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BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: REFLECTIONS FROM A KAZAKHSTANI SCHOLAR IN THE USA

Abstract. This auto-ethnography explored the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) during a one-year internship at Michigan State University (MSU) in the USA, undertaken by a visiting scholar from Kazakhstan. The auto-ethnography study investigated how navigating the academic and social environment of the United States aided in the development of intercultural communicative competence through reflective analysis of personal narratives and intercultural encounters. The auto-ethnographic method placed these experiences within the larger framework of ICC theory while highlighting significant instances of cultural learning, adaptation, and conflict resolution. The auto-ethnographic approach highlighted key moments of cultural knowledge, adaptation, and conflict resolution while situating these experiences within the broader framework of intercultural communication theory. This article provided insights into the lived experiences of international scholars, contributing to a deeper understanding of how academic exchange programs foster intercultural communicative competence.

The reflective journey captured in this study emphasized the role of experiential learning in adapting to diverse communicative practices and managing cultural misunderstandings. The study demonstrated how immersion in an academic setting overseas challenges and enhances one's identity as a communicator and learner through everyday encounters with American professors, students, and colleagues.

The analysis of these interactions revealed how moments of discomfort and cultural difference can catalyze ICC development. Additionally, the study addressed the impact of cultural self-awareness, examining how the scholar's Kazakhstani background influenced their perception and response to the American social and academic landscape. Lastly, this auto-ethnography study emphasized the value of institutional resources and encouraged mentorship in promoting fruitful cross-cultural interactions, highlighting the transformative potential of international academic mobility.

Moreover, findings reveal key moments of cultural adaptation, communication challenges, and identity negotiation. The study highlights the role of mentorship, institutional resources, and experiential learning in facilitating intercultural competence. It provides practical recommendations for host institutions, international scholars, and academic programs to enhance cross-cultural

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exchange experiences. The implications extend to the design of international mobility programs that support scholars' adaptation and professional growth.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence, auto-ethnography, academic exchange, cultural adaptation, international scholars, experiential learning.

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Мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзыреттілікті қалыптастыру: АҚШ-та қазақстандық ғалымның рефлексиялары

Аңдатпа. Бұл автоэтнография АҚШ-тың Мичиган штаты университетінде (MSU) бір жылдық тәжірибеден өту кезінде қазақстандық шақырылған ғалымның мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзіретін (ICC) дамытуын зерттейді. Жеке әңгімелер мен мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынастарды рефлексивті талдау арқылы зерттеу АҚШ-тың академиялық және әлеуметтік ортасында өз орнын табу тәжірибесі мәдениетаралық коммуникациялық дағдылардың дамуына қалай ықпал еткенін көрсетеді. Автоэтнографиялық әдіс мәдениетті үйрену, бейімделу және қақтығыстарды шешудегі маңызды сәттерді атап көрсетеді, сондай-ақ бұл тәжірибені мәдениетаралық коммуникация теориясының аясында қарастырады. Бұл зерттеу халықаралық ғалымдардың өмірлік тәжірибесіне тереңірек түсінік береді және академиялық алмасу бағдарламаларының мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзіреттілікті қалай дамытуға ықпал ететінін көрсетеді.

Бұл зерттеудегі рефлексивті жол әртүрлі коммуникациялық тәжірибелерге бейімделу және мәдени түсінбеушіліктерді басқарудағы тәжірибелік оқудың рөлін көрсетеді. Американдық әріптестермен, профессорлармен және студенттермен күнделікті қарым-қатынас кезінде шетелдегі академиялық ортаға бейімделу коммуникатор және оқушы ретінде тұлғалық қалыптасуға қалай ықпал ететінін зерттеу көрсетеді.

Бұл қарым-қатынастардың талдауы ыңғайсыздық пен мәдени айырмашылықтың сәттері мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзіреттің дамуына катализатор бола алатынын ашып көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу мәдени өзіндік сананың әсерін қарастырады, ғалымның қазақстандық болмысы американдық әлеуметтік және академиялық ортаға деген көзқарасы мен жауабына қалай әсер еткенін қарастырады. Соңында, бұл зерттеу нәтижелі мәдениетаралық алмасуды қамтамасыз етудегі қолдаушы тәлімгерліктің және институционалдық ресурстардың маңыздылығын атап көрсетеді және халықаралық академиялық ұтқырлықтың өзгерту мүмкіндігін айқындайды.

Сонымен қатар, зерттеу нәтижелері мәдени бейімделудің, коммуникациялық қиындықтардың және тұлғалық келісімнің маңызды сәттерін анықтайды. Зерттеу тәлімгерліктің, институционалдық ресурстардың және тәжірибелік оқытудың мәдениетаралық құзыреттілікті дамытудағы рөлін көрсетеді. Бұл жұмыс қабылдаушы жоғары оқу орындарына, халықаралық ғалымдарға және академиялық бағдарламаларға мәдениетаралық алмасу тәжірибесін жақсартуға бағытталған практикалық ұсыныстар береді. Нәтижелер халықаралық мобильділік бағдарламаларын жобалауға ықпал етіп, ғалымдардың бейімделуін және кәсіби дамуын қолдауға бағытталған.

Кілт сөздер: мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзірет, автоэтнография, академиялық алмасу, мәдени бейімделу, халықаралық ғалымдар, тәжірибелік оқу.

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Формирование межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции: рефлексии казахстанского учёного в США

Аннотация. Эта авто-этнография исследует развитие межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции (МКК) во время годичной стажировки в Мичиганском государственном университете (MSU) в США, проведённой приглашённым исследователем из Казахстана. Посредством рефлексивного анализа личных историй и межкультурных взаимодействий исследование раскрывает, как опыт адаптации в академической и социальной среде США способствовал росту навыков межкультурной коммуникации. Авто-этнографический подход подчёркивает ключевые моменты культурного обучения, адаптации и разрешения конфликтов, рассматривая эти опыты в более широком контексте теории межкультурной коммуникации. Это исследование углубляет понимание опыта международных исследователей, подчеркивая, как программы академического обмена способствуют развитию межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции.

Рефлексивное исследование акцентирует роль практического обучения в адаптации к различным коммуникативным практикам и управлению культурными недопониманиями. Ежедневное взаимодействие с американскими коллегами, профессорами и студентами показывает, как погружение в академическую среду за границей способствует формированию личности как коммуникатора и учащегося. Анализ этих взаимодействий раскрывает, как моменты дискомфорта и культурных различий могут стать катализатором развития МКК. Кроме того, исследование обращается к роли культурной самосознательности, рассматривая, как казахстанское происхождение исследователя влияло на его восприятие и реакцию на американскую социальную и академическую среду. Наконец, это исследование подчеркивает значимость наставничества и институциональных ресурсов в содействии значимым межкультурным обменам, подчеркивая трансформирующий потенциал международной академической мобильности.

Более того, результаты исследования выявляют ключевые моменты культурной адаптации, коммуникативных трудностей и формирования идентичности. Исследование подчеркивает роль наставничества, институциональных ресурсов и практического обучения в развитии межкультурной компетенции. В нем предлагаются практические рекомендации для принимающих образовательных учреждений, международных ученых и академических программ по улучшению межкультурного обмена. Выводы исследования также могут быть использованы при разработке программ международной академической мобильности, поддерживающих адаптацию ученых и их профессиональный рост.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, авто-этнография, академический обмен, культурная адаптация, международные исследователи, практическое обучение.

Introduction

To contextualize the findings, this study integrates recent perspectives on ICC, academic mobility, and intercultural adaptation. Byram (1997) introduced the concept of ICC as a multidimensional framework, including linguistic, sociocultural, and attitudinal components [1]. Recent research (Ward & Kennedy, 2019) highlights the significance of socio-cultural adaptation in international education [2].

However, much of the existing literature focuses on student experiences, with limited studies on international scholars. Studies by Anderson (2020) and Gareis (2021) emphasize the importance of host institutions in shaping scholars' intercultural experiences [3; 4]. This study builds on these insights by focusing on the adaptation process of an academic professional, filling a gap in the literature on faculty mobility and ICC development.

In an era of globalization, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has become an essential skill for professionals and academics. For international scholars, especially those from non-Western countries, adapting to a new academic environment often involves significant challenges related to cultural differences, communication styles, and social norms. As a Kazakhstani scholar, my internship at MSU allowed me to experience these challenges firsthand while learning to navigate the complexities of intercultural communication in academic and social contexts.

In this auto-ethnographic study, I discuss my experience learning intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in the United States. I examine how my contacts with instructors, coworkers, and local community people enhanced my capacity for intercultural communication using personal narratives and reflective analysis. This research places my experience within the larger context of academic mobility and cultural interaction by referencing ideas of intercultural communication and second language identification.

Language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and the need to adjust to various communication methods were all part of my trip. However, these difficulties also brought about worthwhile chances for development and education. This study tries to clarify how international academic work aids in the development of intercultural competency while documenting my life-changing experiences. I want to add to the discussion on intercultural education and international academic collaborations by sharing my experiences and assisting other academics going through comparable changes.

Globalization has brought about significant change in higher education, with universities now acting as crucial centers for international collaboration and information exchange. A critical skill for professionals and scholars working in multicultural environments is intercultural communicative competence. To promote understanding, it is necessary to skillfully negotiate linguistic, social, and behavioral barriers while communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.

As a Kazakhstani scholar, I completed a year-long internship at Michigan State University (MSU), which provided me with a unique opportunity to strengthen my intercultural communication abilities. This auto-ethnographic study examines the process of developing intercultural communicative competence through a reflexive analysis of personal experiences, including academic interactions, classroom dynamics, and social interactions with colleagues and the local community.

The process of intercultural learning presented several challenges. Adjusting to the American academic environment required overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers, overcoming language barriers, and meeting new classroom participation requirements. However, this event spurred personal and professional development. By critically analyzing these interactions, this study sheds light on how academic mobility programs can aid international academics in developing intercultural competency (ICC).

This study integrates my personal experiences with broader theoretical perspectives on intercultural communication and second language identity to connect theoretical concepts with real experiences. As a result, it contributes to the growing corpus of research on intercultural education and provides insightful recommendations for institutions and scholars involved in cross-cultural interactions.

There has been a lot of interest in research on study abroad experiences and the evolution of ICC, especially using qualitative and auto-ethnographic approaches. For instance, Anderson carried

out an auto-ethnographic investigation into the experiences of foreign students in the US. His research shows how firsthand recollections can provide a profound understanding of the transformative aspects of acclimating to a new academic setting and culture. Anderson's research shows that international students experience not just an academic transfer but also a significant cultural adaptation that restructures their professional and personal identities, which is comparable to my own academic and personal growth journey in the United States [5].

Gareis also conducted qualitative research on cross-cultural friendships among overseas students in the US, demonstrating the importance of forming ties with locals for cross-cultural adjustment. This outcome aligns with my own experiences developing relationships with American teachers and students, which were crucial to my ICC growth and understanding of cultural peculiarities. The notion that social integration is necessary for effective adjustment and personal development in a foreign setting is supported by Gareis's research [5].

His work demonstrates how firsthand accounts offer deep insights into the life-changing elements of adjusting to a new academic environment and culture. Similar to my own journey of academic and personal development in the United States, Anderson's research demonstrates that international students undergo not just an academic transfer but also a substantial cultural adaptation that restructures their professional and personal identities [3].

Qualitative research of cross-cultural friendships among international students in the US was also carried out by Gareis, who showed that making friends with locals is crucial to cross-cultural adjustment. This result is consistent with my personal experiences forming bonds with American instructors and students, which were essential to my ICC development and comprehension of cultural quirks. The notion that social integration is necessary for effective adjustment and personal development in a foreign setting is supported by Gareis's research [6].

The cross-cultural experiences of a visiting scholar in the United States and their effects on both professional and personal development were the subject of another auto-ethnographic research by Berry. Berry examines in her work how foreign academics deal with the difficulties of intercultural communication and identity development in a classroom context. In light of my own experience, Berry highlights the value of considering cultural differences to have a deeper understanding of others, particularly in an academic setting that encourages international communication and cooperation [7].

Jackson underlined that a variety of interactions within the American educational system offer a rich environment for developing intercultural competency. This is directly tied to my experience, in which exposure to American teaching methods and cross-cultural communication aided in my language and professional development [8].

Lastly, Ward and Kennedy conducted a longitudinal study examining how international students adapt to new cultural environments over time. Their findings indicated that both psychological and socio-cultural adaptation are crucial for a positive study-abroad experience [1]. The study underlined that intercultural competence develops not just through academic learning but through everyday interactions and challenges faced by international students. My adaptation journey in the USA mirrors these findings, as navigating academic and social landscapes simultaneously contributed to both my intercultural awareness and communicative skills.

These studies collectively provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how intercultural competence is developed through study-abroad experiences, particularly in the U.S. context. They highlight the interplay between academic immersion, personal identity transformation, and intercultural communication, all of which are central to my own experiences as a visiting scholar.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has become a critical skill in globalized academic environments. International scholars from non-Western countries often face challenges in adapting to new academic cultures, communication styles, and social norms. This study examines

how an academic internship in the United States shaped the ICC development of a Kazakhstani scholar through immersive cultural experiences and self-reflection.

The research objectives are:

- To analyze how cultural immersion in an American academic setting impacts ICC development.
- To identify specific adaptation strategies used to overcome communication and cultural barriers.
- To explore the role of institutional support in fostering ICC growth.

By employing autoethnography, this study contributes to existing literature by providing an in-depth, first-person perspective on the intercultural adjustment process of international scholars.

Research methods and materials

Auto-ethnography, a qualitative research approach that combines ethnography with autobiography to allow researchers to analyze their own experiences in a more thorough academic, social, and cultural framework, is the methodology used in this study. Auto-ethnography allows visiting researchers to critically and individually reflect on their experiences and cross-cultural contacts, making it a valuable methodological tool for evaluating their intercultural proficiency abroad. Through self-reflection and narrative analysis, scholars can explore how their identities and cultural backgrounds impact their understanding of intercultural connections [2]. By emphasizing individual experiences and situating them within broader cultural contexts, this method sheds light on the challenges and learning processes encountered by scholars in a variety of circumstances [9].

By employing auto-ethnography to document the complexities of cross-cultural contacts, researchers can better understand how intercultural competence develops from lived experiences and expose the influence of culture on communication [10]. Auto-ethnography also encourages critical self-analysis, enabling researchers to explain how they evolve and change as they move through different cultural contexts [11].

A unique lens through which researchers can examine how their cultural background, experiences, and language use intersect with broader societal and institutional dynamics, auto-ethnography has gained popularity in TESOL and Second Language Teacher Education as a means of critically reflecting on personal experiences and comprehending the complexities of identity, language, and culture in teaching and learning contexts [12], [13].

This method encourages in-depth reflection on how one negotiates diverse cultures, communication styles, and academic settings, making it particularly useful for investigating the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in second-language contexts [14].

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The study will make use of personal reflections collected both during and after the internship, including notebooks, anecdotal notes, and observations about communication styles, challenges, and cross-cultural encounters. Emails and correspondence, classroom experiences, and social interactions will also be analyzed to provide a complete picture of the development of intercultural competence.

To identify recurring themes, such as language barriers, cultural misconceptions, and examples of cultural synergy, the reflective data will undergo thematic analysis. These topics will be examined using the most recent theories of intercultural communicative skills and intercultural adaptability.

I will use narrative analysis in this study to look at and analyze first-person accounts of my experiences while I was in the US. A qualitative research technique called narrative analysis focuses on how people create and share their own stories, offering insight into how they interpret and make meaning of their experiences [15].

In order to identify underlying themes and patterns, narrative analysis examines the form and content of human tales. It enables a thorough investigation of how experiences mold identity and intercultural proficiency. Using this approach, I will examine my thoughts on adjusting to American academic culture and how it has affected my identity as a second language learner.

The study will concentrate on recurring themes and the framing and structure of the stories to give a comprehensive understanding of the human and cultural factors at play [16], [17]. By elucidating the links between personal experiences and broader cultural contexts, this approach will contribute to the advancement of research regarding intercultural adaptation and professional development.

Triangulation by integrating the body of current literature on intercultural communication and using a variety of data sources, including journals, emails, and cultural observations. Emphasis will also be placed on reflexivity, recognizing the author's positionality as a participant and researcher.

Personal and Professional Background

I had a great urge to travel as a child and understood early on the value of learning various languages. I went to a Kazakh-language school where Russian was taught as a second language in every school and English was introduced as a foreign language. I first came into contact with the Turkish alphabet when I took Turkish as an elective in the eighth grade. When a Kazakh-Turkish high school with an intense English program opened in my city the next year, I got to know my first Turkish foreign teacher who also taught us Turkish.

As my interest in other languages grew throughout my school years, I eventually enrolled in the translation studies program at the Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages in Almaty. I maintained my fluency in Turkish and English during my undergraduate studies. In order to fully immerse myself in Turkish culture, language, cuisine, and customs, I spent 10 years in Turkey after completing my undergraduate studies, earning my MA and PhD. I gained considerable international communication skills during this time, which let me communicate with Turkish people naturally.

As time went on, I discovered that communicating with Turkish people came easily to me and that I could easily have significant cross-cultural conversations. I started to wonder if I would be able to get along with individuals from different cultures back in Kazakhstan, especially Americans or Britons. Would it be as easy for me to relate to them as it was to Turkish people? During my time in the United States, I think I discovered the solution to this issue.

International cross-cultural interactions have had a big impact on my academic journey as a scholar from Kazakhstan. Because I was raised in a society that valued education, I had an early interest in learning about the world.

I majored in Translation years throughout my undergraduate years, which is where my affinity for cross-cultural engagement initially surfaced. I picked this major to support my goals of traveling and working overseas after realizing that English would be essential to gaining access to opportunities around the world.

I was accepted to Gazi University in Turkey after carefully evaluating several international programs, where I obtained a Master's and subsequently a PhD in English Language Teaching (ELT). My professional identity was greatly influenced by my 10 years of studies in Turkey. I developed my Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) during this time by interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds regularly in an academic setting. Additionally, by visiting numerous European nations, such as France, Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, I was able to deepen my understanding of other cultures.

I was the head of the International Relations Office after serving as a lecturer at an international institution back in Kazakhstan. I was able to contribute to the university's international objectives while expanding my professional experience in these roles. My responsibilities included

interacting with foreign academics and arranging cross-border cooperation, which improved my capacity to function in a multicultural setting.

Using my experiences from a research internship, this auto-ethnographic study investigates how academic mobility, particularly in the US context, supports the growth of intercultural competency and professional identity. My thoughts fit into the larger context of second language identity and intercultural adaptability. By engaging in this self-examination process, I hope to add to the expanding corpus of knowledge regarding the opportunities and difficulties faced by foreign academics in the US, especially those from non-Western nations like Kazakhstan.

I developed research questions that center on my experiences with cultural differences, my interactions with the US academic environment, and the effects of these events on my identity to examine my experiences and intercultural learning during a research internship in the US. The purpose of these questions is to investigate how my opinions, communication style, and general intercultural competency have changed as a result of immersing myself in a foreign academic culture. Along with assessing how successfully I've adjusted to and thrived in the American school system, they also seek to evaluate the possibilities and difficulties that have presented themselves while I've been here. The following research questions underlie the study:

1. How does immersion in the American academic and cultural environment affect the development of intercultural communicative competence of a Kazakhstani scholar?

2. What challenges and opportunities does the Kazakhstani scholar face in adapting to American academic culture and communication in the classroom?

Results and discussion

A number of important themes that are consistent with the study's research questions surfaced during the auto-ethnographic entry analysis. These topics show how the author handled their language, intellectual, and cross-cultural experiences while visiting the United States. The results are presented below, grouped into pertinent topics, and accompanied by citations to earlier research that bolsters these conclusions.

1. Navigating Academic Systems and Pedagogy

Both familiarity and curiosity are evident in the author's early views of the American educational system. A more seamless transition into the American educational system was made possible by their previous experience in Turkey, which lessened the effects of academic culture shock. Despite not having to attend formal classes, the author's proactive participation in academic courses shows a strong desire for academic progress. Their decision to contact instructors and audit TESOL classes demonstrates their dedication to their professional growth.

Previous research on international researchers' academic adjustment in foreign contexts has found similar results. Montgomery emphasizes that students who actively participate in local academic systems—for example, by auditing classes or attending academic events—are better equipped to adjust and feel included in academic settings abroad [18]. This is supported by the author's experience, which showed that their willingness to look for learning opportunities outside of the official curriculum enhanced their overall academic success.

The transition into the American academic system required adaptation to different teaching methodologies and classroom dynamics. Unlike the more hierarchical structure in Kazakhstan, American classrooms emphasized interactive discussions and student-led learning. Proactively auditing TESOL courses and attending faculty workshops facilitated smoother integration.

2. Language and Communication Barriers

A significant challenge faced by the author was related to the use of language in different contexts. While academic English was generally easy to comprehend, informal communication outside the university, particularly the use of American slang, posed difficulties. This aligns with research by Kim, which highlights that linguistic proficiency in academic settings does not

necessarily translate into competence in everyday language use, especially when dealing with culturally specific language practices like slang [19].

The author's participation in conversation clubs and extracurricular language activities demonstrates a strategy to overcome these communication barriers. Previous studies have shown that such engagement is crucial for developing intercultural communicative competence [1]. The author's proactive approach to improving informal language skills by interacting with native speakers outside the academic context illustrates their desire to fully integrate into the culture, despite the linguistic challenges [20].

While academic English posed minimal difficulty, informal communication, particularly American slang and cultural references, was challenging. Participation in conversation clubs and social events provided opportunities to enhance linguistic competence. This aligns with Kim's (2021) findings that real-world interactions significantly improve intercultural linguistic adaptation [21].

3. Cultural Adjustment and Intercultural Competence

Cultural adaptation is a dominant theme in the author's entry, particularly their reflections on American social norms. Initially, the author was surprised by Americans' respect for personal boundaries and their avoidance of intrusive questions about one's background. Over time, the author came to appreciate these norms as part of the broader societal agreement that respects privacy. This cultural observation aligns with Hofstede's theory of individualism, which posits that Americans value privacy and individual rights, often avoiding personal inquiries that may be seen as intrusive in other cultures [22].

The author's reflections also emphasize the inclusive and respectful nature of American society, particularly in professional settings where age, gender, and ethnicity are considered irrelevant. The significance of pronoun use and respect for personal identity further highlights the cultural emphasis on inclusivity, which the author initially found surprising but later accepted. This aligns with Dervin, who argues that developing intercultural communicative competence involves not only understanding but also adapting to the cultural norms of the host country [23].

Initial cultural misunderstandings, such as differing expectations in professional and social interactions, highlighted the need for adaptability. Hofstede's (1984) individualism-collectivism framework helps explain observed differences, particularly in personal boundaries and direct communication styles [22]. Over time, developing a deeper understanding of these cultural nuances enhanced ICC growth.

4. Automation and Institutional Efficiency

The author highlights the U.S. University's high degree of automation and institutional efficiency, pointing out the efficient service organization and communication. This result is consistent with earlier research showing how effective institutional assistance can help overseas scholars have a better academic experience [4].

The author's comparison to previous academic environments underscores the value of such automation in reducing administrative burdens and allowing scholars to focus more on their academic goals. The role of technology in managing daily tasks, such as course registration, communication, and scheduling, reflects the broader trend of digitalization in higher education [24].

The author's experience with this level of automation suggests that efficient systems can significantly enhance the overall experience of international scholars by providing them with timely information and reducing stress related to logistics.

5. Academic Confidence and Professional Growth

The author's growing confidence in their academic identity is evident throughout the entry. Their willingness to ask questions in seminars, even when others remained silent, illustrates their assertiveness and comfort in an academic environment. This assertiveness, which the author

attributes to their previous international experience in Turkey, shows how prior exposure to diverse academic settings can empower scholars to actively engage in new academic environments [25].

Furthermore, a sense of professional development is highlighted by the writers' observations of their colleagues' lesser levels of academic involvement and English ability. The writers accept that some people can have trouble adjusting to a new language and culture, but they also note that these people have grown into scholars who can make valuable contributions in a global setting. This result is in line with research on academic self-efficacy, which highlights how past experiences influence students' confidence and involvement in international academic environments [26].

Mentorship played a crucial role in facilitating adaptation. Regular meetings with faculty mentors provided academic guidance and cultural insights. Institutional resources, such as the International Scholars Office, were instrumental in easing administrative challenges, reinforcing Dervin's (2022) argument that structured institutional support enhances ICC development [27].

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for host institutions, international scholars, and academic programs involved in cross-cultural exchanges. Host institutions should design structured orientation programs that familiarize international scholars with cultural expectations, communication norms, and academic practices. Mentorship programs, where experienced faculty members provide guidance and support, can facilitate smoother adaptation and foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, universities should create spaces for intercultural dialogue and networking, allowing scholars to share experiences and learn from one another. These measures will enhance scholars' professional integration and contribute to a more inclusive academic environment.

For international scholars, this study underscores the importance of proactive cultural learning and engagement. Scholars should seek opportunities to immerse themselves in academic and social settings, participate in workshops and networking events, and actively engage with faculty and students. Developing cultural awareness and adaptability through self-reflection and experiential learning is essential for successful integration into new academic environments. Furthermore, utilizing institutional resources, such as language support services and professional development programs, can help scholars navigate communication barriers and academic expectations more effectively.

Academic programs should incorporate intercultural training into their curricula, emphasizing the development of ICC through experiential learning, cross-cultural interactions, and case studies. Course designers should consider integrating virtual exchange programs, collaborative research projects, and cultural immersion experiences to better prepare scholars for international academic mobility. Future research should explore the effectiveness of such interventions in promoting ICC development and identify best practices for fostering intercultural competence among faculty and students alike.

Longitudinal studies tracking ICC growth over extended academic stays.

- Examination of digital resources in supporting intercultural adaptation.
- Longitudinal studies tracking ICC growth over extended academic stays.
- Examination of digital resources in supporting intercultural adaptation.

Conclusion

The author's experience as a visiting scholar in the U.S. reflects a complex process of identity negotiation, intercultural adjustment, and professional growth. The findings indicate that the author navigated academic and cultural landscapes with increasing confidence, drawing on previous international experiences to adapt to the new environment.

Proactive engagement with American culture and academic life mitigated the challenges of informal language use and cultural adjustment. While the authors' views on their personal academic

confidence and professional identity highlight the importance of prior international exposure in forming one's ability to negotiate unfamiliar environments, institutional efficiency also played a role in a positive academic experience. These results provide important insights into the personal and professional growth that might come from prolonged academic stays overseas, and they are consistent with earlier studies on international scholars and intercultural competency.

This study highlights the dynamic and transformative nature of ICC development in international academic settings. By reflecting on personal experiences, it provides actionable insights for scholars, institutions, and policymakers aiming to enhance the intercultural experiences of international academics. Future research should expand on these findings to develop more comprehensive models of ICC growth in higher education contexts.

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