

Previous research has highlighted the benefits of a Study Abroad (SA) experience in terms of the second or foreign language (L2) development (Llanes, 2011). However, most studies have been conducted in SA settings where the L2 participants are learning is the official language (i.e. Spanish learners of English in the UK), and very few studies have examined the L2 development in a SA experience in an English as a Lingua Franca Study Abroad context (i.e. Spanish L2 learners of English in Denmark). And these studies have only tracked the development of English (L2), ignoring what happens with other languages involved in the SA such as the local language/s of the target country or other languages that participants may speak in multilingual settings.

In order to fill this gap, the present study examined L2 development in a multilingual context such as Catalonia. Participants were 26 international students enrolled in a semester-long SA experience in a Catalan university. All the participants were learning Spanish as an L2 and already knew English, and some of them took Catalan classes and practiced the language once there since their SA was in Catalonia.

Participants were administered an oral picture-description task at the beginning and at the end of their SA experience, and they were asked to explain what they saw in the pictures in Spanish, English and Catalan. Once the data were collected, the measures of oral fluency, lexical complexity, grammar complexity and accuracy were calculated in the three languages. Preliminary results indicate that most of the gains occurred in Spanish, but some aspects of English were also significantly improved. It was also found that improvement in Spanish was not at the expense of English.

References

Llanes, À. (2011). The Many Faces of Study Abroad: An Update on the Research on L2 Gains emerged during a Study Abroad Experience. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3, 189-215.