



Short-Term Study Abroad and Language Implications in Context

Alan Garfield

University of Dubuque, United States of America

Abstract

Studies of language acquisition often footnote study abroad as a kind of effortless magical solution for painless language-related solutions. In fact, a consistent body of research clearly concludes that study abroad can have a positive impact on every domain of language competence. That data assumes study abroad experiences that are traditionally measured in semesters or years. Yet as reported in the Open Doors Study (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State) over the past five years, full semester study abroad programs in the United States are on the wane while short-term programs (six weeks or less) are clearly growing. What is the effect of short-term study abroad programs on students' desire for language learning? This paper is based on a study of 20 undergraduate students, not foreign language majors, and their perceptions regarding effective oral communication and motivation for language learning after a two-week short-term international study trip to Germany. With full semester programs on the wane, we have to examine how language learning is perceived by students in short-term study. Research is clear regarding intensive exposure in promoting language skills; further research is needed for shorter, less vigorous programs and their implications for language learning.

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