

Roaming the Globe, Expanding Lexicons:

A Meta-Analysis of Study Abroad's Effect on L2 Vocabulary Development

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One aspect that has received the attention of much Study Abroad (SA) research is L2 vocabulary, possibly because of the importance that lexical knowledge has over learners' L2 proficiency (i.e. it to predict success in listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing performance, and spoken fluency, among others). The SA context has been hypothesized as ideal for learners in terms of amplifying their vocabulary knowledge because they are expected to surround themselves with the L2, which will provide opportunities to use it (Milton, 2009). Moreover, the context offers a combination of explicit/implicit exposure to the L2 that researchers believe speeds up the growth in vocabulary knowledge (Zaytseva et al., 2018). However, due to differences in research design, program duration, number of participants, instrumentation, and the multifaceted nature of vocabulary, it is still not possible to draw a definitive conclusion regarding how the SA process influences the development of L2 vocabulary.

The main aim of the present study is to answer the question “where are we now”, and to elucidate the link between SA and lexical development. A multilevel meta-analysis including 25 studies was conducted to examine the extent to which overall, receptive vocabulary (RV), and productive vocabulary (PV) are impacted by a SA experience. Secondly, considering that Length of Stay (LoS) in the foreign country seems to be a key variable when determining whether students will show any gains after an international sojourn, another objective was to determine whether length of stay (LoS) has an effect on L2 vocabulary development. Results show that international stays have

a significantly large impact on RV and overall vocabulary, and a significantly moderate impact on PV. The analysis also showed that LoS alone cannot be used as a predictor of gains in the students' L2 vocabulary.