. As well as, yeah, it was mainly with people that could speak English.

So we never really had like close contact with people that didn't speak any English at all or hardly any English because at some point it would have been very hard to communicate like fluently. So yeah, I would say that was an issue for sure. But again, mainly our Spanish, you know? Perfect.

The other question was if, like, did you notice different communications styles, for example, people are more direct or sometimes they expect you to infer situations like they think you already know something or, yeah, like there were misunderstandings of these, yeah, communication styles. I don't think there were super many misunderstandings. There might have been a couple of small ones, but that was maybe because we said something wrong.

But I'd say the people there were pretty direct to a certain degree, but it depended on the setting. A lot of it seemed very fake, you know? So not real. But once you got to know someone more, they did seem to be very direct in how they would talk.

What helped you the most to adapt to this new context? Um, what helped the most? I don't know. I don't know if I can answer that. Because there wasn't, we just had to, you know? We didn't have a choice.

We were there, so we just adapted. But I don't think there was a lot that really helped. Yeah.

Okay. There were a lot of power outages, I remember that. And a lot of, like, we only had those stuff from the university.

There wasn't anything other than having that Spanish class that would have prepared us any better. Yeah. Because the other question was, did you receive institutional or academic or even social support? Yeah, I'd say the academic support.

The whole Spanish thing was over the university as well, but it was like a paid class. Yeah. So we definitely got help from there, but other than that, I don't think there was any, yeah.

What strategies did you develop over the time to feel more integrated? We did a lot of stuff that the locals did. So we'd go on hikes with some people or we'd party a lot. Yeah.

I think those were like the main two things we did. We went to the Biennale in Quito, which a lot of classes attended. So that was for like a week.

So that was also something we all did to kind of integrate and get to know people better for sure. Yeah. I think that's about it.

Great. Let me check. Do you feel that this experience changed the way you see other cultures? Definitely.

Yeah. Definitely opened a new door to a different culture for me that I hadn't known before. So yeah, definitely changed the way I perceive music as well.

So I took a lot of music back home with me that I still listen to. So yeah, for sure. Were there changes in your personal or academic identity? I'd say I learned a lot.

I don't know if it would have changed my identity. Don't think it changed a lot. But let's say we learned a lot regarding architecture and how you'd build in different regions, you know, just considering insulation, earthquake safety.

So that was like interesting to see. But I wouldn't say it changed my identity. Yeah.

Did you see any other difference between the university here in Ecuador and university there in Germany? Besides the ones that you said? I think one thing I did notice over there was somehow you did have the feeling the country has a problem with corruption. So there were like, I think, power dynamics that might not be good for some people. And just the chance that not everybody has a possibility to pursue a degree is also another issue.

So I think like, there are definitely a lot of points that I couldn't criticize. But I think things that I could compliment was definitely like the that I did have the feeling that a lot of professors really did want to teach the students a lot. And their approach to how they taught, I thought was a lot of times better than how some professors teach here in Germany, just with a more practical approach to things.

And we had to build, for example, like a model of the scale one to one, like one square meter. And I thought that was also really, really great and a good experience to learn. And that's something I think we could implement in Germany as well.

What would you recommend to future students who want to study here in Ecuador? Say, learn Spanish. For sure. I mean, everybody should know about like the risks anyway, and that the culture will be completely different.

General stuff. This is something I tell people here, let's say in Germany, who haven't been in different countries a lot, because it is very different. I don't know if you've been over to Europe too, you might have noticed some differences.

So I mean, people should be aware of that. Yeah, other than that, I think my biggest recommendation would be that you should know the language pretty well. Otherwise, it's going to be very hard to really understand the culture and get to know the people.

Yeah, what would you think universities or mobility programs could improve? To integrate more than foreign students? Oh, that's hard. They could, I mean, they did welcome us pretty warmly, so I can't even criticize that. They could probably, no, I mean, I think you can even get like housing too.

We found our own apartment, but I think they even help you for finding an apartment. You can stay with guest families. So I think, yeah, no, I think it was okay.

Yeah. If you compare yourself before and after this mobility program, what difference would you find? I don't know. I'd say I learned a lot.

That's probably something I'd say for sure. Learning and yeah, got nothing. That's good.

Okay, perfect. Das ist alles. Okay, nice.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: EUA 2

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

Now, and first I will start with some general questions, and the first one is what is culture for you? Oh, I think it's the culmination of traditions and expectations and experiences from a society, but in terms of something that makes them adhere to not the same belief system, but to the same forms of living. Okay, and what about cultural identity? What the persons make out of their culture, if they identify with it and, I don't know, for example, feel a sense of pride being part of that specific culture, that's cultural identity, something that differentiates them from other people. Perfect.

What does it mean to be German for you? Work morality, and I don't think there's a lot of other things that I specifically consider being German, other than that maybe adhering to work ethics, and yeah, basically that's it, I think. Perfect. Now, I would like you to tell me a little bit about you, what are you doing, what are you studying, what did you do here in Ecuador, when were you here in Ecuador, and stuff like that.

I was in Ecuador winter of 2024 to about March of 2025, for a semester abroad, because I was studying architecture, and basically it was the university that was furthest away from our university, so that's why I chose Ecuador, and because I wanted to learn a third language, which I basically started just half a year before, but yeah, well, it went well learning it. Ecuador itself, no, that wasn't the question, the question was what I'm doing. Yeah, well, I've been studying architecture, I finished that in the beginning of this year, I don't know what else I was supposed to say, or what entails the question.

It's okay, we can continue with the other one, because actually the next question is how your decision to study in Ecuador came about, like what expectations did you have before traveling here? Yeah, as I said before, the decision was made mostly because I wanted to change the environment I've been studying, and Ecuador was the university that was furthest away, but had the possibility for that exchanging program to be happening without me putting serious effort into it, because it was a partner university. I was able to do it without a lot of preparations, because it was funded with the, what's it called, um, I can't get up with the word. Stipendium, I think.

Oh, okay. Stipend, yeah. My expectations were basically only that I wanted to learn Spanish, and honestly, if it comes down to that, I think like some kind of adventure making.

Mm-hmm. Yeah, and I'm half Filipino, and the climates are pretty similar, so since I've always been planning to move back to the Philippines at some point, I was curious about learning the architecture there, because I expected them to be pretty similar. That's about it.

Great. Could you briefly tell me about your experience studying here in Ecuador, and also how was it with the foreign students or with the Ecuadorians? The experience with the students, both Ecuadorian and foreign students, were pretty fun, actually. We've been traveling around Ecuador with both Germans and Ecuadorians, and we all befriended a great many people.

But studying, it was pretty hard, because only a few of the professors were able to speak proper English, and my Spanish was far away from being enough to understand it, even though I kept on learning it, and only worked towards understanding more, but not comprehensively taking part in the lectures. So studying was kind of hard concerning language. Yeah, but most of the people were pretty welcoming.

Okay, and how did you learn Spanish? Because you at first you were not that good, and the professors didn't know that much English. So how did you develop that language? I started with a level A1 course in Germany about half a year before, and that was the real basics. Things like that, pretty easy ones.

But in Ecuador, it was part of our curriculum to take Spanish lessons as well, and that was a pretty intense course, because it was only me and my friend who came with me from Germany, and depending on which week, it was two or three times for at least two hours. And other than that, some of the friends I've met, they at some point just said, yeah, we're not going to talk English to you anymore, so learn Spanish. But yeah, it worked out.

And after a couple of months, I was able to have easy conversations once the people started to talk a bit easier or slower, and I managed to learn or listen to the differences of the different, I guess, accents or dialects. For example, people from Ecuador spoke pretty, I'd say, clean Spanish, while I had problems understanding the people from Costa Rica or Argentina. Yeah, so there's that.

Okay. If you had to describe your experience in one word or phrase, what would it be, and why? One phrase. I'd say it was fun as one phrase, and why? Because the studying system was different.

It was, compared to how we fare in university, it was pretty school-like, with modules and classes being held multiple times a week and assignments after every class. Usually in our university, it's different. So I kind of got more back to, I don't know, feeling back in school and making fun friends and, I don't know, getting to know the city.

Like when I started school back here in Germany. So additionally, I think, since we've been traveling a lot around Ecuador and seen a lot, it's been pretty much that what I've expected, like experiencing a lot, tasting many dishes, getting to know people, and that in a country where I'm barely able to communicate myself. So, yeah, it was fun.

That's the overall for me. Okay, perfect. How were your first weeks in Ecuador and also in the university? The first weeks were kind of bizarre because I landed in and when I got out of the airport, there were two watchtowers.

Like, that's things I've only seen in movies about prisons. So that was really, I don't know, I guess, brutal. And when I got out with my, I don't even know what, Maleta, you know, the big bags? The security told me to take a taxi to my hostel because, yeah, I would most likely get robbed right away.

Yeah, there at the hostel, I stayed alone for the first few weeks, but I wasn't able to do a lot because I was still helping a friend in Germany who I've been operating with on a big module in architecture because he was about to do the exam. And since it was partner work, I wouldn't, I didn't want to let him hang and do it alone. So, yeah, that combined with Guayaquil being kind of scary, I guess.

The first few weeks were kind of boring, really. But yeah, at some point, I just walked around the city and gotten to know the food and then we started pretty quickly and transitioned to going to university. And that was a lot of organizing because our curriculums weren't finished at that point and we didn't know the buildings, we didn't know the people or professors.

But after we've finished organizing everything and gotten into a rhythm with the classes and the city, it was pretty easy to take part except for the language, of course. But most of the professors also always took their time after each lesson to speak with us in slow Spanish or in English, depending on. And we're really engaged into helping us getting accustomed to it.

So, it was kind of hard, but everyone was working towards it going well. So, so eventually it went well. Okay.

And do you remember any situation that was particularly difficult or surprising for you here? Yeah, there was the architectural Biennial in Quito. And after the party, I got out to take a walk like we do here in Germany. And I was pretty drunk already and I got robbed.

So, yeah, the guy just, I don't know, he kind of just spawned out of nowhere, pulled a knife and cut off my back. But, yeah, I talked to him and he basically gave me back my bag and only stole my power bank. And then I got home.

So, I think that was the most difficult situation ever in Ecuador. Okay. Which cultural aspect caught your attention the most at the beginning? In the beginning? Okay.

Or in general? I'm not sure. I think that all the people were pretty interested in getting to know us. Because here if someone's from, I don't know, any other country or city, it's nothing special.

We have a big influx of people from outside the country. So, there's nothing interesting about it, basically. Other than that, I think the people seem to be much more open to conversation and not only like superficial talk, but really talking about things that matter and stuff.

Perfect. Okay. How did you perceive the relation between students and professors or other older people in comparison to Germany? Well, to the professors it was rare seeing them being that touchy.

I didn't expect them to be this friendly. Because here we have a certain distance from the professors. They are, I don't know, people that demand respect, maybe to some degree.

But they are quite the opposite, as I experienced in Ecuador. And concerning older people, I don't think it's been different. I like to treat older people here kind of gently.

How did you perceive the system of rules, deadlines or academic organizations in comparison to the university in Germany? It was very different. To me, it was like school. We have the, I don't know, I think you'd call it preschool and high school in English, like in American terms.

And I think it's more comparable to high school. We have a similar system with the first school and the second school, and then you start either a job or studying or anything. And university differs in a way that we are mostly left to work alone on our assignments and modules.

And I've gotten the feeling in Ecuador it's more like school because of the many lessons of the classes and because of the many assignments we had to do. Okay. Let me see.

Oh yeah. During your academic mobility experience, did you perceive differences in how success or academic performance were valued? For example, was there more emphasis on competition and achievement or maybe more collaboration and well-being in comparison to Germany? What do you think? I think because mostly we had classes from lower semesters, it was harder organizing and a lot of the people were fending for themselves more, like more aiming for academic pursuit and individual goals instead of working together. But the difference is since I've been in a higher semester in Germany while studying, I think I've gotten accustomed to the people that I know work well or I work well with.

So I'm not sure if that perception of mine concerning the other students in Ecuador, in Cuenca, is accurate. And I think they do value the academic work more in Ecuador because here it's like you do your module, your classes and finish the exam and then it's up for the next. But in Ecuador, it's like you have the exhibitions of your own students and they get called out for being the, I don't know, best graded student in course XY.

And that's a difference that really stuck with me. Okay. There is another question that is also during your stay here.

Did you notice differences in how students approach planning their studies or careers or future goals? For example, did they seem more focused, thank you, on planning or on immediate academic results in comparison to Germany? How did you experience that? Can you repeat the last part? For example, did they seem to be more focused on long-term planning, like on their future or just in the academic results, like just in the moment? Actually, we've been talking about exactly that. I think a lot of the friends I met there weren't really up or really interested in long-term planning. Christian, for example, is different.

I think he was working hard towards his future goals, but a lot of the others were mostly like, yeah, it doesn't make a difference after finishing study, you get your work and then you start. And we've been talking about a lot of these courses being fundamental in building a portfolio, for example, or making connections to the professors to each of their own offices, architectural offices. And I think also what compounds to me believing that a lot of students did not really care that much about planning for the future, but rather focusing on the immediate academic task, is that most of them were younger than the people I'm used to here in Germany.

So maybe they weren't up to thinking that way simply because they were younger. Did you notice differences in how students express their emotions or celebrate achievements or spend their free time here in Ecuador in comparison to Germany? Maybe there was a difference? They dance more. Okay.

Yeah, I suppose, I guess, caused by the weather, they spend much more time out in the city. Like the campus of the University of Cuenca, it was really green and it was a summer round year all of the time. And we don't have that here.

So I think that's a major difference, people being outside and enjoying it. And here it's like every morning, if you arrive at the university at seven o'clock, they despair about it being this cold and it's still dark and they have to be inside while it's still dark until it's dark again because it's winter and it gets dark early. The people there, at least the friends I made, they express themselves pretty directly, I think.

They do value friendship, I'd say. That's a discussion we had a lot because sometimes, for example, if one gets lost, it's not immediate panic, but they work hard to undo these situations that can lead to problems. For example, me being lost after a party because I don't know the city, I don't know where I am.

Okay, were there cultural misunderstandings in your study? Our Spanish teacher made a whole lesson about expressing feelings in Spanish and there's like, what's it? Me gusta? Me gusta. There's three levels, right? I think so. Te amo and then there's something in between.

Te quiero. Te quiero, yeah. And that's something that's not really present here in Germany.

Maybe there's two levels of it, but you don't differentiate that much, really. And I think that is something that's much more present there. Perfect.

What helped you the most to adapt to this new context? I think mostly the people I've been around with. The Ecuadorian people I've befriended there. And we had a roommate, she was also a German exchange student and she studied Spanish.

So she helped us communicate a lot of things until I've developed the capability to talk for myself. That's great. Okay.

And did you receive like, not just social support, but also institutional or academic support? Yeah. In what way? In general. Okay, yeah.

Our professor in Germany, who is the professor for the exchanges, she's pretty disorganized. Yeah, but we managed anyway. In Ecuador, Maria, she was, I don't know her last name.

Most of the professors actually helped us a lot with getting everything straight and organizing. And yeah, I said before, it's that we also got a stipend. I'd say enough money to live a good life there and don't have to worry about saving that much money upfront or working while we are studying.

Do you feel that this experience changed the way you see other cultures and how? I know, I don't think so. But yeah, I think that's because I've been used to traveling back to the Philippines where I grew up and I've been used to different cultures to some degree. Okay.

And now I would like you to tell me some recommendations that you will do to future students who want to study here in Ecuador. What would you say to them? Yeah, I would say learn Spanish. You won't get around with English.

Get to know some people so that you learn about what you're able to do safely, like in Guayaquil and Quito, you don't go out at night, but in Cuenca and smaller cities, villages, it's all right. I don't know, see the parks, see the nature. What's the national park called near Quito with the mountain? I've forgotten.

But things like that, like doing the bike tours, getting to the beach, climbing the mountains. People outside, they are very accommodating and if you address them respectfully, they will help you find things that are interesting and that's what they should do if they go to Ecuador. Okay.

And what could universities or these kinds of mobility programs improve to integrate more of the people and to help them to adapt? I think they should optimize their organization because we've had a lot of paperwork and classes and modules to decide on and to search for ourselves in the system of the university, which we aren't or haven't been accustomed to and that was a lot of work. Yeah, and there was kind of no help because the people themselves didn't know the system. It could be because as far as I know, we've been the first exchange students from the architectural faculty who visited Ecuador, but still I think it's in general an organizational problem that they could work to make it easier.

Okay. Danke. Das wäre alles.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: VA 1

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

La primera pregunta es un poco general, ¿qué es la cultura para ti? ¿La cultura en Alemania o en general toda la cultura? Toda la cultura. Bueno, es el idioma de la gente, cómo se aportan en la vida cotidiana, como día a día, que dicen que si están hablando mucho o poco, si estás comprando algo, si van a hablar o hacemos una conversación pequeña, o si no lo hacen, algo así. Y también lo que es la parte de las obras del arte, esas cosas, también es cultura.

Y también creo que un parte es también la historia que toda la gente tiene, así es. ¿Qué es la identidad cultural para ti? ¿Mi identidad cultural? En general, ¿qué significa para ti lo que es identidad cultural? El país de donde vienes, también el idioma, tus ideas y también tu familia, cuál es una familia normal, cuáles son las ideas, y esas cosas. Ok, ¿qué es para ti ser alemana? Díganos, ¿cómo describirías la cultura alemana? Bueno, es una cultura en donde creo que si estás en Alemania, si tienes bien relación con toda la gente, sabes cómo todo funciona, pero creo que para personas que no vienen de Alemania parece muy estricto, con muchas reglas, pero si vives acá es más como no son reglas, es más como una estructura y toda la gente lo sabe.

Y bueno, no es tan estricto como parece. ¿Cómo crees que es la cultura ecuatoriana? Bueno, es más abierta, que la gente habla más y también muestran más un poco las emociones. Si estás en la calle, puedes ver un poco más las emociones de la gente.

En Alemania no es así y bueno, todo es con un poco más de espontaneidad, sin que no tienen tantos tiempos que si no estás en el tiempo que dicen, no pasa nada. Ahorita me gustaría que me cuentes un poco de ti, qué es lo que estás haciendo ahorita, qué estudiaste, en qué estás haciendo voluntariado, desde cuándo comenzaste y qué haces básicamente aquí. Sí, bueno, el año pasado, en marzo, acabé con el colegio y ahora desde agosto estoy haciendo ese voluntariado y trabajo en el Museo Pumapungo y mi trabajo es un parque en el museo con las turistas, haciendo guías y esas cosas y la otra parte es trabajar en el jardín.

¿Te graduaste del colegio, dices, verdad? Sí. Perfecto. ¿Hiciste a Pitú? Sí, eso.

Listo, me gustaría que me cuentes un poco cómo surgió tu decisión de venir a Ecuador como voluntaria, qué expectativas tenías antes de viajar, por qué decidiste aquí. Bueno, después de la escuela tenía la idea de hacer algo como viajar, pero también quería hacer algo que tiene un sentido para otras personas, que no es solo viajar y trabajar para mí, sino para ayudar a un poco de intercambio intercultural también. Y por eso digo que quiero hacer un voluntariado y me inscribir en una fundación que lo puede organizar y bueno, después me muestran diferentes posiciones en donde puedo trabajar en todo Latinoamérica.

Y bueno, al inicio me quería ir a Paraguay, pero había un cambio en la organización y por eso no podía hacer eso. Y sí, después digo, bueno, Ecuador parece interesante y también que vivo en una casa de voluntarios y que no es una familia más que tengo un poco de libertad, más libertad en una casa. Y por eso también digo que me encanta la ciudad de Cuenca, que es una ciudad un poco más grande y hay más que puedo hacer.

¿Cómo se llama esta fundación, disculpa? ¿La fundación de Alemania? La que estás haciendo todo este voluntariado. Sí, bueno, la fundación en la parte de Alemania se llama Volunta y la fundación cooperativa que trabaja con Volunta aquí en Ecuador es Ecoavolo. ¿Podrías contarme brevemente tu experiencia de este voluntariado hasta ahora? Digamos con personas ecuatorianas o con otros extranjeros.

¿Cómo describirías el contexto al que llegaste? Bueno, hasta ahora me encanta mi trabajo y bueno, mi trabajo también estuvo por el trabajo en el jardín. Sí, es un trabajo duro y también corporal. Y además encontré diferentes comunidades, por ejemplo, hago mucho deporte y encontré un estudio de pole dance.

¡Qué gana, qué chévere! Sí, sí, sí, encontré eso y también eso es una comunidad con... lo más parte son de Ecuador, también hay algunas personas de Alemania o de los Estados Unidos que están por acá. Pero sí, eso me encanta y también encontré otro grupo de gimnasia artística. Sí, eso es bien lindo y también por eso tengo un poco más de contacto con personas de Ecuador también.

Y sí, no mucho con otras personas del extranjero, excepto de los voluntarios que también viven en esa casa. Y bueno, sí. Perfecto.

¿Cuánto tiempo llevas ya aquí? Dijiste desde agosto. Sí. ¿Cuánto tiempo? Bueno, hasta agosto también.

Ah, un año. Sí. Perfecto.

Si tuvieras que describir esta experiencia en una palabra o en alguna frase, ¿cuál sería y por qué? Bueno, interesante porque hay cosas que son muy positivas pero también hay cosas negativas como, por ejemplo, que no tengo mi familia aquí. Y bueno, es diferente vivir casi solita en una casa con otras personas y, bueno, debes encargarte de todo lo que hay que hacer, como la comida, la limpieza, todo. Bueno, pero interesante porque también es una nueva experiencia y hay muchas cosas positivas y, por ejemplo, nunca antes hice el pole dance y ahora me encanta hacer esas cosas así.

Qué chévere. ¿Recuerdas alguna situación que te haya resultado difícil o sorprendente en el momento de adaptarte aquí a esta cultura, a este nuevo país? Bueno, la cosa con los tiempos que siempre son un poco más tarde porque soy una persona que es muy puntual siempre. Casi sí estoy, debe ser a las 4, estoy casi 20 minutos antes y, bueno, eso es un poco difícil pero ya me acostumbré a pensar que, bueno, es así, no puedo cambiar nada.

Y otra cosa es, bueno, con las temporadas. Me extrañan un poco que en Alemania hay un invierno, otoño, verano y todo eso y aquí no lo hay, sí. Mucha lluvia y mucho sol en un día.

Sí. Perfecto. ¿Qué aspectos culturales o de la cultura ecuatoriana te llamaron más la atención? Bueno, sí que es una cultura, o me parece que no tiene mucho de estrés.

Si te vas a trabajar y después del trabajo no tienes el trabajo en la casa. Eso es lo que me parece, tal vez puede ser porque es la experiencia que yo vivo que cuando acabo con el trabajo no necesito pensar más en eso. Sí, eso.

Porque en Alemania muchas veces si acabas con el trabajo a las 4, todavía estás haciendo emails o algo así a las 9 de la tarde, sí. Bueno, seguimos. ¿Cómo percibes la relación entre jefes y colaboradores en Ecuador? Digamos una distancia de poder, hablando así, una estructura, comparado a Alemania.

Bueno, solo puedo hablar de la situación aquí en el museo y hay una persona que se llama la doctora, ella es como la jefe del jardín en donde trabaja con otros compañeros y me parece que ella es muy cercana a los trabajadores que están aquí pero eso puede ser un resultado que ella ya está trabajando aquí para muchos años y los otros compañeros también, por eso tienen una relación más cercana. ¿Notas diferencias en la manera en que las personas se dirigen a figuras de autoridad comparado a Alemania? ¿O es igual? No sé, sí de una manera también es igual, pero a veces en Alemania no sé, siendo que la policía o algo así tiene un poco más de respeto. La gente tiene más respeto de la policía y de las reglas.

¿Cómo describirías el trabajo en equipo en Ecuador? ¿Si en algún punto trabajaste en equipo? ¿Son más individuales o más colectivos? Bueno, sí, a veces trabajo en equipo con otras personas del jardín y sí, eso funciona bien y hay como una estrategia de que todos pueden trabajar juntos y sí, eso funciona bien. Ok, sí. ¿No son como individualistas? ¿Son un poco más colectivos o cómo percibes tú que son? Ciertamente, las personas que trabajan aquí en el jardín sí trabajamos como colectivo porque hay mucho que hacer y bueno, las unas personas están cortando, ellas no y nosotros recogimos y sí, así es un trabajo comunitario.

¿Sientes que las decisiones se toman más de forma individual o grupal en la parte del trabajo? Bueno, cierto, aquí es que la doctora dice lo que hay que hacer y después las personas hacen esas cosas y bueno, no digo que es una decisión grupal, es más que la doctora dice lo que hay que hacer y nosotros hacemos. Perfecto. ¿Cómo percibes la organización y planificación en tu lugar de trabajo? ¿Crees que son flexibles o son estrictos? ¿Cómo percibes tú? Sí, son muy flexibles y también no hay mucha organización, hay algunas cosas que siempre deben hacer como dar comida a las aves, esas cosas, pero otras cosas son muy flexibles.

Cuando llego al trabajo, debo preguntar qué hay que hacer hoy y hacemos eso y el próximo día mañana voy a preguntar de nuevo qué hay que hacer. Sí, es como día a día y no es un plan de la semana o un mes. Perfecto.

¿Cómo describirías tu actitud frente a estas reglas y cumplimientos de normas por lo que son más flexibles? Bueno, a mí normalmente soy una persona que siempre tiene una planificación del día, de la semana, del mes, como para la estructura, pero por la parte del trabajo no importa tanto para mí porque hago lo que dicen y ya está. Sí, no más. No debo planificar algo más.

A ver, ¿qué rol jugó el idioma en tu proceso de adaptación laboral y social? Bueno, antes de venir aquí solo aprendí con Duolingo. Mentira. Y por eso al inicio me resulta un poco más difícil de comunicar, pero también en la escuela de Alemania tenía francés como lengua y por eso ya podía comprender mucho pero no hablar bastante.

Y por eso a veces era un poco difícil saber cómo preguntar, por ejemplo, las cosas que necesito para trabajar, por ejemplo, cortadores o cosas así. Pero ahora sí es más fácil y ya tengo un vocabulario de aquí de Jardín, también del museo. ¿Sentiste diferencias en los estilos de comunicación? Por ejemplo, ¿han sido directos o a veces esperaban que asumieras tú algo que no está dicho explícitamente? ¿En comparación a Alemania? Bueno, en Alemania puedo decir que todos son muy directos y dicen lo que piensan.

Pero aquí me parece que conmigo hacen así también, pero también hay más chistes en los grupos de Whatsapp. Sí, por ejemplo, en la gimnasia o el pole dance que hacen chistes. Y a veces al inicio no comprendí tanto y estuve pensando qué están diciendo y qué significa eso, pero ahora sí entiendo que es un chiste.

Con la ironía o sarcasmo, sí. ¿Qué te ayudó más adaptarte a este nuevo contexto? Sí, mi organización de Coabolo, ellos me ayudan bastante con cosas cotidianas como el bus, la tarjeta del bus, los bancos en donde puedo tomar dinero, la comida, los supermercados, cuáles son las mejores que necesitan saber de las cosas acá. Y también la comunidad del pole dance porque es un lugar en donde siento que puedo preguntar todo y también es algo en donde me siento más libre de hacer lo que quiero.

Bueno, ¿recibiste apoyo institucional o social? Creo que sí me contaste de la organización. Sí, eso de la organización y también antes de venir por aquí teníamos un seminario de preparación para toda la gente que iba a hacer un voluntariado en Latinoamérica y eso también me ayudó a pensar lo que puede haber aquí y las diferencias y un poco de preparación para que no es tan diferente como en Alemania. Bueno, esto es una pregunta un poquito más personal pero igualmente se dirige a la adaptación.

¿Por qué decidiste entrar a pole dance? O sea, me contabas que no sabía que te gustaba hasta que entraste. Sí, una vez en Alemania hice para el cumpleaños de una amiga y no pensé más de eso y llegué aquí y había una voluntariada anterior, el último año y ella me dice, voy a visitar, ¿quieres ir conmigo a pole dance? Y digo, sí, ¿por qué no? Y por eso estuve allá una vez y sí, ya me enamoré que sí es lindo de aprender elementos así. ¿Qué estrategias desarrollaste con el tiempo para sentirte más integrada en la sociedad o en la cultura? Bueno, definitivamente estoy una persona que necesita la estructura y también como un plan de la semana y siempre hago lo mismo y sí, por eso cuando tengo esa estructura en mi vida, sí me siento bien acostumbrada a vivir por aquí.

Sí, también es el tiempo. Si pasas más tiempo en un lugar, sí te sientas más cómodo. ¿Sientes que esta experiencia cambió tu forma de ver a otras culturas? Sí, creo que sí, porque si antes no supe que en Latinoamérica hay tantas culturas diferentes y también en Ecuador que la cultura de aquí de Cuenca es muy diferente a la cultura en la parte de la Amazonía o en la parte de la costa y que tienen otras formas de vivir y hay tanta variación, sí.

¿Hubo cambios en tu identidad personal o, bueno, sí, laboral en este aspecto? No sé si hay todavía, sí, un poco de cambio de personal, pero no lo siento mucho, pero creo que mi familia y mis amigas de Alemania van a notarlo más cuando regreso, pero yo por persona no siento en mí mismo, pero otras personas tal vez sí, no sé. Sí, también creo que una cosa es que tengo más confianza de hacer cosas solita sin el apoyo de mis padres o amigas. ¿Qué aprendizajes interculturales te llevas de esta experiencia? Bueno, tal vez que no necesito, tengo tanto estrés en Alemania que si todo va a funcionar y si algo no funciona, si el bus no llega al tiempo, no pasa nada, todo va a funcionar.

Esa cosa como que no te pones tanto estrés en los tiempos. Ah, ¿qué recomendarías a futuros voluntarios que quieran venir a hacer voluntariado acá en Ecuador? Por aquí en Cuenca, que se encuentran un grupo deportivo, un grupo de baile, un grupo de algo así en que puedes integrarte un poco más con la gente de Ecuador, porque si no haces eso, te quedas mucho con los otros voluntarios y no tienes tantas relaciones con otras personas de aquí de Cuenca. ¿Qué crees que podría mejorar este tipo de programas de voluntariado para que las personas como tú, o sea, voluntarios, se integren más a la cultura? ¿Qué recomendarías? Bueno, hasta ahora sé que todo es bien, pero tal vez que tienen un poco más de cercanía con otras personas del trabajo, si eso es posible.

Por ejemplo, no es el caso para mí, pero sé que en el jardín botánico, por ejemplo, hay como cuatro o cinco voluntariados y ellos trabajan juntos, y por eso se quedan así con solo las personas de otros voluntarios también, y que no tienen tantas relaciones con los otros trabajadores del jardín, porque se quedan en equipo así. Tal vez esa cosa. ¿Crees que la preparación intercultural previa como la que tú tuviste es suficiente o se necesita más? Bueno, creo que sí para mí está suficiente, pero tal vez para otras personas necesitan un poco más de preparación si tienen cosas como, si cotidianas como los buses y también la electricidad, el agua, sí, pero creo que es difícil preparar todo antes de venir a un lugar.

Si te vas a pasar algunos meses acá, o si también solo algunas semanas, sí ya te vas a acostumbrar. Bueno, eso sería todo. Gracias.

De nada.

Bueno, muchas gracias. Mucho gusto. Cúdate.

Sí, a ti también.

TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENTREVISTA

Entrevistadora: Julianna Maldonado

Entrevistado: VA 2

Modalidad: Virtual, plataforma Zoom

Perfect, I will start with some general questions. The first one is, what is culture for you? What it means? Actually, I don't really know. For me, I think culture is like from food to manners or I don't know.

Okay, I'm going to mix Spanish with English and German a little bit. Don't worry. Sometimes I don't know really.

And traditions, yeah, well, and everything, I guess. I don't know, like society, rules, everything, I would say. Don't worry, every answer is correct.

So, what is cultural identity for you? I would say like, oh, this is okay. Yeah, this sounds so dumb when I'm going to explain it. I don't even know how to explain it, to be honest.

I mean, if you as a person can identify yourself, like if, no, no, if your culture maybe like shapes kind of how you are as a person, and also shapes like, yeah, the manners you have, the morals you have, personality traits, everything like that. Yeah, and then shapes you as a person, I would say. That's perfect.

What it means to be German for you? Like, coming here to Ecuador, how would you describe the German culture? Okay, like German culture? This is really hard. I actually never thought about that. I mean, being a German, I mean, first of all, we have our history, of course.

And like, when you're meeting people, they're always like, oh my god, you're the country who had Hitler. And yeah, but of course, that's not the only thing, I think. I think we are like a country in progress, not in progress, or that already, how do you say, like, we are already a very advanced country, I would say.

Like, when it's about politics, things that we want to do, for example. For example, like, oh my god, I'm so sorry my English. I think that is one thing.

Oh my god, no, no, the fucking boy from England is here. So nobody's fucking listening to me. There are people on the terrace and everything.

Okay, well. That, I don't know, like, I mean, as I said, like, culture is like everything, like society and like food and whatever. I don't know, but being a German, I don't know, to be honest.

I'm white. I mean, this is also like part of being German. I don't fucking know what to say, actually.

It's okay, don't worry. The other question is, how would you describe the Ecuadorian culture, in your opinion? This is like a really big question. Um, okay, if we go on to society, for example.

First of all, I feel like in Ecuador, there are a lot of people being religious, Christian. This is like a big part. And what comes with that is also that a lot of people are very conservative.

And this is what I actually also noted in my experiences and everything. I would say that definitely. I mean, maybe this is just a stereotype, but I also actually experienced this.

That you have a lot of, like, you celebrate more than Germans do, for example. We have, only in San Joaquin, for example, we have some fiestas, like once in a while. And yeah, for example, also Carnival.

Like you have holidays here for Carnival, and you're celebrating Carnival really big and stuff. So this, I would say, especially in general, I think, or I've heard that the people in general are more free. I don't know how to describe it.

In Germany, you say people have a stick in their ass. You heard that? No, but I don't think so. But they're like really strict and stiff sometimes.

And actually, it's true, I think. So as I said, the thing is, I'm not 100% sure what really culture is completely about. So really describing the culture of an entire country is, I don't know, difficult.

Oh, no. First, I want you to tell me, what are you doing here in Ecuador? Tell me something about you, like the volunteer and stuff like that. Like, what did you do? So I'm here with a program that's called Weltbärts.

And Weltbärts has different organizations. And my organization in Germany is called Volunta vom Deutsch-Roten Kreuz in Hessen. And then there's the Ecuadorian partner organization, which is called EkoVolu.

And I worked. Okay, first, I worked at the Botanical Garden here. And then I changed my work.

And now I'm working in the city. It's a kindergarten. I think a Christian kindergarten.

It's like next to the Fibonacci, if you know that. So, yes. And like, my work is actually like the same as all the professors have.

So we're just gonna, yeah, we just take care of the children. And, you know, we give them food. They're sleeping.

We go to the toilet with them, whatever. Like, everything like that. Yeah.

How old are you? And I don't know if that's... Continue. Oh, sorry. I think what's also important, like, I'm having... This is like, okay, I'm a volunteer.

Yeah, of course, you know that, but yeah. And so I'm not getting any money. I'm doing this for a whole year.

And I'm working eight hours, five days a week. Yeah. Okay, perfect.

So you already finished high school or Abitur, I think it is? Yeah, yeah. I have Abitur. She was dead.

We can continue with the other questions. And yeah, I will like you to tell me how your decision come, like, why did you decide Ecuador to do like a volunteer? Yeah, actually, it's a little bit silly. Actually, I really wanted to do something ecological.

And I saw that actually just, or almost just in Ecuador, there were ecological programs. Programs in most of the countries, you can only work with children. And I didn't want to do that.

Well, but yeah. So I actually applied for another program, which was with dogs from the street. But yeah, that didn't work out.

But this was actually the factor why I really wanted to go to Ecuador. Yeah. Okay.

Did you know something about Ecuador? Or did you have expectations before you came here about Ecuador? Yeah, I mean, I did not really know much about Ecuador. But the sister of my best friend went to Ecuador actually, also for like a volunteer year. And what she told me is that she only works for four hours a week.

No, four hours a day. And actually, her work is actually really boring. Because often, and she told us also about other volunteers, that you don't really get any work.

I mean, in my program, now it's different. But like, yeah. So I thought, she told me that a lot of volunteers have that experience.

I thought, okay, hopefully, I'm not going to work as much. But it's probably also going to be boring. Well, yeah, she didn't really tell me much about the country.

I just, you know, I mean, there are stereotypes that exist. And actually, yeah, she told me that they celebrate a lot. She told me that almost every other week, there was also a fiesta in her barrio.

No sé. And yeah, that they dance a lot. So and she was also in Cuenca.

And she told me about the mountains and stuff. And that the nature is really beautiful. I saw some pictures.

So that I knew that, yeah, that the nature here is at least beautiful and stuff. Yeah. I forgot to ask you, when did you start doing this volunteer? Was last year in August? It was last year in August.

I came in the end of August. And you will stay until this August, right? Yeah. Okay, good.

Now, could you briefly describe your experience volunteering abroad or working also with foreigners or with Ecuadorian people? And how would you describe the context you arrived in? Okay, I mean, there were a lot of ups and downs, to be honest. And actually, like after the second month, I really thought I would be going home again. Because to be honest, being a volunteer here, I think it also depends on the project and your organization 100%.

And because I think my organization personally is not the best. And I always had a lot of health problems. This was one thing that was really bothering me.

And I had a lot of pressure from all sides, from my organization. And also, especially for my work, because they didn't understand that. They had no... Yeah, they didn't show any comprehension for that.

And they always acted like I was being lazy and not wanting to come to work. But I actually fought with myself because I was getting sick every other week. It was so exhausting.

It's never happened to me in Germany. And after some time, because I had to talk to my German organization, about some things that were going on. And they told me that here, there's another work philosophy in general.

And that one thing, you only have like 15 vacation days. What was really surprising for me, because in Germany, you have a lot more. And also that people come to work actually being sick, because they are afraid to be fired.

So this was one thing. Then, yeah, I was always really exhausted, especially working at the Botanical Garden. Because I had to work immediately, eight hours a day, five days a week.

I've never done that before. Actually, I also didn't know that I had to do that. But yeah.

And the work in general, as I said, I changed projects. So I didn't like the work, because there were... As a volunteer, you notice that they are giving the Aufgaben to you, that they don't want to do. I had to collect trash all the time.

At one point, almost every day. And we had to collect trash. This was actually almost all the stuff that we did.

It was so boring. And I did not really feel that... I mean, they said, yeah, we're gonna see if we can do something about it. So it's more exciting for us.

But I don't know. I mean, at least they asked us how we are. Like my boss asked us how we were the entire time, and also offered us to do an own project.

So this, definitely. In general, working with Ecuadorian people, I mean, I had some co-workers. But they were all older than me.

So I did not really connect to them, to be honest. There were... Most of them were also men, and I don't know. We did not really connect, to be honest.

We were also... We were a lot of volunteers there, like three or four. So we often also spoke to each other in German. So we did not connect with the others.

But I did also not... They tried to communicate with us and stuff. And it was not because of the language barrier. There was not a problem.

Not a big problem. Sometimes, yes. Especially with the other volunteers.

But at some point, we were just not on the same level and stuff. So yeah. But they were all really nice, always.

So this is not a problem. Yeah, what else? I don't actually know what's everything you want to hear about. But yes, I mean, I had a lot of problems with my organization as well.

They took a lot of time to get me to change the projects and stuff. Yeah. But yeah, I don't know.

Tell me if you want to know something specific. It's okay. Otherwise, I'm just gonna talk shit and you have to find whatever is interesting.

Don't worry. It's okay. For me, everything is okay.

Everything you say. So yeah. At some point, I will just take the things that I will put on my thesis.

Yeah, yeah. But really, do the questions more specific if you really want to know something. Don't worry.

It's okay. The next question is, if you had to describe your experience in one word or a phrase, what would it be and why? Well, I think I already explained it a little bit like, yeah, the question before. I think up and down and chaotic or something like that would describe it.

Mm-hmm. Pretty good. And for the reasons I told you.

Okay, perfect. Oh, how were your first weeks here in the country? And also in this institution? It was a culture shock, to be honest. It really was.

I remember, like, stepping on the bus and I was like, I was horrified. Because first thing, you have to stop them. Then you have a card that you always have to... Yeah.

Yeah. And where I live, I'm living in Berlin and students don't have to pay for the bus. So I so often forgot to... Yeah, that was a problem because sometimes I was in places and I did not have... And I couldn't go anywhere with a bus because I did not have any salary anymore.

And I didn't know how it works. I didn't know where to get new stuff. So this was kind of stressing sometimes.

But yeah, in general, how the buses drive is... This is so specific, but it's a really big thing for me still. Because if you would drive like that in Germany, you would not have your license anymore. Like, for real.

I was laying on the ground one time too. Like, for real. The bus drives like this, bro.

What the fuck? Yeah, this was one of the first things I noticed. Then the first week was actually really good. I mean, the thing is, I did not want to do the project.

The beginning was just because my other project didn't work with the docks. And I knew that there was another project, but they told me I had to come to the Botanical Garden first, and then I could change. Yeah.

So, but like the first week was fine. But like after the first week, it already got like really boring. And I was really tired all the time.

And I know, especially like in the beginning, I was really, really, really tired all the time because of the work. And yeah, but still, we had this high because we were in a new country. And there was no food to try.

The supermarket was new, like different products and everything. The people were new. And it was already exciting.

It was also like the month where I traveled the most. Like I traveled so much on the weekends. And I got to know new people and found my friends that I still have and that I love.

What do you want to say as well? Ah, this was, yeah, this was all like this high. And what was really weird that people were looking at us all the time. And I don't know if it's, if it changed, to be honest.

But I don't, I don't notice it anymore as much. Of course, sometimes still, but like, I know, like the first week, I was like telling all my friends in Germany, Oh my God, like people are looking at us all the time, all the time. I don't know.

No, I was not paranoid. It actually was like that. And yeah, so it was all really weird, but all really cool at the same time.

So I think like the first month was really exciting. But like, yeah, in a weird way, but also like in a really good way. Perfect.

What cultural aspect of Ecuadorian culture caught your attention the most at the beginning? In the beginning? The thing is, it was not really in the beginning, but can I say something else? I mean, I looked at your questions and some of them, I mean, they're not completely similar, but I would say like the same thing about it. So we have to see. But for example, as I said, like, I feel like the society is like really conservative.

And when I got my first Ecuadorian friend, she told me that she's 20 years old. And she told me she had a curfew for 1 a.m. And I was like, girl, what the fuck? You know, Emilia, I don't know her last name, Pelita? I don't know. I didn't understand that much what happened to her.

Yeah, wait. Okay. What? I didn't hear that much what happened with her.

So that's why. Yeah, no, no, she had a curfew. You know what a curfew is? No idea.

She had to be home at 1 a.m. Like when she was going out. Yeah. And always her parents would get her and stuff.

And the thing is, when you're 20 in Germany, you can do whatever you want. You're a fucking adult. Like, when you're 18, my mother said to me, like, you're 18.

You can do whatever you want. But like, actually, that's the mentality in Germany, I think. But already when I was like 16, of course, my mother did care for me.

But like, it was no problem. Like, she asked me at like 1 a.m., like, where are you at? Everything's fine. Yeah.

And I said, yeah, but I'm gonna be, I'm gonna come home late. And then I came home at like 4 a.m. And it was no problem, you know. So this and also like, she has a boyfriend and she wanted to visit him in Europe because he studies there.

And her parents told her, no, you cannot go. Also, because he's your boyfriend, but you're not fucking married. I was like, girl, like, especially, like, she also told me that, like, marriage and having kids is a really big thing in her life.

And like, kind of her purpose, not really her purpose, but like, this is like one of the biggest goals she has. And I was like, okay, I mean, fine. But like, in this time, at this time, I think like the biggest goal, for me, would be something else.

Or she, for a woman, should not be like marriage and kids anymore. Like, you know? Yeah. So I noticed that.

Like, this caught my attention like the most, I think. How do you perceive the relationship between employees and their boss or authority figures in comparison to Germany? The thing is, I never actually, I mean, had many jobs in Germany, but it was never, like, I never was having a real job. So I don't 100% know from own experience how it is in Germany.

But for example, like, for my many jobs, I could just say, oh, sorry, I cannot come, or like, whatever. I mean, it also depends on the job. But they were always so nice to me and never, like, strict with me.

Like, when I made a mistake, there was no problem and stuff. Like, they were really chill. And yeah.

But here, for example, I have the impression that employees have a real, like, real big respect for their bosses. I don't know. I mean, it also depends.

But like, I've been in two programs. So I don't, this is the only thing I saw. Yeah.

And as I said, like, what I heard or what I experienced, like, they don't, like, when they're sick, they come to work, because, like, what could happen if they are not coming, like, often as me, for example. And yeah, one time, like, when I was working at the kindergarten already, we had a woman who was pregnant. And she was, like, eighth or ninth month already.

And she asked in a meeting if somebody could help her pulling down the beds. Because the beds, like, gammas of the children are always, like, up on the wall. And yeah.

And she couldn't do that anymore. She would not like to do that anymore. And then our boss said, no, you're gonna do it yourself.

And I was like, what the fuck? And nobody said anything about it. Like, she accepted, like, accepted it. And nobody protected her or whatever, stood up for her.

I mean, in the end, we still did it, like, but, like, in secret, you know. But yeah, I noticed that. And I don't know if that would be the same thing in Germany.

Yeah, that's the only thing I noticed. Um, how would you describe teamwork in Ecuador? Like, do you feel that decisions are made more individually or in a collective way? In comparison too. In comparison to Germany. ^[P]_[SEP]Mm. I didn't already notice so much about it, but, um, Like, they always had meetings at my programs and always by talking about things. I was never at the meetings because they didn't allow it. ^[P]_[SEP]They didn't want it us there. I don't know, because I think it was not important for us. So I don't know what they talked about in meetings and how much the employees could say something about the things. that they talked about. ^[P]_[SEP]How much they could decide. But still, they had meetings, so I guess they maybe talked. Together and try to find a solution or like planning things. ^[P]_[SEP]Um, but I don't know, to be honest. Um, but yeah, what I noticed in Germany, I, I only know that from my parents, so this is only experience for my parents. But for example, like my mother, at her, at her work, they also have like meetings like all the time, like all the time. ^[P]_[SEP]They're always talking about everything together. So I think, Just from my own experience, It's similar, but I don't know, to be honest.

Uh, how do you perceive organizations and planning planning in your workplace? ^[P]_[SEP]Are rules strict or uh, flexible? do you think? In comparison? ^[P]_[SEP]Yeah. Yeah. Um. ^[P]_[SEP]The thing is, it also depends on the program, I think. It really depends. Oh, you might like the organization, the volunteer organization or like the program I was working at? ^[P]_[SEP]Uh, the volunteer. Organization. Oh, okay. ^[P]_[SEP]Okay. This, like the organizations are really strict. Not only mine, but also from the other organizations, um, for example, um, this has also changed, um, because they experience had some bad experiences with the volunteers of the years before. ^[P]_[SEP]But for example, we have a curfew, so we have to be at home at 2 AM. Okay, thing is, No one actually does that. Um, I mean, they're not controlling us, so yeah. ^[P]_[SEP]I think, like, this is actually flexible, like, but the other one's not. For example, we cannot invite people. Because like one time somebody came and robbed, the people here, but we were inviting like really, really close friends from Germany and Austria. ^[P]_[SEP]So they're not even Ecuadorians and Aretha, bro, like, why would they rob us? and we see them every day and stuff, like, this makes no sense. Why can't we invite them? ^[P]_[SEP]There's really no. Um, Peligro. Yeah. ^[P]_[SEP]And, um, still, they have a camera here, so they they can actually control us or like, um, at least like see what we are doing. And, um, So once they send us a video and say, like, who's that girl? Because they invited a girl. ^[P]_[SEP]No, she's living here. Well, but, like, still, and we explained them everything. She's a volunteer and she's German as well. ^[P]_[SEP]Like, we thought, like, it would be okay, and they're saying, no, if this happens, again, like, you are going back to Germany all. And yeah. So this, for example, like, there are a lot of rules, to be honest. ^[P]_[SEP]What else? Um, then we have to bring a certificate every time when it's sick. Like every time from the 1st day. ^[P]_[SEP]No other organization has that. Like, for most of them, like, from the 3rd day or the 4th thing, you know? But we have to bring it like every day and one time I said, like I had problems or I was sleeping. ^[P]_[SEP]I was thinking the entire day because my field was so high. And I said, like, I couldn't go to the doctor. I'm sorry, and they say, you have to bank the certificate from this day. ^[P]_[SEP]Like what you're doing, bro. And they're really strict actually about, especially about being sick. Um, Now they kind of understood our situation and

have a little bit more understanding for it. ^[SEP]But still, they're kind of pressuring us to not be sick all the time. Yeah, and what else? Yeah, no, I would say they're really strict and one girl actually has to. ^[SEP]She was already fired because she went to Montanita and Germans are not allowed to go to the coast normally. And, um, Yeah, but still, I think like it's our own risk. No, I understand that rule, but at the same time, I also see that we are adults and that's our risk, kind of. ^[SEP]So, I do not really see why she has to go home just because of that. And okay, there were other things, but like these were not even true. Most of them. ^[SEP]Um, yeah, so I... But, um, we have one minute, so I will finish this, and then I will send you another one because... Oh my god.

The next question is how do you perceive punctuality and time management in Ecuador? I really do think that the stereotype that people in Germany are on time is true or more like people here are kind of not as on time, I don't know. To work yes, actually I noticed this, like they've always been on time and we not as volunteers to be honest. Yeah but like in my free time when I'm meeting with people like always we say we meet at that time then they're writing to me and say yeah okay a little bit later then even a little bit later and stuff whatever.

And also I went on a family trip with a friend, we wanted to leave at like 1am, no not 1am bro, 1pm and we left at 3pm. Whatever. And also because we had to leave at 1pm because the mother still had an appointment so she had to work and still we did not go on time so still if it's important yeah whatever.

Yeah that kind of time and also with our organizations when we had meetings like so often they came late. Yeah or just like last second they told us we would have a meeting or they would come or they would not come like stuff like that yeah. Okay what role did the language play in your work and social adaptation process? Oh actually a lot.

I think I still had it more easy than others because I learned Spanish in school but there were other volunteers that didn't and I thought I mean I left school with officially B2 C1. This was not true, this was not true but it was on paper you know and also I mean I hadn't talked Spanish in like five months when I came here so I knew I was out of practice but still and yeah with the people here having a different accent and also a different vocabulary it was still more difficult than I thought it would be and yeah so I had to learn especially like the vocabulary at my workplace and when talking to people especially when I wanted to go into deeper conversations like I couldn't like one time I wanted to or a co-worker wanted to discuss abortion with me and I like I can say a lot about this topic but also like the people here they don't speak English and when I don't speak Spanish like what are we gonna do like I could not discuss I could not find arguments and stuff and always like I thought okay I should socialize but then I would have to talk in Spanish and right now my Spanish is really bad so I just leave it you know so rather than trying it I just did not talk to people yeah so especially of course in the beginning it was really difficult and then I mean in the beginning I did not meet a lot of Ecuadorian people my age so like finding friends I mean it was a thing but yeah as we didn't meet so many people this was not as a problem but still like later I noticed it like I cannot socialize and I was always thinking oh my god I have no personality because like for real like I have a completely different personality no it's so true and like people perceive me so differently because I actually I seem so shy and so introvert but actually I'm really not like but I especially I cannot make jokes and I'm so unfunny in Spanish like already in English sometimes I have my problems but like in Spanish like bro no chance and I always thought oh my god like how would people even want to be friends with me if I cannot talk because to be honest if somebody would come to me and like like talking some phrases in like broken Spanish but I actually noticed like they're the most basic person and don't really have a personality I don't know if I wanted to be would want to be friends with them and I don't know like it's still it still worked out and like I'm getting better in my language and I notice it makes a big difference yeah I think like the language is really really important to be honest okay and what helped you the most to adapt to this new context um yeah actually it was like um getting better in the language um also like speaking like really speaking or practicing it it was so important like also when I didn't want to speak Spanish um then like my friends and I like we um obligated ourselves to speak it um so we would practice um this but also like as I was too shy or like really bad at socializing I had my other friends that are more extrovert or like better in Spanish or whatever like they can talk to everybody so I was just following kind of my friends and like they were do the socializing and I would do socialize like through them or when they like kind of worked before like prepared it so I would also be able to go in the conversation with the people or like meet with the people because they made they made the um contacts now how do you say it yeah sie haben kontakte quasi für mich geknüpft oder halt auch um or like when I met my one Ecuadorian friend um Emilia as I told you um she was in Germany so it was we had this point um where she was really interested in like getting to know me and stuff and when I got better with her and we're like um getting to know her friends of course like through this um I could yeah like find my place um in the society I don't know and like get to know other people and stuff like yeah okay thank you um did you receive institutional or social support to integrate you more in this context culture context what exactly do you mean uh for example will the organization help you to make Ecuadorian friends or to integrate to other volunteers and stuff like that yeah there's no way also um actually no actually not at all um I once already also asked my German um organization if they could send us some contacts to other volunteers that were in Cuenca um but they told us no they said because of um like data shots but also um because they want to us to make um your contacts by your own yeah yeah yeah yeah so no we did not get any support actually no but it was fine still okay uh do you feel that this experience changed the way you see other cultures or it changed you in a personal way or in a work way yeah I I made some notes about this actually um you had like three questions or so and um it's kind of similar I just um I always forgot the word in Spanish and in English I don't know why.

So like learnings I had and also like how I grew with this experience um personally so like first of all like learnings um okay maybe I was just reading because I actually like like oh yeah I actually wrote a text so um yeah learnings that I have was like even if I find things weird or bad it does not mean that this is true I mean it was a culture shock definitely for me and as I told you like um hearing that my 20 year old friend has a curfew and has to ask about all her plans if she could do that it was like really weird to me but you know I'm coming from a different culture and I'm shaped by that and you're coming from another culture and I'm shaped by that and I know other morals manners and society rules and I learned that also you for um that people from Ecuador for example find my culture where it's like some things and for example a lot of people told me that when to Germany like German people are rude or impolite or like really cold and I actually never um saw it that way because in Germany we just have another perception of like kindness or like um how I say like yeah being polite and stuff whatever like for you or for not only for Ecuadorian people I heard that um from other people as well from other foreigners um they find it rude when we don't ask them how you are but in Germany how are you is like a real question and I feel like especially in Spanish but also in English it's like just a set phrase like nobody actually expects an answer or at least not um a real answer like if you would ask me how I am I would feel like I have to explain what's going on in my life and how I really feel and stuff like just saying like good like you're not getting anything from that and especially nobody would even like tell you I'm I'm bad you know so like for me it's unnecessary and you find it maybe unpolite to not ask that so this is like they're just really big differences and you have to get in another position and um like see that as I said like people pursue things differently because of their culture and how they were um how they grew up and stuff and um yeah so I was not I'm wondering right now so I have to see what I what else I wrote okay wait a second um yeah okay this was actually really important for me or actually really interesting for me because I never thought about this but I as well learned how it just feels like to be a foreigner in another country so um I mean sounds bad but like good for me I cannot experience racism um but I wouldn't say like I experienced discrimination either but still I was just treated differently of course than other people from here of course of course

um but okay what did I wrote wait um yeah okay I'm just gonna read um okay but and I really don't think that people even hate have that intention but you always get treated like a foreigner and over time when you live in another country this culture is kind of also getting part of your culture identity and um yeah I have only lived here for a half half bro for half a year but I simply see myself differently like as like a German tourist for example so I don't even know why and I might be like also dramatic about that but something just bothers or triggers me um when people immediately assume I'm a tourist or even telling that I'm um or even if I'm telling that I'm living here they're still claiming I'm a tourist and of course like I'm a foreigner and I don't like bro I don't want to claim I'm a Ecuadorian person of course bro I'm not from here I'm not from here I get that but like I'm I'm still not a tourist anymore so yeah and also people on the street tell me welcome to Ecuador and this is actually I know this is so nice I know that and they always say it in English as well and I'm always thinking thank you but like six months late like I've lived here like I'm living here and yeah I'm not here new here anymore and um yeah and also like people speaking to me in English I don't know why I'm so offended by that to be honest but like I learned Spanish for so long so that I could speak Spanish to other people and they just come up to me and immediately immediately assume that I speak English or I mean they just want to be nice or just want to show that I'm that that they're also like that they can also speak my language but they don't even ask what my language is I mean like less like a week ago a little boy came up to us and asked us you speak um Chino and we were like no we don't speak Chinese and then the parents came and say no they speak English and I was like no we don't we don't like everybody thinks we're from the United States and I get it I get it because a lot of American people are here or like a lot of people from the United States are here but still like I don't know and especially when I say I can speak Spanish you can speak Spanish with me and one time I don't get one word and then they pursue to speak English in me and I always have to remember them to speak Spanish with me okay yeah I don't know it's just I feel offended by that it's so nice of them but I don't so as I said like they really like most of people just want us to feel comfortable and just really want to be nice to us and just help us so we can understand them better and stuff but I think this is actually what I find so interesting and so important about it like sometimes when people in Germany like people with a migration background or like foreign people complain about things like that or just simple things where I thought okay I get it I sometimes I kind of get why you're offended sometimes I don't I even don't um and people from here just have good intentions and you're still offended but yeah if you live that experience you get offended by so tiny things and especially if you feel that people want to deny your identity your cultural identity or like um that you're from Germany for example like I know so many people that were born in Germany or lived there since years and years and still people say oh my god your German is so good and they they literally grew up in Germany of course they're German bro they speak German like me you know and um when people always ask yeah where you're from where you're from and you know and you're just actually from Germany because you were born there yeah so I think that's really hard for a lot of people and now that I lived this experience of course like in a different way and I think especially for people coming to Germany it's way harder because they also experienced racism and stuff but still I can see I can understand that better and I think like everybody should have such an experience and live that especially racist people um yeah I think it's like really valuable to have um yeah experience something like that okay yeah and I don't know you want to know like things about my personal growth or like only about like culture identity because you wrote something about that could be both of them like in a personal way how the culture the Ecuadorian culture or how your experience here volunteering made you grow up as a person or see another thing that you didn't know yeah okay yeah as I said um for culture identity I would say yeah of course I'm German 100 percent but I do not feel the same anymore and when people are saying because like I make like Ecuadorian things and people are saying like girl you're Latina and I'm always like and like I also want to kind of be that and I don't feel like that sometimes um of course after a year I'm still not a Latina you know but you still get like your take or like as I said this culture identity is kind of getting part of your identity so yeah this for once and also um what I learned like personal growth I experienced is especially being like I'm more responsible for myself I'm independent um I mean I've never lived on my own of course I live with other volunteers but I don't have a family not even the host family especially I don't have my family and um also like I'm good with the other volunteers in here but we are not as close so when I'm for example when I was sick like I had to take care of myself there was no mother that would like cook me like a soup or anything so I would feel better um so yeah but I also I think like I learned a lot about myself I don't know why especially like right now but I think because I did so many new things and things on my own and had to find friends and stuff I don't know and um yeah I just learned what I like what I want what I don't like and what I don't want um yeah things that I didn't know about before but also I discovered new characteristics about myself or even things that I developed here um for example to be honest like I had never had problems with anxiety like never um or not more what I'm saying bro what am I saying like not that of course I was like insecure sometimes or had like social anxiety but not as often I was actually always perceived like as an extrovert and like since I'm here like I kind of feel like I'm a fucking introvert I mean this is because of course like I'm foreign and I don't know the language so good and when I'm getting to know new people of course like I'm holding back and stuff um but as I said like socializing things um yeah I don't know and I really kind of got social anxiety in so many different situations where I really don't in the because like why why am I feeling even scared of this situation or stuff but yes this for once and yeah um I had to get way more active if I wanted to change things and I learned that I had to take care of myself and yeah um had to get active if I wanted to something to change about my situation or my life and yeah um then patience I mean you can assume that with the language with everything adapting myself um yeah and as I said like in the beginning not in the beginning beginning but like after two or three months I really thought I was going home and um when I wouldn't have waited um I wouldn't have been here anymore but like this situation got better and stuff so yeah I had to learn patience and um yeah also I was really yolo like especially in the in the time in the beginning and I learned that I do not have to do every shit because I'm in my fucking gap year and that I should actually think a little bit more about some decisions and yeah not be such so impulsive and stuff so yeah okay this it's okay and there um is also another question that will be like the general one that is yeah would you recommend to future students who want to volunteer in Ecuador and how also the mobility programs or the these organizations can improve to integrate people yeah um yeah okay um the thing is I'm wait what did I want to say I just I thought about that um let me think for a second okay well the thing is um I think Ecuador is not okay I'm gonna come check that but I don't even know if I would recommend like volunteering um I mean on one side yes but not for everybody I think because if you're like a really sensitive person um I don't know because it's harder than it seems and yeah so I think like volunteering in general is like really really cool and like having this intercultural exchange and stuff um what was my point okay wait a second um I think it depends also really on the organization and your program of course um but yeah like the thing is in Ecuador but I think this is like every this is about like every country um as I said like working here is differently as in Germany um you don't have as much vacation and what I don't want to say your time don't worry I don't remember what it was like about Ecuador to be honest okay um because like I think what I thought about was more general but is this still okay if not okay because the thing is you you have to be also okay with with working a lot I mean as I said like other organizations or other programs you have to work less but um oh no wait a second I wanted to say that I think to the other question wait I did not make notes about that I just saw it on work before wait a second oh my god okay what what were the other questions

what the organizations can do better and what else yeah two and the well the first one was what you recommend to future volunteers once want to go to job yeah and the second one is what do you think mobility programs or these organizations can do to improve the integration of students or volunteers yeah okay um yeah no okay um yeah okay the thing about volunteering is it can be yeah that the work is hard and you're not getting any payment for it you know so um and also what I feel like the the thing is we are working of course we are not we have no formation we didn't study or anything but so we're working the same hours or almost the same hours as the other employees but and we are not getting paid and they're also like they're treating us as normal employees, but and we are not getting paid, and they're

also like they're treating us as normal employees. ^[P]But I never really felt any gratitude. from the organizations and I, I know I, I came here on my free will and um, I wanted to do that and I actually knew about it more or less. And But still, I mean, also like saying this as a white person and stuff, stuff, like it comes. yeah, I know. Don't get me wrong, but still. Sometimes, especially in the beginning, I kind of felt exploited. ^[SEP]To some point, you know? Um, so, I would say, like, studying or like doing anything in a crew or can, coming here and working in Ecuador, do that, do that 100%. I love Ecuador. ^[SEP]Like the culture, also like the, all the people are really open and um, I've, yeah, like, they're welcoming you here and taking you into their circles and stuff. I love that about Ecuador, and also like because you had in your question, like studying it, of course, I do not study here, but maybe like studying here is actually really cool. So maybe I would recommend that more. ^[SEP]Um, or doing anything here, um, but voluntary, I think you have to be the right person for that and you have to really want that. And um, Yeah, really think about if you really want to do that. But yeah, still, as I said, like, I think these, it's really important that these programs exist and um, still, I think the inter-cosure exchange that you have and all the experience you gain from, especially living here for a whole year is really important. ^[SEP]So, yeah. I would recommend it, but yeah. Okay. ^[SEP]And the other one was what could this organization do to integrate more the people? Yeah, yeah. Um, like, the organizations from, uh, the volunteer organization, so not where we work at. ^[SEP]Okay. Well, okay. I thought about, um, how the programs can improve, but so let me, let me just think about it for a 2nd. ^[SEP]Um. Okay. Yeah. ^[SEP]Um, I think, It would be good to have them tell us it's a bit about society rules, morals, and everything, and the culture in general. So we know, um, Yeah, so we also know, How to not, um, in Zoom, Fat napkin treating so much, Bill. So, of course, we don't want to do anything that is perceived like bad here, and we want to adapt ourselves. ^[SEP]So, I think that would be helpful if they would would have explained to us more how we can adapt.

Um, by, of course, by, for example, um, Like acting in some situation, more like people do hear and not like we do in Germany because it's different sometimes. And also I think they could have. I mean, of course, the organization can say, like, this is not our part of, This is, this is what it was, the tüstedich, kind, but, um, tell us how, where, for example, we can meet people, um. They could, make some recommendations or, um, what hobbies to do, where we could find something where we could do hobbies. Um, for example, I'm I'm doing uh, dance course now. Like, I'm doing set up a chat and this is so cool. And also we're going to a social like once a week and this is, I think this is so cool and good to do and they could have. For example, told us that something like this exist because maybe it didn't exist in Germany, but actually, I don't think a lot of people know about stuff like that and so you meet new people. This is like really cool. Um, so something like this, I think, or just tell us some places where we could go in general, to, um, also, yeah, get to know the culture or, like, Something about Cuenca or anything, um, culture, but, yeah, I don't know. For example, I could recommend us a museum or anything. I think, like recommendations in general. Yeah.

So, perfect. That will be everything. I will stop recording.