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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INTER-CULTURAL INTERACTION OF TURKISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' STUDY ABROAD (SA) EXPERIENCES: THE CASE OF ERASMUS STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study explored the motivation, expectations, and yielded outcomes of tertiary students participated within Erasmus program. With this purpose, a qualitative analysis was sought to understand tertiary level students' intercultural contacts in their host countries. The participants were 8 Erasmus students who spent a semester in various countries within Erasmus program. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants and the data drawn from the interviews were analyzed through content analysis. Results revealed that participants showed an openness with an inter-cultural sensitivity. They also made effort to improve their foreign language proficiency particularly English during in the host country. However, they did not become interested in learning the local language of the host country with a general tendency. Also, the participants did not have long-term career plans for future stay in their minds.

Keywords: *Study abroad, Erasmus students, Inter-cultural interaction*

TÜRK ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN YURTDIŞI EĞİTİMİ DENEYİMLERİNDE KÜLTÜRLER-ARASI ETKİLEŞİMLERİ ÜZERİNE NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA: BİR ERASMUS PROGRAMI ÖRNEĞİ

Özet

Bu çalışma, yurt dışı eğitimi kapsamında Erasmus programına dâhil olmuş Türk üniversite öğrencilerinin programa olan motivasyonlarını, beklentilerini ve elde ettikleri kazanımları araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, programa katılan üniversite öğrencilerinin ev sahibi bir ülkede kültürler-arası etkileşimleri nitel verilerle analiz edilmiştir. Katılımcılar Erasmus kapsamındaki ülkelere bir yarıyıl geçirmiş farklı bölümlerde eğitim gören 8 Türk üniversite öğrencisidir. Veriler yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yoluyla elde edilmiş ve sonuçlar içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Elde edilen bulgular, katılımcıların, açıklık, anlayış ve kültürlerarası hassasiyet gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Katılımcılar ayrıca yabancı dil bilgilerini özellikle de İngilizce bilgilerini geliştirmek için çaba sarf etmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte katılımcıların genel olarak ev sahibi ülkenin dilini öğrenmeye karşı bir ilgi duymadıkları görülmüştür. Ayrıca katılımcıların gelecekteki uzun süreli kariyer planlamalarında yabancı bir ülkede kalma düşüncelerinin olmadığı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yurtdışı eğitimi, Erasmus öğrencileri, Kültürler-arası etkileşim.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Global relations, networks, and mobility among universities have eliminated boundaries among academic community members from well-known professors to undergraduate students. To strengthen the international cooperation and cultural relationships between higher education institutions across countries, many initiatives have been launched and these initiatives have been supported and encouraged by international unions to enhance their members' knowledge and skills with social links in academia. For example, EU mobility programs particularly Erasmus + have been bringing students and academics from various countries together. More than 400 000 higher education students and staff went abroad thanks to Erasmus+ during the academic year 2016/2017, reaching a total of over 1.1 million since 2014 (Erasmus Annual Report, 2017: 24). Eight million students each year until 2025 are estimated to participate in this circulation (ICEF [International Consultants for Education and Fairs Monitor], 2017: 5). Enhanced awareness in internationalization in higher education effectively contributes to students' interaction and second language use, too. Students meanwhile obtain more chances to have a better quality of learning in their field. Outside the educational settings, study abroad students' social participation such as cultural clubs, community services, even part-time jobs can improve their language proficiency and performance (Fraser 2002: 57; Whitworth, 2006: 232-236). These social interactions, meanwhile, positively affect students' psychological barriers such as anxiety and lack of self-efficacy of oral communication (Dewey, et al., 2013: 102-105). Research into how study abroad students experience their endeavors in terms of language use and social interactions offers insights about second language acquisition development and relevant variables. For example, through an SLA framework, study abroad interactions offer considerable input and assist to create meaning and produce language utterances (Krashen, 1981: 50-77; Long, 1985: 377-393).

The exposure to another language, even if the target language, i.e. English, is not the native language of the host country but as the medium of communication among foreigners or medium of education has a value since this situation both encourages and forces to use target language in real-life instances where native and non-native speakers of another language can scaffold these hosted students. Through diverse communicative goals such as conversations in formal and informal contexts, questioning and answering in real life contexts and classroom setting interactions throughout their study abroad experiences, students need to develop communicative skills in the target language, and make efforts to overcome their psychological barriers for successful communication. In other words, study abroad experiences force students to interact in another language and as a result students' comprehensible outputs, as "street learners" according to Swain (1985: 253-256), inevitably increase and vary in addition to the classroom settings supporting Swain's "pushed output" argument. Based on this socio-cultural framework, study abroad experiences can be said to offer various support for SLA. Due to geographical, political and linguistic reasons, undergraduate level students' mobility across countries is depended upon various tendencies such as students' native language is an official language in the host country, or to country where English is the official language. Another preference is towards the countries where the host country language is other than English with a goal of learning another language except for English. The fourth reason for students' study abroad can be due to ethnic, religious or linguistic connections of the students with the host country (Isabelli-García et al., 2018: 441). Given this goal diversity, students with different characteristics undergo their study abroad actions under the influence of some variables such as countries, purpose of study abroad, L1 and L2 language proficiencies of the students, their identities, socio-political attitudes of both parties seem to be effective on their study abroad experiences.

In recent years, study abroad studies have become highly popular since they offer solid findings for second language acquisition literature. In view of the value of internationalization of higher education and the considerable growth of study abroad initiatives of university students, this research study seeks to focus on what Turkish undergraduate students experienced and confronted as English users in a foreign country as well as how these experiences impacted their L2 English employment and acquisition in line with affective factors. Though there have been many research studies into the SA experiences in many country-based settings, the number of the studies regarding Turkish students' perspectives are quite rare. Drawing upon self-report data obtained from university students who studied abroad through the ERASMUS program, the findings will not only provide insights about their experiences towards English use, but it will also help understand their challenges and needs in terms of sociolinguistic perspective and offer novelties for further exchange programs. With this purpose, the research questions upon which this study was based was as follows:

1. What motivates Turkish university students to participate in the ERASMUS program as a SA experience?
2. What expectations in terms of inter-cultural interactions do the ERASMUS students voice as a SA experience?

3. What do the participants think about the outcome of their SA experience in terms of inter-cultural interactions?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

The participants targeted in this research were students who participated in the Erasmus program. A convenience sample was selected among the students participated in the program. The students studied in various EFL contexts during the 2017-2018 Fall and Spring semesters. The sample consists of 3 females and 5 males. The sample of the study consisted of students who were studying at Atatürk University, a large Turkish state university, and all of the participants were native speakers of Turkish except for one of them who is bilingual speaking Turkish and Russian. These undergraduate students included in the study aged between 19 and 23, the average being 21. Of the 8 participants, four were studying natural sciences and another half were studying social sciences. The participants spent 4 to 5 months in countries where English is the Lingua Franca. All of them had studied English at least for 6 years in their home country before the sojourn and three of the participants listed English as their majors. To apply for the Erasmus program, the students are required to have an average GPA score of 2.5 at least. In addition, all the candidates are required to have a foreign language proficiency level for optimum level communication. For this purpose, all the candidates are interviewed and they take a proficiency exam for the university decision. Thus, they shared similar characteristics in terms of grade point average, prior English study experiences. However, prior to Erasmus program, only two of the participants reported having prior international travel experience and one of the participants' mother is Russian and he was born in Russia, thus, he travels to Russia every year. On the other hand, other six participants have never experienced international travel before the program. The demographic information of the participants is provided in the table below.

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Faculty	ELF communities visited through the Erasmus Program	Duration of Study Abroad Experience
Interviewee 1	Female	19	Faculty of Pharmacy	Czech Republic	4,5-5 months
Interviewee 2	Male	23	Faculty of Engineering	Poland	5 months
Interviewee 3	Male	21	Faculty of Arts	Romania	4,5-5 months
Interviewee 4	Female	22	Faculty of Education	Hungary	4 months
Interviewee 5	Male	22	Faculty of Education	Hungary	4 months
Interviewee 6	Male	23	Faculty of Engineering	Hungary	4,5 months
Interviewee 7	Male	19	Faculty of Law	Poland	4,5 months
Interviewee 8	Female	21	Faculty of Architecture	Italy	5 months

2.2. Instrument

In the present study, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Before determining the data collection tool for the study, the previous studies on SA experience were also taken into consideration. Interviews were employed as the data collection tool because the study upon which this article is based explored the learners' beliefs, motivations, and expectations by creating a chance for them to voice their thoughts throughout their study abroad experiences. Therefore, by asking directly to students, a deeper insight would be gained into the SA process as a whole. The interviews were conducted in Turkish to make participants easily express themselves in their native language. Interviews were one-on-one and had duration of 15-35 minutes and were audiotaped and then transcribed.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data elicited from the current study were analyzed through content analysis. Firstly, the collected data were transcribed. The researcher carefully went through the transcribed data several times to have a deeper understanding of the data and then formed the codes out of answers and after the coding process, the codes were combined to the categories and themes. The main purpose for developing themes is to find answers to the research questions of current study and provide a comprehensive understanding for the issue under discussion. Themes were already predetermined in accordance with the research questions. Moreover, to provide the reliability of coding, the researchers studied with an invited coder who has experience in content analysis.

Regarding the validation of the qualitative data, two academics at the department were asked if the questions were relevant and any revisions could be needed. Subsequently, the interview questions have been piloted by three students with study abroad experiences to test the questions in terms of understandability, appropriateness and the direct relevance. Minor revisions were conducted before the main study. After the main study, each interviewee confirmed the transcribed interviews and their consents were taken.

3. RESULTS

The reason that motivates students to participate in SA programs is the basic theme identified as the result of the analysis. The participants were asked to express their motives to get involved in the program. The participants' answers were coded in accordance with the categories and predetermined themes. Their answers were analyzed in terms of three phenomena that are motivation, expectations and outcome of the SA experience.

Table 2: Theme for the motivation for SA experience

THEME 1. Motivation for SA Experience	
Categories	Codes
Category 1. Socialization	Interest in discovering different places Meeting different people and cultures Making more friends No ethnocentrism
Category 2. Language-Oriented Factors	Priority over English Ignorance of local languages Language enhancement Using English for communication
Category 3. Professional and academic development	Career plans

Self-development goals are seen the source of participants' motivation. Throughout the stages of Erasmus experience 'becoming socialized and agent' seem to be the rationale of a study abroad experience. As Erasmus program offered students a broaden opportunity of a planned, intensified and encouraging autonomy through education, participants found this experience as a unique chance to realize this purpose. Thus, they often expressed their engagement with knowing new people and culture in a new environment. They assumed this social engagement as a part of learning experience. They prioritized host culture people's lifestyle, social norms and real-life interactions, rather than host country's academic culture. While they aimed to establish a cross-cultural communication, the learning channel seemed to be one way of learning focusing on the host country. Participants did not keep an agenda to introduce the home culture, customs and norms. When they were asked their considerations and priorities, they merely emphasized to explore and discover a new cultural setting and physical world. Such an openness with a potential of intercultural sensitivity (i.e. the desire to understand and acknowledge the cultural differences and being interested in another culture with respect) was one of the strikingly observed attitudes among the participants. Though they had no concern to represent their country, and when they were asked to evaluate their self-confidence, they did not have much concern about interaction with others in the host country despite language constraints before their departure. One of the potential confidence problems seemed to be solved through group living with other Turkish students but they maximized interaction with students from other countries in real life instances. Even though they made many friends from various countries, they spoke in English as possible as they could. The following quote exemplified this situation as follows:

"We were 8 students from Turkey in my group... in our house with Turkish friends we often used to invite foreign students. They were coming from different countries, but we spoke in English, I had intensive interaction with foreign people there." (Interviewee 8)

Given the intricate relationship between culture and language, participants did not ignore the language learning and practicing during their sojourns. However, it is interesting that though the participants had not been to the Anglophone host countries (see Table 1) they were not interested in the local languages. Another equally important finding for lack of local language attention was that participants considered their study abroad experiences as a unique chance to improve their oral English competencies. The following quotes are examples for English emphasis as a foreign language. As one of the reasons for SA process, enhancing language proficiency (i.e. English) had a central role particularly for their career concerns.

“In fact, I want to go to abroad for a long time. I have been interested in English for years and my real concern is to learn different languages.” (Interviewee 1)

“...I perceived the program as an opportunity to develop my English.” (Interviewee 7)

“I have particularly interest in English. I wanted to have SA experience.” (Interviewee 5)

According to their self-report, their SA experience improved their oral English proficiency. Even though they had challenges in oral communication in another language, they overcame this constraint in a short time at an acceptable level of intelligibility.

“That I had to speak in another language turned out to be good. I forced myself and I could speak in English.” (Interviewee 7)

“If you could go to a country where English is spoken in this case you could improve more.” (Interviewee 3)

“Though I did not have the chance of using English more in Hungary, my chance to speak English was more within the countries I visited. Before the experience I did not think that my English was bad; however, after this experience I noticed that in terms of practice it was very different in case you have to use English.” (Interviewee 4)

Participants mostly linked their career related assumptions to their socialization experiences in the host country such as making new friends, widening their visions by discovering new places and academic settings. Apart from this, they did not have an assumption to prolong their study abroad programs for professional and extended educational purposes. However, among the participants only one of them stated that he might work abroad in the case of any opportunity.

“How do I live abroad with Erasmus, how do I live my life, at least I have an idea right now. In other words, if any job offer comes right now, I accept that I will work abroad.” (Interviewee 2)

Another participant also expresses his career-oriented motives for the SA experience with the following utterance:

“My plan was to get to know more people abroad, to see new things in my main field... to be familiar with more different cultures, to make more friends, that is, to live my student life as a student.” (Interviewee 6)

Table 3: Theme for the expectation from SA experience

THEME 2. Expectations from SA Experience	
Categories	Codes
Category 1. Satisfied Expectations	Exposure to the target culture Language improvement Having international friends Gaining self-confidence Travelling different countries Spending time for oneself Length of stay
Category 2. Disappointment & Challenge	Technological accessibility Not having the chance to use English Currency

The second theme is expectations from SA experience which particularly refers to the participants’ ideas after the sojourn. As can be observed in Table 3, participants’ expectations display diversity ranging from social to language-related elements. The first category, *satisfied expectations*, is related to the factors that satisfied participants’ expectations during the process. Having friends from various countries and improving language proficiency formed the most frequently mentioned expectations during the sojourn. For example, one of the participants addressed the satisfaction she has experienced during the process both in terms of travelling and developing language proficiency:

“I thought that I could wonder different places and do as many things as possible, that is, I could travel as many places as possible because this is an opportunity for me and maybe I will never have this opportunity again. I thought I was satisfied in terms of travelling because I have visited 8 countries. In

terms of English, I lost my suitcase at the beginning and I could not express anything. In fact, I had some knowledge, but I could not speak. Then, while coming back, I noticed that I can speak very well. I have really developed my English.” (Interviewee 1)

Moreover, one of the participants, studying at English Language and Literature, mentioned the self-confidence he experienced during his sojourn. The following excerpt illustrates the contribution:

“Prior to this experience, I had some doubts about whether my language proficiency is satisfactory. However, after the experience, I think that I developed myself overcoming my doubts and gaining self-confidence.” (Interviewee 3)

However, the second category refers to the issues that negatively affected participants and two of them stated that due to some factors such as the country visited, they experienced disappointment. Their unmet expectations revealed that the target country did not satisfy their wish to use English for communication and did not contribute to their academic achievement. Participants stated this problem with their comments as such:

“Hungary was not effective in terms of language use for me because in the city I visited, English was not commonly used. And the city was not so developed or big. It was very small.” (Interviewee 4).

“One of the points that constituted challenge for me was the language proficiency of the country I visited. The city I spent my semester is not a popular tourist destination and it has recently begun to accept international students; therefore, language proficiency of people was not developed. We could not communicate with people in certain settings particularly with the shopkeepers at all or we experienced challenges even when we tried to have coffee.” (Interviewee 6)

The economic status of the host countries seems to be highly effective on participants’ perceptions of their SA experiences. Participants often compared and contrasted the host countries in term of economic, technical opportunities, social conventions and their foreign language proficiencies to their home counterparts. Technological accessibility and the currency of the host countries were found to be the prominent issues they needed to challenge. However, this home country related issue cannot be expanded to all study abroad experiences. What these allegedly constraints yielded participants is they contributed students to be more independence with problem-solving skills, thus, they perceived these challenges as an asset after their return to home country.

“Now I think that fortunately I experienced these difficulties, because I know what to do now when I go abroad again.” (Interviewee 3)

“I have learned what it means to live in a very different place and now I can easily express myself and I do not get lost anywhere in the world. Now I can go wherever I want.” (Interviewee 4)

“Today, if I travel abroad again, I can easily find my way, communicate easily with people and know how to get from one place to other.” (Interviewee 8)

Through an open-minded perspective, they had a chance to understand and acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses of the host country and contributed their intercultural competence. The comparison and contrasts seem to be one of the realized goals of the Erasmus program within notion of study abroad. The following instances seem to be yield useful insights to the participants in their socialization experience:

“In Hungary, education is very different when compared to Turkey. Technological tools such as smartboards or other equipment are not very common in Hungary. Today they still use MP3 players in courses for listening activities. ... Moreover, life in Hungary is very different when compared to us. In social sense, we also got to know personalities of Hungarian people. We witnessed their school settings or dormitory settings. Consequently, we are learning their lives as well as their languages.” (Interviewee 5)

“In general, we encountered with difficulties. The country we visited was mostly Christian and therefore, their culture and eating habits were very different when compared to us. We had problems in this respect.” (Interviewee 7)

“When I went to Hungary, I thought they could speak English better than me because they were European after all. However, when I was there, I noticed I was unfair to myself.” (Interviewee 6)

Self-confidence was seen the most common outcome among the participants for their study abroad experience. The notion of self-confidence is one of the required features comprising an autonomous individual.

Throughout the study abroad experience of the participants, they underwent an independent, autonomous and self-confidence improvement. It seems that they could take initiative to their own personal learning during their sojourns. Enhancement of their self-confidence was reported to strengthen in the field of communication in another language and to solve immediate problems in daily life such as an airport setting or a school environment.

Table 4: Theme for outcomes of the SA experience

THEME 3. Outcomes of the SA Experience	
Categories	Codes
Category 1. Personal Contribution	Gaining world view Universality More interest for foreign culture/ politics Self-expression Willingness to travel Having friends Power to overcome difficulties
Category 2. Academic Contribution	Career plans Being prestigious as an Erasmus student

Erasmus program as a part of SA experience could be perceived through two dimensions. On one hand, the participants stated the contribution of their experience on personal level; they meanwhile did not ignore the professional and academic aspects of their experience. Study abroad context, namely Erasmus here, seem to be a type of personal challenge towards different conditions. Confronting new conditions, travelling and self-expression are the prominent assets they obtained. These assets meanwhile are the indicator of their self-confidence.

Based on the participants' statements they reached their goals, established intercultural skills, personal development such as foreign language use and socialization comprising meeting new friends and knowing new geographies. Their interest in the foreign cultures and people improved their global openness and acknowledging others. Their expressions are provided below:

"I do not suppose this experience will affect my career too much. In fact, prior to this experience I had prejudices, but I was free from these prejudices during my experience. Apart from that, I am more open minded now. This is the individual contribution of SA experience for me. If I have the chance and time again, I would like to see my friends there and get to know their culture more closely." (Interviewee 3)

"On an individual basis, I made new friends and I got to know new cultures. I took very good actions in terms of universalization." (Interviewee 6)

While discovering the host country, their challenges seem to be solved without much anxiety. Most of their professional thoughts were centered around foreign language proficiency. Their desire to practice and improve foreign language knowledge was assumed to be influenced positively. Their SA experience had also an affective outcome on the participants. They assumed this SA experience to enhance their social status and it positively affected their prestige among their academic lives. The below statements are good examples for this assumption:

"I want to travel abroad again in the future. I want to do something related to my major instead of just a journey. In this sense, I think the current experience will make a contribution to my CV. Moreover, in Turkey students with Erasmus experience are more prestigious." (Interviewee 8)

"In terms of my field, now, I have known professors who can reference me when I want to enter a company... or in terms of language this was a good chance to improve English and I have achieved it. I am more confident to improve myself because I discovered what I could do at this stage. I have a foreign language that I can add to my CV." (Interviewee 1)

Participants sought to renew their study abroad experience for their future plans and they recommended other students to apply for the relevant programs. It is not surprising that the rationale of their disposition centered again around improving their foreign language practice and cultural interaction. While they were talking about the professional future plan only one out of eight participants stated a possibility of academic education next time.

4. DISCUSSION

This study explored the motivation, expectations and achievements of Turkish students at the university level who went to another country with Erasmus program within the scope of studying abroad. Findings in general showed that students aimed to discover new culture and people as well as having awareness about intercultural sensitivity. In addition, one of the most important elements of study abroad is the ability and achievement to speak in a different language. Indeed, one of the most important reasons for almost all of the participating students to participate in this program was to be able to communicate in another language. However, what is interesting is that Erasmus students have seen English as the language of communication rather than learning the languages of the host countries. During the time they spent in these countries, they basically sought to improve their English knowledge, practice and socialize by using English. Moreover, the courses they took in the academic field in English has strengthened their motivation too. Given that participants' beliefs on the SA experience are not stable but a dynamic process in which the beliefs change as confirmed by the previous studies (Amuzie and Winke, 2009: 376; Kaypak and Ortaçtepe, 2014: 364 ; Yang and Kim, 2011: 332), it is not surprising to hear different expectations, motives and outcomes from the students in study abroad contexts.

One of the basic principles of the Erasmus program has been acting independently, making decisions autonomously, gaining new experiences in the host country, and finding solutions to the unexpected situations. It may sometimes become a problem to encounter new cultures and a different language, which is the main motivation source of education abroad. The findings of this study have provoked the idea that the participants correctly managed these two phenomena as the potential sources of stress. Hendrickson et al. (2011: 287-290) emphasized that the priorities of the participants were for rather entertainment and social contacts. In the current study, however, the participants focused on the cultural interaction and language development particularly English than entertainment. Asaadodan et al. (2017: 93), contrary to these findings, stated that students are more willing to learn the language of the host country than English. The reason for this may be that Turkish students thought English as a priority in foreign language, and they believed that they would gain more with an advanced knowledge of English. Particularly, when they return home from the host countries, students considerably believe that improving language proficiency is one of the most important motives and it provokes them to sustain their desire for further sojourn. This conclusion corroborates with Asaadodan et al.'s (2017: 93) study which declared that language proficiency was the one of the most significant criteria learners established for successful Erasmus experience.

Rinehart (2002: 75-84) stated that students had the chance to get to know the host country through their study abroad experience and that they had the chance to learn their lifestyle, norms and traditions. This has a positive effect on their openness and understanding. The findings of this study highlight very similar notions. Turkish students also sought to discover new cultures and lifestyles, but did not worry about being representatives of their own culture. Communicating with scientists from different countries is a good opportunity for seeking professional and academic careers (Selmer and Luring, 2009: 430). However, in the process of career planning of Turkish students, such an instrument was not among the priorities, and career plans focused on foreign language knowledge and use. Gender may play a distinctive role about the motivation and perception of the students' SA experience. On the one hand, female students were claimed to be more culturally sensitive and autonomous than male students (Anderson et al., 2006: 464-467; Chirkov et al., 2008: 437) on the other hand no gender difference has been observed with these regards (Chirkov et al., 2007: 2013). In relation to our research findings, we have not reported such a gender difference in terms of intercultural sensitivity and autonomy and self-confidence. This may be attributed to the current selection criteria of the program concerned. The criteria encompassing GPA scores, personal statements and social qualities of the candidate may have played a role in this similarity. Having similar characteristics may have made these selected students more successful, active autonomous and socially engaged visitors.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study conducted with students participated in the Erasmus program has attempted to explore the beliefs on SA experience as a whole from the pre-established motives for the experience to the effects of the experience regarding the outcomes ranging from personal to academic gains acquired during the process. Results suggest that participants' beliefs on the SA experience are not stable because this is a dynamic process and learners' beliefs strengthen and weaken in accordance with the time they spent during their sojourn. However, after the sojourn of a semester, participants appreciate the value and potential contribution of participating in SA programs.

Exploring SA experience encompasses complex underlying factors and the goals students recognize before the experience mainly determine their efforts to get involved in the target context. The study is of significance because the data drawn from the study makes it possible to gain deeper insight into students' real feelings, motivations, expectations, and satisfaction status from the program, which may enable to design more effective sojourn programs. When the needs and expectations of students are recognized before the departure, students may more effectively use the chance of maximizing the benefits of SA experiences. However, more research is needed to discover the dynamic SA process taking various factors such as language-oriented, social and academic factors into consideration which may lead to suggestions that motivate SA learners to take full advantage of the experience both in linguistic and non-linguistic benefits.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was your motivation to participate in SA program? Could you tell me about your purposes for going abroad?
2. What were your expectations before participating in this SA program?
 - a) Were they met or to what extent they were met?
3. What do you think of the length of SA program? Is it appropriate or not and why?
4. Has your SA experience affected your perception of English and desire to enhance your English proficiency?
5. Were you more motivated to communicate with English speakers? Did you become more confident while expressing yourself in English speaking environments?
6. Please compare your language proficiency at the beginning and end of the SA program. Do you think you have made progress? If so, please describe this process.
7. How this study abroad experience will be effective in your so personal/social life/ academic life/ future career?

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