Student Expectations, Motivations, Target Language Use, and Perceived Learning Progress in a Summer Study Abroad Program in Germany

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Introduction

Study abroad has become an increasingly important component of the language and culture curriculum in the preparation of university students in the US. Many educators, administrators and students share the view that language competence and cultural understanding are acquired most effectively while living in the target language country. With an increase in the number of students studying abroad, university administrators have begun to recognize the lack of research on learning outcomes in study abroad programs. Some have demanded that research contribute to the development of reliable learning outcome measures to bolster the credibility and quality of study abroad programs (Gillespie; Gray, Murdock, and Stebbins). SLA researchers have studied mostly the effects of study abroad on language learning in medium- and long-term (semester- or academic year abroad) programs. Relatively few studies have investigated short-term study abroad effects although, according to Open Doors 2006, the annual report of the Institute of International Education, “the largest growth area is short-term study”. The number of students in programs of less than eight weeks has tripled over the last decade, from 2.5% in 1994–1995 to 8% in 2004–2005.

Brochures for university intensive-language study-abroad programs occasionally suggest that students will make a “quantum leap in the oral proficiency” (Wilkinson 121) as a result of their immersion in the target language and culture. However, as research on second language (L2) acquisition in study abroad contexts reveals, there is conflicting evidence as to how effective study abroad is. The present study attempts to contribute to our understanding of the impact of short-term study abroad on students’ L2 acquisition and use. It investigates students’ motives for participating in a one-month summer program in Germany, their expectations about learning progress at the beginning of the program, and their perceived progress in various language skills at the end of the program. It also ascertains whether goals, expectations, L2 use, and self-reported progress in L2 skills correlate. Before reporting the results of the study, we will review previous research, particularly, studies about short-term study abroad (i.e., three to eight weeks). For comprehensive reviews see Freed (“Language Learning,” “Overview”), Coleman, and Churchill and DuFon.

Selected Issues and Findings of Study Abroad Research

L2 Proficiency Gains

There is evidence that study abroad for longer periods of time positively affects students’ oral proficiency (Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg; Dyson; DeKeyser; Isabelli-García “Development”; Möhle and Raupach; Segalowitz and Freed), listening comprehension (Dyson), and vocabulary development (DeKeyser; Ife, Vives Boix and Meara; Milton and Meara). However, writing skills (Freed, So and Lazar) and grammatical accuracy (Howard; Möhle and Raupach) seem to yield less or no noticeable improvement during long-term study abroad.
Fewer data are available for short-term study abroad. Positive effects of short-term study abroad were reported by Milleret, who found that US students who studied in Brazil for six weeks significantly improved their speaking skills moving on average from an intermediate-mid to an intermediate-high level on the ACTFL proficiency scale. Oral proficiency gains were also reported by Tschirner for high school teachers of German who participated in a four-week intensive program in Germany. By the end of the program, 80% of the participants had moved up by one sublevel on the ACTFL proficiency scale, e.g., from intermediate high to advanced low. A study conducted by Lennon, on the other hand, showed fewer or no proficiency gains for German students of English in a two-month stay in England. Cubillos and Robbins investigated the linguistic and non-linguistic gains of participants in a five-week training program of US teachers of Spanish in Mexico. They found “significant changes in the amount and accuracy of participants’ written output” (28) compared to performance before the program.

A number of studies used students’ self-assessment of L2 proficiency and progress as indicators for short-term study abroad effects. Allen and Herron examined students’ linguistic and affective outcomes following a summer program in Paris. Students reported an enhanced self-confidence in their L2 use, a decrease in non-classroom language anxiety, and significant improvements in oral and listening skills in French. Kaplan, also using survey data, found that listening and reading comprehension were the skills in which students felt to have made the most progress. Mendelson, in a study of short-term and long-term study abroad, suggested that for the short-term students, “listening represented their ‘most improved’ skill (55%), followed by speaking (26%), writing (19%), and reading (0%)” (53). Furthermore, her study revealed that the students’ linguistic outcomes did not match the expectations they expressed at the beginning of the study abroad program. In a recent study, Adams analyzed self-assessments of linguistic gains collected from US students in two- or four-month programs in the Dominican Republic, France, Brazil, Spain, and Austria. Her findings also show that students perceived their listening to have improved the most, followed by overall proficiency, speaking and vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, and writing and grammar.

Pellegrino notes that a majority of study-abroad research is “highly product-oriented, focusing on measurable advances students make in language proficiency and linguistic knowledge while abroad” (91) and that relatively little research considers the learners’ own perspectives and experiences. She highlights the importance of such research as it can provide unique insights into students’ attitudes, expectations, L2 learning and use “in ways that observations and quantifiable scales could not” (92). There is considerable research evidence showing that self-assessment can be a reliable instrument (Adams; Fishman and Cooper; Ikeguchi) in spite of the finding that less experienced learners may overestimate their skills somewhat (Heilenman). Although the additional use of proficiency tests would have been desirable, we opted to use self-assessment questionnaires in the present study because they are relatively easy to administer, reliable, and representative of students’ perceptions, which in the end, determine a study abroad program’s success and survival, perhaps more so than proficiency tests.

**Target Language Use**

Isabelli-García (“Study Abroad”) suggested that “contact with the host culture outside of the classroom and attitudes towards the host culture can be related to the development of oral communication skills and accuracy” (232). According to Mendelson, out-of-class contact with the L2, both interactive (e.g., informal conversations with native speakers) and non-interactive (e.g., going to the movies) “is often lauded but rarely put to serious investigation” (44). Using OPI and self-assessment, Mendelson investigated the relation between students’ oral proficiency levels and the amount of out-of-class L2 use. Her participants in a four-week summer program in Spain reportedly used the L2 mostly in listening (67%), followed by speaking (35%), writing (18%), and reading (15%). However, Mendelson found no direct relationship between the students’ reported L2 contact hours and their gains in oral proficiency. Similarly Ginsberg and Miller did not find a correlation between how much students interacted with native speakers and measured L2 proficiency gains.

**Goals and Motives for Study Abroad**

Allen and Herron inquired about students’ reasons and motives for participation in a summer study program in Paris. They found that students considered integrative motives most important for
study abroad participation, e.g., meeting different kinds of people, and getting to know the French. Instrumental motives, such as receiving training or earning a degree, were considered less important. Interestingly, the authors also noted that “whereas participants called ‘getting to know the French’ an important motivation for participation, they did not appear to invest great amounts of out-of-class time in establishing contacts with target culture members” (Allen and Herron, 382). Kitsantas investigated the role played by 232 students’ goals in the development of “cross-cultural skills” and “global understanding” while abroad and found that goals did influence the magnitude of gains in both areas. Participants reported three main reasons for joining study abroad programs: to enhance their cross-cultural skills, to become more proficient in the language, and to socialize.

In sum, our review of research suggests that significant proficiency gains are possible not only in longer-term study abroad programs, but also in short-term study abroad stays, with more significant gains in listening and speaking skills than grammar and writing development. Students often have high expectations with respect to study abroad outcomes, and frequently participate in the programs for integrative reasons; that is, they want to get to know people and participate in the target culture. In reality, such integration can prove difficult given the common living and studying arrangements of study abroad programs in which Americans live primarily among themselves (Frye and Garza).

Research Questions

The present study seeks to contribute to our understanding of short-term study abroad effects by investigating the following questions:

1. What are the participants’ goals and motives for enrolling in a one-month summer study program and how do they relate to their expected proficiency gains, perceived improvement, and amount of L2 use?
2. What are participants’ expectations with respect to language skill development and culture learning at the beginning of the program?
3. What are participants’ ratings of perceived language skill development and culture learning at the end of the program, and how do these compare and correlate with the reported expectations at the beginning of the program?
4. How does the participants’ reported frequency of L2 use in listening, speaking, reading and writing (outside of class) relate to their reported progress in these language skills?

Method and Procedure

Setting

The program under investigation was a one-month summer-study program in the city of Leipzig, Germany, offered by the University of Arizona, a large public and research university, in collaboration with the Herder-Institute of the University of Leipzig. To enroll in the program, participating students were required to have completed a minimum of two semesters of college German or equivalent. Two courses were offered: one for students in their second year, and one for students in their third year of study and above. Students received four hours of language instruction from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm five days a week from teachers of the home institution. Instruction in both courses addressed the development of the four skills and included reading a book and articles, watching and discussing videos, writing daily journals, discussions, role plays, presentations, and some instruction in grammar. Participants were housed in single rooms of apartment units in student dorms. Most participants shared the apartment unit (kitchen and bathroom) with one or two German students. To provide additional opportunities for interaction with native speakers, each participant received a German tandem partner interested in learning English and helping American students learn German. On average, the tandem partners met twice per week to practice German and English with each other. In addition to classroom instruction, the program offered afternoon activities, two day trips, and a weekend excursion to sites of historical and cultural interest.

Participants

The participants constituted a sample of convenience, namely 30 students who took part in the 2006 Summer Study-in-Leipzig-Germany Program. Seven of the participants had to be excluded from the analyses because they provided incomplete data. From the remaining 23 participants, five students were enrolled in the second-year course, and 18 students were enrolled in the third-year course. All participants (14 females and 9 males)
were undergraduate students (1 freshman, 9 juniors, 12 seniors, 1 other). Their average age was 22.6 years. Students declared a wide variety of major and minor areas of study. Five participants were pursuing a German major and 12 a German minor.

**Instruments**

Data were elicited through two sets of questionnaires based on the Language Contact Profile (Freed et al. “Contact Profile”). The first questionnaire, administered at the beginning of the program, included questions regarding the students’ backgrounds, their goals and motives for participation in the program, and their expectations with regard to language and culture learning. Participants were asked to indicate how important nine potential goals and motives were for them on a six-point Likert-scale (see Table 1 below). Expected L2 proficiency gains in the areas of speaking, listening, writing, reading, cultural understanding, grammar, and vocabulary were rated on another six-point scale (see Table 2). The second questionnaire was given at the end of the program and asked students to rate gains in the seven proficiency areas described in the pre-program questionnaire on the same six-point scale. In addition, students had to provide estimates on how frequently they used German outside of class. They had to indicate how many days a week and how many hours a day they spent speaking, reading, listening, and writing in German in addition to the 20 hours of weekly course instruction in German.

**Data Analysis**

We conducted repeated-measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) to test whether participants expected different gains for speaking, listening, writing, reading, cultural understanding, grammar, and vocabulary at the beginning of the program, and whether they perceived different progress in these areas at the end of the program. In another ANOVA, we compared students’ expectations about proficiency gains (of all skills combined) at the outset of the program with the perceived gains they reported at the end of the program, that is to say, whether general expectations were higher or lower compared to the actual perceived progress later. In post-hoc analyses, we tested for potential differences between expected gains and actual improvement in each of the seven areas, e.g., whether participants’ expectations about progress in speaking was any different from their reported progress in speaking at the end of the program. A final ANOVA was conducted to test whether participants’ frequency of use of speaking, listening, writing, and reading in German outside of class differed significantly from skill to skill, e.g., if participants devoted more time to reading in German compared to writing in German. Lastly, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the students’ expected proficiency gains, their perceived improvement in speaking, reading, listening, and writing, their reported L2 use in these areas, and their goals in order to determine whether there was any relation between these measures.

**Results**

**Goals and Motives**

Table 1 shows how participants on average rated the importance of nine goals and motives for their participation in the study abroad program.

The most important goal for the participants was “to study German,” followed by the desire “to travel”, and “to be in contact with Germans” and “for cultural enrichment.” “To get six course credits”, “to find new friends from home university”, “to party” and “to be away from home” received medium ratings, whereas “to conduct a research project” was rated the lowest. Significant correlations were found between the goal “to be in contact with Germans” and expected gains in speaking ($r(19) = .765$, $p < .001$) and listening skills ($r(19) = .617$, $p = .005$) and between the goal “for cultural enrichment” and expected gains in speaking ($r(19) = .635$, $p < .005$) and listening skills ($r(19) = .660$, $p < .005$). No correlations were found between goals and the amounts of L2 use.

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1 The original questionnaire is available in Freed et al. The modified version can be requested from the authors.
Table 1. Participants’ Ratings of Goals and Motives for Study Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals and Motives</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To study German</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To travel</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be away from home</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To party</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get six course credits</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be in contact with Germans</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To conduct a research project</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For cultural enrichment</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find new friends from home</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 1–6, 1=not important, 6=very important

Expected Gains and Perceived Improvement

Table 2 illustrates the proficiency gains that participants expected at the beginning of the program and the improvements they reported at the end of the program.

Table 2. Participants’ Expected Gains and Perceived Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Skill / Area</th>
<th>Mean Expected Gains</th>
<th>Mean Perceived Improvement</th>
<th>Mean Difference between Expected Gains and Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Areas</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale 1–6: 1=none, 6=very much

According to the pre-program data, participants’ mean expected gains were highest for listening, followed by speaking, vocabulary, and cultural understanding. They expected somewhat less progress in reading, grammar, and writing. In the end-of-program questionnaire, participants reported to have improved mostly in their cultural understanding, followed by listening, vocabulary growth, reading, and speaking. The lowest rates of improvement were reported for writing and grammar. The data for students’ expected gains and perceived improvement in the seven skills were analyzed with a repeated-measures ANOVA. The analysis showed a statistically significant difference for the factor language skill with the seven levels speaking, listening, writing, reading, cultural understanding, grammar, and vocabulary ($F(3.3, 71.8) = 8.78, p < .001$) and for the factor time (program start and program end) ($F(1,22) = 42.92, p < .001$). The interaction between the two factors was also significant ($F(4.2,92.8) = 4.00, p = .004$). Due to violations of sphericity, the results for the main effect of language skill and the interaction of language skill and time had to be adjusted with the Greenhouse-Geisser correction. These statistical results indicate that the means of expected gains as well as perceived improvement in the various skills differed significantly. Moreover, mean expected gains were different from mean improvements. The interaction between the two factors indicates that the differences between the language skill gains in the pre-program questionnaire were also different from the perceived improvements of skills in the program-end questionnaire. The difference between the students’ expectations and their perceived improvements for each language skill was analyzed through post-hoc analyses. Due to the number of pairwise comparisons conducted, the p-level was adjusted with the Bonferroni method which reduced the p-level at which statistical results are significant to $p = .007$. Significant differences were found in the areas of speaking ($F(1,22) = 32.04, p < .001$), reading ($F(1,22) = 9.85, p = .005$), listening ($F(1,22) = 15.76, p = .001$), writing ($F(1,22) = 18.78, p < .001$), grammar ($F(1,22) = 47.27, p < .001$), and vocabulary ($F(1,22) = 19.75, p < .001$). This shows that the students’ perceived improvements in these areas fell short of their expectations. Only in the area of cultural understanding was the difference between expectations and improvements statistically not significant ($F(1,22) = 1.49, p > .05$).

Target Language Use

In the end-of-program questionnaires, participants also provided estimates of how frequently they were using German outside of class. The
mean numbers of reported use of speaking, listening, reading and writing in the L2 (in hours per week) are presented in the figure below. In order to learn whether there were statistically significant differences in the frequency of use of the four language skills, the data were analyzed with a repeated-measures ANOVA. Due to incomplete data, four participants had to be excluded from the analysis. The ANOVA revealed significant differences between students’ reported use of the L2 in the four skills (F(1.9,33.3) = 21.06, p < .001). Participants reported to have spent the greatest amount of out-of-class time listening to German (32.9 hours), followed by speaking (12.6 hours) and reported to have devoted considerably less time to reading (7.2 hours) and writing (5.8 hours). To investigate the relation between the students’ expected gains, perceived improvement, and their self-reported L2 use, bivariate correlations were computed. The only statistically significant correlation was found between the perceived improvement in listening and the self-reported amount of listening (r(19) = .608, p = .006). The positive correlation indicates that those participants who spent more time listening to German also perceived their improvement in listening comprehension to be greater.

In addition to an overall estimate of L2 use outside of class, students had to provide detailed accounts of how much time they spent on a number of specific activities that involved speaking, listening, writing, and reading in German. With regard to speaking in the L2 outside of class, students indicated that they most frequently used German in extensive conversations with their tandem partner (an average of 5.7 hours per week), for superficial or brief exchanges with their roommate or acquaintances in the dorm (5 hours), and to obtain directions or information (4.5 hours). With respect to listening, students reported that they mostly tried to catch other people’s conversations in German (15.4 hours), listen to songs (6.9 hours) or watch TV and listen to the radio (4.5 hours). Only an average of 1.5 hours per week was spent watching movies. The majority of time spent on writing (8.4 hours) was used to complete homework assignments. Smaller amounts of time were used to write personal notes and letters (1.5 hours) and emails (1.4 hours). A minor 0.2 hours were spent on filling in forms or questionnaires. Students’ read mostly schedules, announcements, and menus (8.3 hours) and less frequently emails (2.9 hours), novels (1.5 hours), newspapers (1.2 hours), and magazines (0.8 hours).

**Discussion**

We investigated a group of 23 US students’ motives, expected L2 proficiency gains, L2 use, and perceived L2 learning progress in a one-month summer study program in Germany; we wanted to learn why students participated in the program, what they expected with respect to their language skill development and culture learning at the beginning of the program, and how much they thought they had progressed in language and culture learning at the end of the program. We analyzed whether expected gains and reported progress were comparable and whether these correlated with each other and with participants’ goals and their reported frequency of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in German outside of class.

**Goals and Motives**

“To study German,” “to travel,” “to be in contact with Germans,” and “cultural enrichment” were the motives that students rated highest for participating in this summer program. These results coincide with Allen and Herron’s findings that the most frequently reported reasons for participating in study abroad are integrative in nature. More instrumentally-oriented goals, such as “to get six course credits” and “to conduct a research project” received lower ratings in our study. Significant cor-
relations were found between students’ ratings of the goals “to be in contact with Germans” and “cultural enrichment” and the rates of expected gains for speaking and listening. These findings suggest that the students who set as goals interacting with German native speakers and learning about the culture, also expect high improvement rates in listening and speaking, two skills that are necessary for interaction and integration in the culture. The motives “to be in contact with Germans”, “to travel” and “cultural enrichment” are aspects that set study abroad apart from study in the home country where native speaker contacts and cultural experiences are quite limited. In promoting and advertising a study abroad program, teachers and administrators may want to stress these aspects and illustrate what the program can offer in terms of cultural experiences, travel, and contact opportunities with Germans in addition to a rigorous program of study.

Expected Proficiency Gains and Perceived Improvement

Participants’ expected gains at the beginning of the program were quite high overall. They were highest for listening followed by speaking and vocabulary, and cultural enrichment. Somewhat lower gains were expected for reading, grammar, and writing. The high expected gains for listening and speaking may stem from word-of-mouth, which generally lauds studying and living abroad as a panacea for achieving oral proficiency in the L2. Although the program under investigation did not make any explicit promises with regard to language proficiency gains, students might still have been influenced by the widely-held belief that study abroad will inevitably lead to fluency development in the L2.

Students’ reports of perceived L2 learning progress at the end of the program showed that participants felt to have improved mostly in cultural understanding, followed by listening, vocabulary, reading, and speaking (in that order). The lowest progress was reported for writing and grammar. Low progress in grammatical accuracy and writing were also found by Lennon and Meara and are frequently attributed to the fact that L2 writing and grammar are simply not priorities while abroad. The high improvement rate in listening corroborates findings reported by Kaplan, Meara, and Adams whose study abroad participants also perceived their listening skills to have improved the most. However, Fraser cautioned that it may be easier for students to perceive progress in aural skills than in reading, writing, or grammar.

Overall, perceived improvement received a significantly lower rate (4.2) compared to expected gains (5.3 out of 6 points). Perceived improvement was rated lower for all but one area in comparison with expected gains. The only area in which improvement did not fall short of expected gains was cultural understanding. A similar discrepancy between expected proficiency gains and perceived L2 improvement was reported by Mendelson. High and possibly unrealistic expectations for L2 development in short-term study abroad stays may be a common phenomenon. One implication of this finding is that administrators and teachers may want to discuss with students the potential and limits of study abroad programs in pre-departure meetings. Asking students to share and discuss their motives and goals may help them to form realistic expectations and set achievable goals for study abroad which in turn may help to prevent feelings of disappointment or failure at the end of the program.

Target Language Use

Students reportedly spent the greatest amount of out-of-class time listening to German followed by speaking in German. Smaller amounts were reported for reading and writing in the L2. These results are similar to Mendelson’s finding with participants of a study abroad program in Spain. Correlation analyses of students’ self-reported L2 use, expected gains, and perceived improvement revealed that only frequency of listening and perceived improvement in listening correlated, i.e., participants who felt that they had spent more time listening in the L2 also perceived their progress in listening to be greater. The estimated frequency of speaking, reading and writing, however, did not correlate with reported progress in these skills. Neither Mendelson nor Ginsberg and Miller found a relationship between the students’ reported L2 contact hours and their gains in oral proficiency. Our findings lend support to Ginsberg and Miller’s conclusion that a great amount of contact with native speakers alone does not suffice but that there is a complex interplay of different factors leading to proficiency gains, one of them being quality and depth of the interaction with native speakers.

It should be noted that students’ reported amount of L2 use varied considerably. This may simply suggest that some students used German more than others, but it may also be an indication
that one student’s perception of time may be different from that of another student and that retrospective estimates of L2 use may have limitations. As Kaplan cautioned, “there’s always the problem of how well categories reflect what learners actually do” (298). A better way of eliciting data on L2 use may be to have students report on their L2 use daily, perhaps in a journal, instead of having them report on their L2 use at the very end of the program.

Overall, participants of the present study not only reported engaging frequently in listening and speaking activities outside of class, they also reported in the end-of-program questionnaire that they highly valued opportunities for interaction with native speakers, such as the tandem program, opportunities that may be provided best in a study abroad context. Isabelli-García’s (“Study Abroad”) argument that programs could benefit from providing students with opportunities to create social networks while studying abroad is relevant here. A tandem program, as the one integrated in the program under investigation, may help to provide students with such an opportunity. Laubscher noted that a student’s success in making just one acquaintance can impact the out-of-class experience tremendously as this contact may create further opportunities for getting to know other native speakers. Helping students to establish these kinds of contact with native speakers should be a goal for program organizers.

Conclusion

This study investigated students’ goals and motives for participation in a one-month summer study abroad program in Germany; it investigated participants’ expectations about their learning progress in various language skills at the outset of the program and compared and correlated these with students’ self-assessed progress in L2 skills at the end of the program, their self-reported frequency of L2 use, and their goals for participating in the program. Findings indicated that students’ overall expectations were significantly higher than their perceived progress in all skills with the exception of cultural learning in which participants reported the greatest gains. In addition, correlations were found between reported frequency of L2 listening and gains in L2 listening proficiency, and between the goals “to be in contact with Germans” and “cultural enrichment” with expected gains in speaking and listening skills.

It is important to recognize the limitations of this study. A relatively small sample size and the focus on only one program hardly allow for generalizations to be made. The present study also did not attempt to compare study abroad effects with effects of comparable immersion programs in the students’ home country. However, as one of the few investigations of short-term study abroad in Germany, this study may help generate and test hypotheses for future research. Future investigations may benefit from complementing quantitative analyses of self-report data with actual proficiency testing and qualitative analyses (e.g., based on interviews) to learn more about expected, perceived, and actual L2 use and proficiency development. It is also hoped that this study’s findings, based on students’ prediction and retrospection, might be informative for study abroad administrators and teachers who are rethinking and fine-tuning aspects of their study abroad program to create an optimal environment for L2 learning and a lasting cultural experience for their students.

Works Cited


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