

Enhancing English Language and Culture Learning in Short-Term Study Abroad

Dr. Cherry Chan, English Language Teaching Unit, CUHK

cherrychan@cuhk.edu.hk

Introduction

This poster reports on a study which focused on the second language (L2) identities, language and intercultural (IC) learning of English Language Education (ELED) majors who participated in an eight-week English language and cultural immersion program in the U.K.

Research questions

- What are the participants' perceptions of their L2 proficiency and their attitudes towards the host language and culture prior to the sojourn, during the sojourn, immediate after the sojourn, and four months post sojourn?
- How do they perceive themselves as English learners and users, and future teachers of English at the four stages?
- In their estimation, how did the sojourn impact their L2 identities?

Overview of study abroad (SA) program in U.K.

- 8-weeks
- Required, credit-bearing component of ELED program;
- Homestay;
- Language enhancement and pedagogical skills courses
- IC studies course
- School visits
- Cultural excursions



Methodology

- Multi-method, multiple-case studies;
- Qualitative data (e.g., interview transcripts, pre- and post reflective essays, sojourn journals) uploaded to NVivo 11 database and coded;
- Quantitative (survey) data processed by Excel;
- Cross-case analysis

Profile of cohort

Cohort: 9 3rd year ELED majors

Sex: 3 males
9 females

Perceived English proficiency
(1= very poor; 5 = excellent)

2	Fair
4	Good
3	Very good

Previous international experience

Mostly short-term travel in Asian countries; a few had short-term SA experience in secondary school

Findings

Pre-sojourn

- Their attitude towards their use of English was relational and context-dependent;
- Their L2 learning was driven by a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motives;
- Their perceptions of their L2 identities and attitudes towards English were related to their previous L2 learning and IC/ international experience

Findings

Sojourn

- All participants believed that they had enhanced their English, especially their speaking and listening skills;
- Variations were found in their exposure to English/ IC interactions;
- Their emotions and attitudes towards English evolved as they used the language in the U.K.;
- Both internal and external factors contributed to their L2 and IC learning.

Post-sojourn

- All participants maintained their identity as L2 learners. They believed that they had acquired more confidence, particularly in their listening and speaking skills;
- They developed a stronger sense of being L2 users due to their ability to use the language in real life situations (e.g., interacting/ rapport-building with their hosts);
- All believed that their SA experience had broadened their views about English language teaching, which in turn, boosted their confidence as future EFL teachers



Pedagogical suggestions

Pre-sojourn preparation

Briefing sessions

- Explain L2 identity-related concepts and enhance students' understanding of related dimensions;
- Foster students' observational strategies to enhance their sociopragmatic awareness;
- Allow students to share their SA concerns and discuss possible solutions

IC workshops

- Explore IC issues
- Raise their IC awareness, sensitivity, and understanding

Sojourn support

Regular debriefing sessions

- Encourage students to seek opportunities to initiate L2/IC interactions in the host environment;
- Prompt them to reflect on their SA goals and employ L2/ IC learning strategies

Purposeful tasks

- Prompt students to Interview host members about a topic of mutual interest;
- Prompt them to write reflective auto-biographical narratives;
- Encourage the posting of blogs or multimodal texts (e.g., online sharing in an e-learning platform)

Reentry intervention

- Offer debriefing workshops;
- Encourage the writing of post-sojourn reflective essays about SA experience;
- Prompt the setting of goals for further L2/IC learning.

References

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