

Multilingual ELF and European Identity – Contributions from Study Abroad through the Erasmus program

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Abstract

This article analyzes the relationship between study abroad through the Erasmus Program, European identity, and the role of English as a Lingua Franca in identification processes with Europe. It focuses on three groups of European Higher Education students (n=155) from different nationalities (n=26) that participated in a sojourn abroad in three European contexts: Northern (Oulu, Finland); Eastern (Bucharest, Romania); and Southern (Lleida, Catalonia) Europe. The study follows a PRE-POST design, corresponding to the beginning and end of the participants' experience. It analyzes quantitative data collected through questionnaires. The results of the study indicate that, contrary to what is claimed by the European Commission, study abroad through the Erasmus program does not have a substantial impact on the development of an alleged European identity. However, these results are not negatively correlated with the value that the participants allocate to the English language, perceived as a means that unifies European youth.

Keywords: European identity, English as a Lingua Franca, study abroad, Erasmus, language learning