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# EFL learners in ESL contexts: Short- and long-term changes in international communicative competence

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## Résumé

Although study-abroad programs are slowly rising in popularity in countries like Japan (Tanikawa, 2013), the large majority of these are short-term in nature. With their stay measured in weeks, participants in such programs often gain some social, cultural, and L2 communicative experience, but this might not be enough to lead to substantial, long-term changes, especially compared to those studying in programs with a duration of one year or longer. And while many studies have compared motivation and English proficiency changes brought about through study abroad (e.g., Freed, 1995; Kininger, 2007), not enough is known about the effect of program length on non-linguistic effects of the study-abroad experience, such as changes in perceived L2 confidence, speaking anxiety, and a sense of an "L2 self" identity. We will present the results of a study of the non-linguistic changes brought about by the study-abroad experience in both short- and long-term contexts.

Data covered in this presentation were collected in the first two stages of a four-year sequential exploratory mixed-methods project. The quantitative portion of the study ( $N = 149$ ) comprises data from EFL learners who studied in both long-term and short-term ESL language programs. Participants completed both pre- and post-study abroad questionnaires, with items concerning nonlinguistic factors such as intercultural competence, ethnocentrism, and possible L2 selves. Phenomenological interviews (Seidman, 2006) conducted with select participants from each type of study abroad program comprise the qualitative data, which add depth and texture to the quantitative results. Findings indicate the long-term participants experienced substantially greater reduction in speaking anxiety and improvement in perceived confidence than those in short-term programs. However, results related to L2-selves indicate fewer clear-cut differences. After presenting these findings, implications for study-abroad instructors and coordinators will be discussed.

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