

Peer learner interactions and SLA during an intensive Arabic programme abroad: Insights from dynamic social network analysis

Second language acquisition during study abroad (SA) has been a burgeoning field of enquiry over the last three decades. However, not all learners benefit equally from SA sojourns, and considerable variation has been evinced in students' linguistic attainment.

One line of enquiry that has attempted to explain the varied picture has investigated students' social networks. However, most of the extant studies have i) focused on sojourners' interactions with native speakers of the TL, passing over their communication with other interactants ii) only investigating participants' egocentric networks, iii) if at all, used solely global metrics of the networks extracted, and iv) only measured pre-sojourn proficiency and one-shot post-stay gains.

This contribution analyses the longitudinal development of the social interaction network and its influence on L2 gains of 40 U.S.-born native speakers of English and one Chinese national enrolled in an intensive 3-month program of Arabic at a language institute in Amman. The SA program typically results in most students reaching at least B1 level. Unlike extant research, the current study i) focuses on students' interactions with their alma mater classmates as well as other agents ii) reconstructing their complete network (in line with the novel computational social network analytic methodology laid out in Authors 2021a,b & 2022), iii) tracing the impact of each individual student's position in the social graph using betweenness and in-/out-degree centrality metrics, and iv) includes a dynamic developmental perspective with three measurement points at 4-week intervals each, gauging the extent to which changes in the interaction networks translate to changes in both self-perceived and objectively measured progress along a range of dimensions.

Data collection is ongoing, with the first survey already administered after the first month of the sojourn. Analyses of the dataset are expected to conclude in February 2023.