

**MILSA Colloquium  
14th/15th April 2016**

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**What contributes to intercultural learning in study  
abroad programs?**

**Insights from a longitudinal, quasi-experimental study among  
high school students.**

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# Content

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**1. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS & COMMON ASSUMPTIONS**

**2. THE STUDY**

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- 2. Theoretical Constructs**
- 3. Sample**
- 4. Methodology**



**3. EFFECTS OF STUDY ABROAD**

**4. PARAMETERS INFLUENCING INTERCULTURAL LEARNING**

**5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

# 1. Theoretical underpinnings & common assumptions

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## Study abroad

- ... fosters authentic use of the TL
- ... through this increases language learning motivation
- ... ensures contact and interaction with TL speakers
- ... through this fosters intercultural learning (contact hypothesis)

## Study abroad



**a magic potion**



# 1. Theoretical underpinnings & common assumptions

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Research suggests:

Regular contact & interaction with TL speakers no matter of course

(De Federico de la Rúa 2008; Ehrenreich 2008)

➔ authentic use of the TL no matter of course

➔ intercultural learning no matter of course

# 1. Theoretical underpinnings & common assumptions

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Research suggests:

Contact by itself not enough

(Allport 1954; Anderson et al. 2006; Chieffo & Griffith 2004; Donnelly-Smith 2009; Dwyer 2004; Engle & Engle 2004; Hammer 2005; Kehl & Morris 2008; Leyens et al. 1994; Medina-Lopez-Portillo 2004)

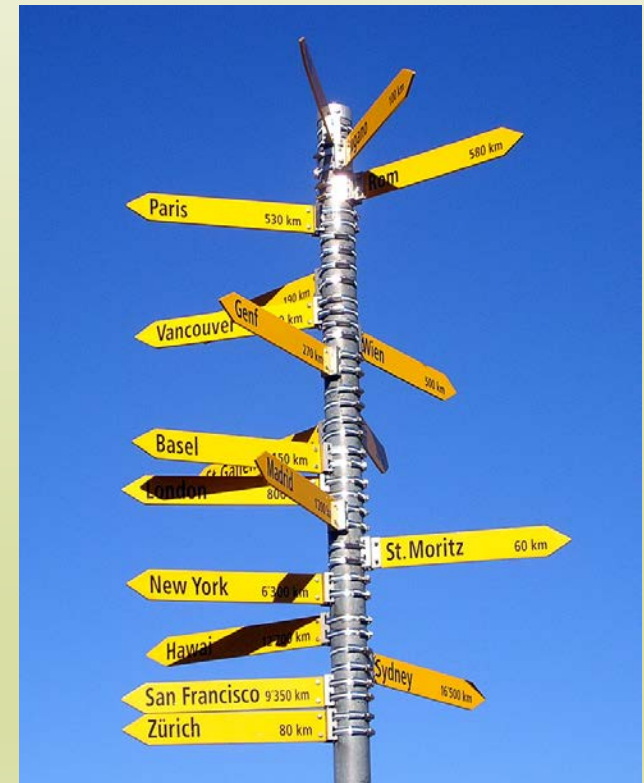
- Criteria for success:
  - About equal social status of involved groups
  - Common interests and goals
  - Opportunity for cooperation
  - Support by authorities
  - Duration
  - Personal attributes

## 2. The Study

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### Research Questions

1. What are the effects of study abroad on the development of intercultural competence and language learning motivation?
2. What are criteria and conditions for success of study abroad programs?



## 2. The Study

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### Theoretical Constructs

Intercultural Competence:

Byram 1997:

- knowledge (savoir)
- Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)
- attitudes (savoir être)
- skills of discovery & interaction (savoir apprendre/faire)
- foreign language skills

## 2. The Study

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### Sample

- Baccalaureate students from German- and French-speaking Switzerland
- intervention group:  
405 study abroad students
- control group  
135 students without study abroad
- 73% Swiss
- 13-20 years-old
- 69% girls
- TL English (n=181), TL French (n=150), TL German (n=74)
- Duration: 14% >7 weeks, 13% 5-6 weeks, 38% 3-4 weeks, 37% 1-2 weeks





## 2. The Study

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### Methodology

#### Quantitative Part

- Longitudinal study with 3 measurements in an intervention and control group
  - Shortly before departure
  - Shortly after return
  - 3 months after return
- Online-questionnaire on students' intercultural competence, language learning motivation, FL lessons and program parameters

#### Qualitative Part

- Guided interview with 10 selected participants after return (on the basis of positive vs. negative development)

## **2. The Study**

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### **Analysis quantitative part**

- ANCOVAs for the different aspects of intercultural competence and language learning motivation
- ANCOVA for entire sample and intervention group only
- T2 – short-term effect
- T3 – long-term effect

### **Analysis qualitative part**

- Responses recorded and transcribed
- Computer-based thematic content analysis (MAXQDA 10)
- Deductive codings from the research question / the theory & inductive codings from the interviews

### 3. Effects of study abroad

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What are the effects of study abroad on intercultural competence & language learning motivation?

- Study abroad has a positive effect on both intercultural competence & language learning motivation
- Group membership played a significant role in all the models
- the students who participated in a study abroad program were significantly more interculturally competent and motivated to learn the TL than those not participating in a study abroad program
- This is true both short-term (T2) and long-term (T3)

 **study abroad programs make a difference**

## 4. Parameters influencing intercultural learning

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What are criteria and conditions for success of study abroad programs?

1. Educational background of parents
2. Gender
3. Duration of stay
4. Personal starting conditions
5. Contact / Interaction
6. Use of the target language

## 4. Parameters influencing intercultural learning

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### Duration of stay

- Longer stay in TL area has a positive effect on intercultural attitudes and skills
- **Tendency: the longer the better**

But:

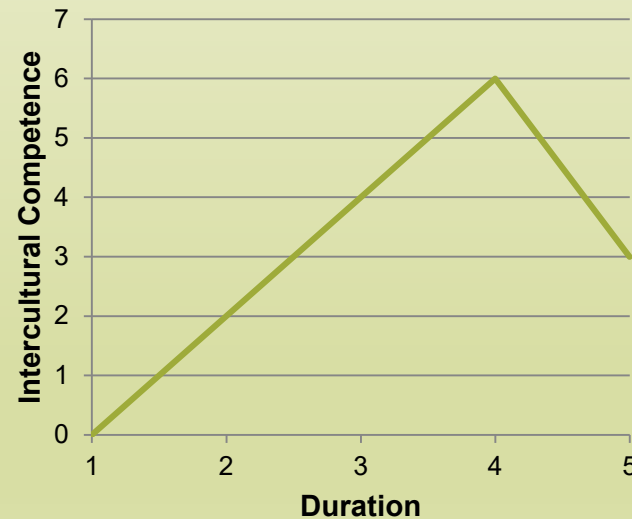
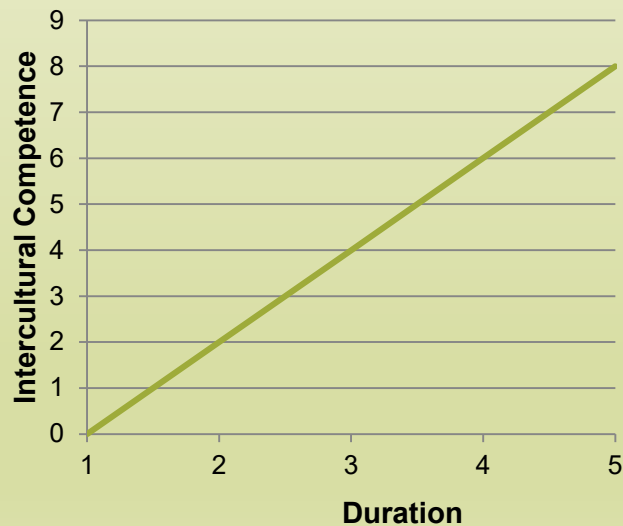
- Even relatively short stays (3-4 weeks) have an effect
- Stay of 1-2 weeks has no measurable effect on intercultural competence but can serve as a door-opener for later, longer stays (Chieffo & Griffith, 2004; Engle & Engle, 2003).

## 4. Parameters influencing intercultural learning

### Duration of stay

#### Not to forget:

- Development is not always linear



## 4. Parameters influencing intercultural learning

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### Personal starting conditions

- What do I mean with personal starting conditions?
  - Motivation....
  - Intercultural attitudes...
  - Intercultural skills....
  - study abroad / stays abroad....

... before the start of the study abroad program



good affective and skill-related basis as a condition for intercultural learning in study abroad

## 4. Parameters influencing intercultural learning

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### Personal starting conditions

#### Student view:

*„Il faut aussi être assez ouvert et s'ils nous proposent de faire quelque chose, même si ça nous intéresse pas forcément ou à première vue, il faut quand même dire "Oui" et essayer. Quand même découvrir quelque chose de nouveau.“*



## 4. Parameters influencing intercultural learning

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### Contact / Interaction with TL speakers

Social Networks of study abroad students

- TL speakers / host nationals
- Co-nationals / people from your own linguistic-cultural background (face to face or virtual)
- Other study abroad students /international students



On average how much contact do study abroad students have with each of these 3 groups (in percent)

## 4. Parameters influencing intercultural learning

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### Contact / Interaction with TL speakers

Social Networks of study abroad students

- TL speakers / host nationals  
**Swiss baccalaureate students approx. 50%**  
(Erasmus: 17%/ language assistants <50%)
- Co-nationals / people from your own linguistic-cultural background (face to face or virtual)  
**Swiss baccalaureate students approx. 50%**  
(language assistants ca. 50%)
- Other study abroad students /international students  
**Swiss baccalaureate students: unknown**  
(Erasmus: 60%)

Sources:

De Federico de la Rúa (2008); Ehrenreich (2008); Heinzmann et al. (2014)

## 4. Parameters influencing intercultural learning

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### Frequent use of the TL

- Frequent use of the TL positively affects the students' intercultural attitudes and intercultural skills

### How much do study abroad students use the TL (in %)?

- TL: Ø63%  
Large individual differences: 4%-100%
- L1: Ø33%  
Large individual differences: 0%-95%

 regular use of the TL is in no way guaranteed

 has to be fostered or called for

## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

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- Linguistic exchange activities exert a positive influence on the students' language learning motivation and ICC
- not all exchange activities are equally beneficial though. Their impact depends on a number of factors
- Based on the results from our study we can make the following recommendations for the organization of study abroad activities:
  - Ensure sufficient length of stay
  - Encourage regular interaction with target language speakers
  - Encourage frequent use of the target language
  - Work on personal attributes (intercultural attitudes, skills & motivation) before, during and after the stay

## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

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### Encourage regular interaction with TL speakers & frequent use of the TL

How can we foster this?

- Type of program: individual rather than group program
- Type of accomodation: preferably host family
- Possibility for experiential learning:  
i.e. through a mentoring principle, a local tandem partner or charity work
- Duration: relationship building takes time  
 the longer, the better
- Self-confidence to speak the TL

## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

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### Work on personal attributes

- Pay attention to personal starting conditions before the students leave
  - Make the students aware of their expectations, attitudes and needs
  - Relativize unrealistic expectations
  - Work on negative attitudes

- This seems to be rarely done

*"Au paravant je me suis jamais posé ces questions. "*

*"Eigentlich habe ich mir noch nicht so viele Gedanken gemacht."*

- Ensure continued work on affective dispositions during and after stay since intercultural skills do not develop automatically in extra-curricular / naturalistic language learning (Leutwyler/Lottenbach 2008, Jackson 2012)

## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

### «Treasures – Culture through objects»

Idea: to collect things that are characteristic for life at a certain place.

#### BEFORE



The teacher presents an enigmatic object s/he brought home from a holiday. S/e puts it in a bag. The students can feel the object in the bag but are not allowed see it. They try to identify it with the help of questions. When this is done, they discuss its possible origin and use. The teacher explains the story of the object.(see Examples)

#### DURING



Students collect different authentic materials during their mobility activity which they connect with a memory, a story, an experience they have had. They also try to find out the origin of the object, the belief, the custom, etc. They can of course search the Internet but it would be more interesting if they could come up with a personal account from a native of the area. Encourage the students to find something original and tell them not to mention it or to show it to the others.

#### AFTER



Students choose one item from their treasure collection to present to their peers, who try to guess the story behind the object.



Source: Plurimobil

(<http://plurimobil.ecml.at>)

## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

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During the stay → Videoblog





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- ▶ Medina-Lopez-Portillo, A. (2004). Intercultural Learning Assessment: The Link between Program Duration and the Development of Intercultural Sensitivity. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10, 179–199.

# Literature

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## Didactic Materials:

- ▶ ESP III 15+: Zusatzmaterialien, Handreichungen, und Weiterbildungskonzept online abrufbar ab Februar 2016 (Deutsch, Französisch und Italienisch)  
Schulverlag plus: [http:// www.sprachenportfolio.ch](http://www.sprachenportfolio.ch)
- ▶ PluriMobil: Gratis downloadbare Materialien zur Vorbereitung, Begleitung und Nachbereitung von Mobilitätsprojekten auf der Primarstufe, der Sekundarstufe I und II sowie der Ausbildung von Lehrkräften: <http://plurimobil.ecml.at>

# Contact

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