Multicultural effectiveness and self-perceived linguistic progress as a result of a study-abroad experience

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In recent times, study-abroad experiences have found their way into the curriculum of many students, foremost in that of language students. The European Union in particular has gone to great lengths to promote these residences abroad. Not only are study-abroad experiences expected to boost students’ language competences, they are also considered beneficial to students’ personal development and future employability (European Commission, 2014). More specifically, exchange students are expected to gain emotional independence and maturity alongside enhanced social skills (European Commission, 2014). However, few studies have tried to capture the changes prolonged exposure to a L2 community is supposed to have on learners’ multicultural effectiveness, i.e. the ability to effectively deal with intercultural differences (van der Zee, van Oudenhoven, Ponterotto, & Fietzer, 2013). In this contribution, we aim to explore how students perceive their linguistic progress after spending a term abroad. Additionally, we investigate whether their level of multicultural effectiveness has changed. To this end, we administered the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire – Short Form (van der Zee et al., 2013) to a group of 22 Swedish and 42 Belgian university students before and after an Erasmus exchange experience of three to five months. In addition to filling in this measure, students were presented with a self-report questionnaire in which they assessed the linguistic progress they had made and estimated the intensity of their L2 interaction. In this presentation, we discuss the effect the study-abroad experience has had on students’ multicultural effectiveness and on their self-perceived linguistic progress.


Keywords: multicultural effectiveness, study abroad, self-perceived linguistic progress.