Critical Essay

THE
FORUM
ON EDUCATION
ABROAD

Learning from Short-Term Study Abroad to Innovate Intensive English Programs on U.S. Campuses

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Abstract

A major focus of Intensive English Programs (IEPs) in most universities in the United States (U.S.) is English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which prepares English language learners for undergraduate and graduate study, delivered or facilitated in English across scholarly and professional settings. The same EAP approach may also be successfully implemented for short-term, inbound study abroad programs for international students and professionals hosted in the U.S. This qualitative review of current best practices aims to (1) to explore and document measurable trends on the efficacy of outbound study abroad programs from U.S. universities that may, ultimately, help develop short-term, inbound EAP programs, (2) provide a framework that could help IEP directors and coordinators in running short-term EAP courses, and (3) discuss innovations and future directions in hosting short-term EAP programs in an IEP setting in the U.S. Data sources include an extensive review of literature in the field (especially focusing on faculty-led study abroad courses overseas), ethnographic interviews of various stakeholders, and assessment/evaluation results from EAP materials developed specifically for international students in short-term IEP programs.

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Keywords:

Intensive English Programs, English for Academic Purposes, short-term study abroad

Introduction

Although still very limited, there have been recent operationalizations of "short-term study abroad" programs that incorporate and highlight the linguistic and socio-cultural experiences of international students and professionals who come to the United States (U.S.) for a range of academic purposes. In these "in-country" or "inbound" (i.e., hosted in the U.S.) programs, "short-term" typically means from a week to about eight weeks or two months, and certainly less than a full semester, with non-degree-seeking participants (Nolen, 2019). Most of these programs have been housed in university Intensive English Programs (IEPs) or private institutions or organizations specifically established to host these participants coming from varying academic levels and goals. Similar to U.S. outbound study abroad programs, language learning and use and cultural immersion are important target experiences for these participants, and the ability to create, develop, and run these programs in the U.S. have provided much-needed income-generating opportunities, especially for state-supported IEPs.

Nolen (2019) documented what she defined as a short-term study abroad program with Conexión Training Study Abroad, a private, non-profit organization located in the Southeastern U.S. The program was designed for adult learners from Central and South America who intended to move into international contexts and needed additional English language skills for professional work and/or Christian ministry purposes. Conexión Training functions and operates just like an IEP and provides participants English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for four to eight weeks and various socialization and weekly in-community field trips. The language component of the program focused on a task-based approach in engaging learners with real-world functional tasks in the community (e.g., opening back accounts, enrolling children in school, and finding goods and making purchases in grocery stores). Nolen's findings indicate that there was successful language transfer observed when learners transitioned from the classroom to the public domain sites in task performance skills. She also reported positive gains in vocabulary learning and notable effectiveness and measurable applications of performing tasks in public. The study suggests ways that classroom instruction can be linked to social situations, such as stores and many other contexts, for learning opportunities through task-based instruction.

Comparable to the host private institution documented by Nolen (2019), a major focus of IEPs in most universities in the U.S. is English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which prepares English language learners for undergraduate and graduate study, delivered or facilitated in English across scholarly and professional settings. The U.S. has traditionally been an ideal destination for international students from all over the world for academic and technical training, with English being a more 'accessible' language than other dominant languages such as French or German for international scholars. U.S. IEPs, established in almost all major public and private universities, have specialized in EAP materials and approaches that highlight genre-specific instruction, data-driven learning, and second language (L2) writing and speaking development.

In recent years, however, IEPs in the U.S. have experienced significant declines in student enrollment. For example, the 2015-2016 school year saw an 18.7% drop in student enrollment and also a 23.2% decline in the number of weeks for which students enrolled in various courses (Institute for International Education, 2016). Except for Mexico, nine of the 'top ten sending countries' (China, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Brazil, Taiwan, Kuwait, Vietnam, and Turkey) sent fewer students to the U.S. in 2016. IEP directors blame these declines on several factors, including the present political environment in the U.S.; currency exchange fluctuations; competition with less expensive locations like the Philippines for international students coming from South Korea, Saudi Arabia, or China; and cuts to government-sponsored programs (ICEF Monitor, 2017, May 31). Most notably, deep cuts to Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah Scholarship Program and Brazil's Scientific Mobility Program in the past three years have affected IEP enrollment around the country (ICEF Monitor, 2016, August 24). As the recruitment landscape changes, U.S. IEPs may have to innovate their EAP offerings (and also successfully compete with private institutions), and for a period of time, not rely on large, government-sponsored programs as a continuing presence. [Clearly, the current pandemic has completely altered the landscape in 2020, with U.S. IEPs transitioning to online instruction and suspending all long- and short-term in-country programs.]

Most IEPs had traditionally allocated their resources into programs that coincide with the regular university semesters (Fall and Spring). Delk-Le Good (2016, May 20) emphasizes the importance of strategic program scheduling and diversifying IEP offerings to avoid dependence on any single program or course calendar. One such innovation is the development of short-term, specialized EAP programs (i.e., "special programs") that may be offered especially during the Summer months in the U.S. These special programs usually last between one to eight weeks and are offered as a package to sending institutions. Special programs are attractive to overseas partner universities (and their students and parents) for a number of reasons, and their popularity has been growing in key

countries, such as Japan, China, and South Korea (ICEF Monitor, 2014, April 24; 2015, February 10; 2017, January 23). First, the low cost and short time commitment opens study abroad up to students who would not have pursued more expensive, semester-long programs. Next, special programs can be scheduled during university down-time in their home institutions so that they do not interfere with students' normal coursework. Another attraction is their customized EAP content, which may be developed for specific student populations (e.g., health sciences, journalism, business and economics majors; and for K-12 language teacher training). For U.S. institutions, special programs also serve as a recruitment opportunity as many participants may consider staying or returning to the host university to apply for graduate studies.

The focus of this paper

In the post-COVID 19 world, demand for short-term study abroad EAP programs facilitated by U.S. IEPs may return to normal expectations. These IEPs would do well to evaluate their current practices in order to offer the most effective and meaningful experience for participants. The goals of this paper, therefore, are: (1) to explore and document current practices on the efficacy of outbound, short-term study abroad programs that may, ultimately, help develop and improve inbound EAP programs in the U.S.; (2) provide a theoretical framework that could help IEP directors and coordinators in running short-term EAP courses; and (3) discuss innovations and future directions in hosting short-term EAP programs in an IEP setting in the U.S. For readers of familiar with traditional "study abroad" literature, this paper represents a "reverse" in the direction of mobility by primarily utilizing best practices reported in study abroad literature (again, in studies that have been conducted on programs outside of the U.S., and often with participants from U.S. institutions) and applying them to U.S. inbound study abroad programs tasked to host international participants.

Data sources for this paper include an extensive review of literature in the field (especially focusing on outbound faculty-led study abroad courses), ethnographic interviews of various stakeholders, and assessment/evaluation results from EAP materials developed specifically for international students in short-term IEP programs. Much of the research reviewed in this paper focuses on U.S. undergraduates studying abroad. Although this is partially due to limited research on short-term programs hosted in the U.S., there are still important insights that EAP program coordinators may glean from these studies. This paper will frame the findings from these studies in terms of their implications for short-term EAP programs, followed by a discussion of suggested practices informed by the literature review and data.

Exploring Short-Term Study Abroad Programs

Aside from Nolen (2019), there is still very limited literature on EAP-based study abroad programs facilitated by U.S. IEPs. The following sections provide an overview of the parallels between faculty-led study abroad programs and some semester-long homestay (exchange) programs with the benefits, challenges, and future applications of EAP programs under IEPs. The goal here is to provide evidence that short-term overseas programs can really be effective across various areas such as language, culture, and academic/professional development of learners. Also highlighted is the role of out-of-class interaction for learners' language and culture acquisition. This literature review will provide the background information for the theoretical underpinnings in the following section.

Can Short-Term Study Abroad Programs Be Effective?

The goals of short-term, faculty-led programs vary and may include learning gains in language proficiency, cultural awareness, personal development, and field-specific international experience. It is important to critically evaluate these programs to determine whether or not they are accomplishing such goals, and how they could be improved. Day (1987) warns of the potential downsides to short-term study abroad, including "superficial contact with the host culture, inadequate language practice, [...] negligible lasting influence upon values," a vacation mindset, and a bubble-like atmosphere that isolates study abroad participants from the host community (p. 261). Clearly, for these programs to succeed, these and related challenges must be addressed by university IEPs to ensure that there will be a sustainable market, reflecting realistic and achievable goals.

 Linguistic gains may not necessarily be a priority for many programs, particularly programs of one or two weeks in duration, but several studies have actually found significant benefits in language learning for international students not only in English. For example, French-language learners from U.S. universities in a 41-day study abroad program in France achieved gains in both oral and listening skills (Allen & Herron, 2003). Additionally, the students' foreign language anxiety (FLA) both in and out of the classroom reduced significantly after the program, suggesting that short-term programs may be helpful in reducing affective barriers to language learning. Significant reductions in FLA were found from Day 13 to Day 27 and from Day 27 to Day 41, which means that as little as two weeks may be enough to help learners take steps to overcoming FLA. For English language learners, Llanes and Muñoz (2009) found significant gains in oral fluency and accuracy and listening comprehension for Catalan/Spanish first language (L1) learners of English in a three-to-four-week study abroad program in an English-speaking country. The learners who stayed a fourth week experienced higher gains than those who

stayed for three, meaning that a single week of study abroad may contribute to improving learners' L2 proficiencies.

Hassall (2013) reported pragmatic gains in Indonesian address terms (i.e., words used to refer to the person with whom one is speaking) for Australian undergraduates participating in a 7-week language program in Indonesia, with improvements appearing after the first two weeks. Regarding vocabulary gain, Briggs (2015) found that a short stay group (6 to 10 weeks) outperformed a medium stay group (11 to 15 weeks), but the long stay group (> 15 weeks) had larger gains in lexical acquisition and comprehension than both groups. On one hand, this result is encouraging because it means the vocabulary gains in shorter programs can sometimes equal those of medium-length programs. However, the superior gains of the long stay group serve as a reminder that short-term programs are not meant to replace longer EAP study options and serve a different purpose for IEPs and participants.

Beyond language learning, short-term programs have been shown to provide many other benefits to students, which partner institutions may value more highly. Using a pre-post assessment of 136 university students who took part in two- and three-week study abroad programs, Gaia (2015) found that students improved in their ability to consider cultural context as well as their desire to interact with people from different cultures. Students also became more aware of the complexity of identity and cultural factors influencing identity. Participants of short-term programs often use these opportunities as a springboard to pursue longer programs and academic degrees in the future (Ingram, 2005; Kamdar & Lewis, 2015). For example, one student who participated in a short-term program in Vietnam pushed to create a longer exchange program with a Vietnamese university, and he eventually obtained and successfully completed an internship at a Vietnamese company (Kamdar & Lewis, 2015). These types of stories demonstrate the powerful, real-world effects that short-term programs can have on their student-participants

While these findings are encouraging, it does not automatically mean that studying abroad within a short-term IEP setting will certainly promote immediate language learning or intercultural competence. Serrano, Llanes, and Tragant (2016) compared the L2 development of Catalan-Spanish L1 teenagers studying English in two short-term programs, a study abroad program in the United Kingdom and an intensive "at home" program. The authors found no meaningful differences between learners in intensive programs at home and learners taking part in the study abroad program. Allen and Herron (2003) reported no significant gains in integrative motivation in U.S. undergraduate learners of French after taking part in a short-term program in France. In Ziamandanis (2013), U.S. undergraduates studying Spanish took part in a two-week program in Costa Rica focusing on the effects of ecotourism. The results of

participants' pre- and post-test performance on a test of intercultural development indicated that many of the participants regressed in their attitudes towards cultural difference. This was possibly due to the nature of the program, which required participants to travel to a new locale every few days, thus limiting their interactions with the host culture aside from the tour guide. As described by Day (1987), these studies confirm more potential challenges with short-term study abroad experiences. It may be argued that, although short-term programs can often be meaningful and valuable experiences for participants, they may not necessarily provide an immediately measurable holistic gain.

Interaction in Study Abroad Programs

A major assumption about study abroad programs of any length is that participants inevitably learn because they have large amounts of interactive contact in the L2 through exposure to the host culture. Participants have no choice, it is thought, but to use the L2 in almost every moment of their sojourn. The idea that learners benefit from interaction is consistent with the interaction approach (Gass & Mackey, 2015; Long, 1996) in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Through interacting with speakers of a language, L2 learners receive input, which provides them with positive evidence for what is possible within the language. Input is the essential starting point for language learning. As learners receive more input, they learn more about the linguistic patterns and probabilities. During a study abroad interaction, L2 learners may receive more modified input, that is, input that has either been simplified or elaborated upon so that the learner can more easily understand it (Gass & Mackey, 2015). Another important component of interaction is output produced by the learner. If communication breaks down at all or the interlocutor notices a problem with the learner's output, the interlocutors has an opportunity to provide feedback either implicitly or explicitly. These moments are called negotiations for meaning (Long, 1996), expected across contexts in study abroad programs. If learners notice and understand the feedback, they may make an adjustment to their use of the language (Long, 1996). Finally, output also encourages automaticity. As using the L2 becomes more automatic, learners can devote more cognitive resources to *what* they want to say as opposed to *how* to say it (Dekeyser, 2001). Another important feature of interaction is having a desire or need to communicate. If the parties within an interaction are not invested, they have less incentive to negotiate for meaning, provide feedback, and adjustments.

The importance of interaction during study abroad is supported by a study conducted by Baker-Smemoe, Dewey, Bown, and Martinsen (2014). They compared seven variables that may contribute to successful language learning across six study abroad programs in six different countries and found that social networks were the best predictors of language learning. In this study, social

networks were defined as "social circles and the strength of the ties between members of these social circles" (Baker-Smemoe et al., 2014, p. 468). Similarly, and more recently, Hasegawa and Shima (2020) highlighted the social experiences of students in a residential hall called 'Nihongo House' (Japanese language house) at a Japanese university by conducting social network analysis (SNA). They focused on language use and potential linguistic development, and how this type of residential hall can effectively nurture interpersonal relationships. Successful learners initially had large networks with loose ties, but over time these networks shrank and personal ties intensified. Isabelli-García (2006) found that study abroad participants who were greatly invested in L2 learning and were highly motivated had the most extensive social networks. These social networks afforded more opportunities for interaction and were positively correlated with successful language learning.

However, social networks and out-of-class contact do not happen automatically. Many study abroad participants may feel disappointed with their limited experiences, including other dimensions such as program location or individual personality factors. One English-speaking participant attending a program in France described her experience this way: "I was just so surprised that you could be in France for a month and… really not speak French that often" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 33). Unfortunately, such comments are not uncommon. Tanaka (2007) notes that only two out of 29 Japanese learners of English studying in New Zealand were able to make friends outside of their language school during their stay. Possible reasons for this include a bubble effect, wherein participants spend most of their free time with conversing in their L1 with classmates, as well as limited L2 proficiency. For low-proficiency learners in this study, the bubble effect was intensified and their interactions with native speakers were more limited. Even when students are able to make linguistic gains, they frequently do not take advantage of the potential for interaction provided by study abroad (Hassall, 2013; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2016). One might think that homestays would necessitate interaction, but students often felt isolated from their host families. Of the participants in Tanaka's (2007) study who resided in a homestay, 50% felt negatively and 17% felt neutral about their homestay experience. While study abroad certainly has the potential to provide large amounts of interactive contact, it is also apparent that this may not happen all the time. A range of factors are involved in the successful creation and maintenance of social networks and more explorations as to what could be further developed to enhance out-of-classroom contacts should be conducted. Isabelli-García (2006) notes that social networks take time and effort to develop, but it seems that both coordinators and participants expect them to happen effortlessly. For short-term programs, this problem is exacerbated, as students have less time to form these bonds and to take advantage of them.

Theoretical Framework for Short-Term EAPs: Social Capital and Affordances

Two relevant theoretical concepts that could help short-term EAP program coordinators in IEPs to incorporate more interactive contact into their programs are (1) social capital, from the field of sociology, and (2) affordances from sociocultural theory. This proposal to apply these concepts to short-term programs in IEPs was influenced by the works of Castañeda and Zirger (2011) and Allen (2010), respectively.

Social Capital

Bourdieu (1986) defined capital as accumulated labor and identified three types of capital: economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital refers to such things as material goods which can be directly converted into money. Cultural capital improves a person's standing in society and under certain circumstances be converted into economic capital. Language proficiency is one example of this–proficiency in English or other languages used in business may create opportunities for individuals in the global economy. Lastly, Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as:

> "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital" (p. 51).

An example of social capital would be someone who has obtained a job interview through a contact in their social network. Economic capital lies at the root of cultural and social capital, and Bourdieu's use of the word "capital" in cultural and social capital is meant to reconnect these noneconomic forms to their economic root.

From the perspective of short-term EAP programs for international students in the U.S., providing access to as much social capital as possible may maximize interactive contact. This is especially critical for short-term programs, where students have much less time to build relationships. Putnam (2001) distinguishes between two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding special capital refers to the social networks and ties within a group. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, refers to the social networks and ties between groups, which is what study abroad participants need in order to integrate into the host community. As participants join and participate in social networks, they will have more chances for interaction.

Castañeda and Zirger (2011) applied a social capital framework to a three-week program in a small town in Honduras. They developed a working definition of social capital for study abroad: "the ability of language learners to secure language and culture benefits by means of access to already established social networks" (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011, p. 548). Host families were the foremost source of language and culture contact, as well as the service school where participants volunteered as teachers and the local community. Host families not only made participants feel welcome into their own families, but integrated them into their extended social networks of friends, extended family, and neighbors by inviting participants everywhere they went, including the grocery store. Castañeda and Zirger (2011) identified three features of social networks that were key to their success: trustworthiness, comfort, and a sense of belonging. These features are not naturally part of the homestay experience and must be nurtured by both homestay families and participants.

When planning a short-term EAP program then, coordinators can ask themselves the following questions, adapted from the research questions in Castañeda and Zirger (2011, p. 554):

1) What social networks are available in this unique U.S. IEP setting? (e.g., host families, university housing support programs, student assistants, personal contacts, service learning communities, available groups in the city, etc.)

2) How can we quickly integrate participants into these existing social networks?

3) How can we promote trustworthiness, comfort, and a sense of belonging within these social networks?

By identifying existing social networks and planning how to include participants before arrival, they may be able to make more efficient use of their short stays in a U.S. IEP. The role of available contacts outside the university is vital to this program component. IEPs in U.S. cities may have an advantage as there will be more options for social activities and trips that can immediately be organized. Walking tours, volunteering options with a local shelter or a social organization, and easy access to sports and recreational facilities allow for the creation of a network with multiple growth opportunities.

Affordances

For short-term EAP programs in particular, it is not enough to provide access to social capital and then leave participants to their own devices. Even when participants are surrounded by the L2 and L2 culture, they frequently do not take advantage of these opportunities (Briggs, 2015; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2016; Tanaka, 2007; Wilkinson, 1998). This is where

the concept of affordances is helpful. Van Lier (2000) defines an affordance as the "reciprocal relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its environment. An affordance provides action (but does not trigger or cause it). What becomes an affordance depends on what the organism does, what it wants, and what is useful for it" (p. 252). Thus, in short-term EAPs, this means that interaction depends not only on access to contact, but whether or not the participant notices the affordance, his/her intentions to act on the affordance, and the intentions of the interlocutor. By accounting for all of these factors and the relationships between them, and not just the availability of L2 contact, it can become clear why participants often do not use the L2 as much as one might expect.

Allen (2010) explored affordances within a six-week program in France through the use of quantitative surveys, interviews, student learning blogs, and email correspondence between the researcher and students. Findings revealed that, pre-departure, students believed that homestays would ensure L2 interaction. Most students felt it was difficult to interact with the homestay families, at least at first. Dinner was an especially awkward time because students could not follow the fast-paced conversations between family members. However, some students persevered and were able to push for more contact. Allen (2010) identified critical moments where participants have a choice between pushing for more L2 interaction or resigning themselves to be alone or to be with other study abroad participants. One participant, for example, felt discouraged after not contributing during dinner. She initially planned to spend the night reading in her room, but chose to do some work in the common area of the house, which led to a long conversation with the host mother. The lesson here is for program developers to focus on training students in noticing these affordances and how they can make use of them to increase their L2 interactions during their stay. Additionally, the intentions of the interlocutors are equally important; thus, it is important to discuss with all involved in the program, including host families (if available), conversation partners, instructors, dorm coordinators, and others, the importance of strategically interacting with participants and how to integrate them into the host social networks—increasing their potential for interaction.

Promoting Social Capital and Affordances in Short-Term EAP Programs: A Case Study

This section presents an ethnographic case study of practices related to interaction, social capital, and affordances that have been deemed successful in a short-term EAP program developed by a U.S.-based IEP ("Southern IEP"). Southern IEP is part of a very large state university located in the heart of a major city in the southeastern U.S. Throughout discussions in this section,

references to instructors' experiences and observations from working with several short-term programs, ethnographic interviews with participants and directors/coordinators, and an informal document analysis of social media postings (through Facebook) are provided. While the particulars of these practices in the target IEP are not immediately generalizable to all IEPs due to the situated and unique nature of short-term programs, the theoretical underpinnings may be applicable to similar stakeholders in making sure that social capital, affordances, and interaction are all addressed in developing and administering short-term EAPs

Pre-Departure Preparation for Participants

Study abroad literature has consistently highlighted the importance of pre-departure preparation with participants to help them succeed during their sojourn (Allen, 2010; Briggs, 2015; Ingram, 2005; Kamdar & Lewis, 2015; Kaplan, 2013; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2016). Baker-Smemoe et al. (2014) found pre-departure sensitivity to be the second-best predictor of linguistic gains, behind social networks. This is especially important with short-term programs, where the limited amount of time and contact may lead to frustration with and misconceptions about the host culture.

For in-country IEP programs, a clear challenge is access to participants, before they arrive in the U.S. Surveys may be sent to the participants, asking about their hobbies, goals, expectations, and other information to help coordinators plan the program, but there is no real engagement with their current beliefs and their action plans for accomplishing their goals. One might be surprised by the stereotypes of even the most open-minded of participants (Kaplan, 2013). Many partner institutions do have short preparation meetings or culture classes for their participants, but IEP coordinators do not typically know what specifically has been said at these. In one of the short-term programs at Southern IEP, one of the participants was appointed the leader of his group before arrival by the partner institution without host coordinators' knowledge. This participant was visibly tired and anxious during the first part of the program, preventing him from even taking part in a few activities. Eventually, it was revealed that he felt emotionally and cognitively burdened by his duties as group leader. A program coordinator from Southern IEP shared a similar story of a group leader asking each small group of students to prepare meals for the entire group without informing the program coordinator. This led to stress among the students and caused them to miss out on program activities and meetings with conversation partners. These examples demonstrate the importance not only of having pre-departure preparation, but of collaboration between the partner institutions and hosting IEPs in developing appropriate preparation for students.

However, hosting IEPs should take care not to overstep boundaries when proposing pre-departure collaborations. Partner institutions may not have the time or resources to overhaul their standard preparation routine if they have one, and it may come across as if the IEP does not think the institution is capable of providing appropriate guidance for participants. A program coordinator from Southern IEP noted another potential problem: "Another factor that complicates everything is that sometimes the partner university gives a different price per student than what was proposed in order to make a profit, so sometimes the partner doesn't want us to have contact with the students before the program starts." For outbound study abroad programs in the U.S., the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* and the *Code of Ethics for Education Abroad* (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2020) provide important guidelines and provisions to ensure that such lack of transparency is sufficiently addressed before and during the program. Still, all of these issues should be considered when planning pre-departure preparation, but they should not discourage program coordinators from attempting to prepare students before arrival. The following are suggestions for preparation content, based on the theoretical framework provided by social capital and affordances.

Participants should be made aware of the importance of agency in the study abroad experience. As discussed previously, interactive contact is not a natural part of residing in a foreign place. Participants must be intentional about initiating relationships and interactions. Inform participants that making friends during a short stay abroad is more of an exception than a rule, and brainstorm ways to do so before they depart. Simulate typical critical moments where participants have opportunities to initiate or extend interactions, as in the student who chose to work in the family common area in Allen (2010). This will give participants practice in noticing and acting on affordances. Although most short-term programs have tight schedules filled with activities, there will be days and half-days off when participants can explore on their own. Have them research things they would like to do during these open periods of time so that they do not end up spending their free time in their rooms. Study abroad participants who are more successful in asserting personal agency are better able to take control of and get more out of their study abroad experiences.

Paige (1993, 2015) identifies 10 intensity factors that may induce anxiety when living in a foreign country, such as cultural differences, ethnocentrism, and expectations. Introducing participants to these intensity factors could be an excellent way to raise awareness of the issues that people frequently face even during short stays abroad. Expectations, for example, are important because participants may have an overly idealistic vision of the host culture or the study abroad experience in general. While enthusiasm is important, unrealistic expectations will only set participants up for disappointment. Discussing these

factors will also prompt participants to think critically about their own beliefs and assumptions related to intercultural experiences. The following are some experiences and recommendations described by the coordinator from Southern IEP:

> "We have had so many students who expected Americans to look like the actors and actresses from a Baywatch episode or were shocked to see homelessness. I think a good solution might be to really introduce students to the reality of the area. Even a simple power point with pictures and comparisons between what you see in Hollywood movies versus what you will really see in Atlanta could help. Showing video clips of cultural norms and giving real testimonials from international students talking about their first days in the city and their first impressions and surprises can help. Also, providing statistics of the reality. Our students are often surprised about the large African-American population in our city. Providing those statistics can raise their awareness and help with expectations."

Another topic to address during preparation is how to work together as a supportive, but not overly dependent cohort. Participants should try to avoid the "island" or "bubble" effect, which is a common occurrence during study abroad wherein participants only interact with one another, mostly in their L1, and travel from location to location in a large "bubble" of study abroad participants (Hassall, 2013; Kaplan, 2013; Tanaka, 2007). This reduces their opportunities to become more independent and interact with the host culture. However, this does not mean they should avoid one another. Participants can serve as an important resource of both affective support and language learning during study abroad (Allen, 2010). Participants should encourage L2 use within their group, but not judge each other for using the L1. This is not a competition, although some participants may treat it as such (Allen, 2010). During free time, participants should travel in smaller groups of two or three, as larger groups may intimidate potential interlocutors.

Lastly, IEPs and partner institutions should agree on clear goals and objectives for the program, which should be shared with participants. This will provide a road map for what participants should expect to do and get out of this experience. This, too, is clearly supported by the *Code of Ethics for Education Abroad* (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2020), but not yet fully monitored or implemented in inbound programs. The program coordinator interviewed from Southern IEP has the following advice:

> "I used to write a letter to students and have them write me back individually. Then I would often address their questions and concerns one-on-one via our email communications. Another option would be to have a Q&A video chat. I think that having a well-defined program

proposal with clear program goals and objectives helps. Partners need to work on the document together and be honest with each other about whether all the program components work or not. These programs sometimes get put together haphazardly for many reasons, such as the struggle to secure housing, costs, unstable number of students, visas, coordinators etc. Because these administrative and logistical issues are needed to get the program up and running, they sometimes take precedent over more important matters like focusing on the program goals and objectives. The typical process to get a program up and running is that the partner institution will give the IEP the bare minimum as far as their needs and goals, and then the IEP does a lot of work to prepare a proposal. Afterwards, hundreds of emails go back and forth to secure everything. A detailed needs analysis and a better targeted program proposal with regular checks on the focus of the program can help make the process easier and clearer for all. Kaplan (2013) suggests the use of a program blog with teacher-guided discussions about the upcoming trip. The blog can be continued during and after the trip, and past students who participated can post about their experiences for future students to read."

As mentioned above, how to cover this content will vary with context, and IEPs will have to find creative ways to ensure students are prepared before they start the program.

Housing

IEP housing is typically handled by local universities, especially during the Summer months when more units are available. Homestays in the U.S. are also common, varying according to location and size of the university. One instructor from one of Southern IEP's short-term programs shared the following quote:

"Years ago, a friend of mine came to the United States for a year-long study abroad program. During her homestay, the host mother tried to order her to clean the floor with a toothbrush, and the study abroad program quickly relocated to a much better host family. Luckily, most homestays are not as comically horrible as my friend's experience, but they can be frustrating and discouraging for many participants. As homestays become more and more commercialized, it is important to vet host families not only for safety and ability to host a participant, but for intercultural understanding and willingness to make a participant feel welcome and at home. Unfortunately, many hosts may treat participants as roommates or tenants, ignoring them during their stay. As coordinators, it is our duty to make sure that host families fully

understand their responsibility. Additionally, we should try to make host families stakeholders in the study abroad experience, listening to their concerns and getting updates from them about how participants are doing."

It may be possible that homestays are not the best housing situation for an IEP program. In Southern IEP, student residence halls have provided excellent housing for short-term programs, both for undergraduates and teacher-professionals attending sponsored certification programs or workshops, according to the coordinator and supported by exit interviews and surveys of participants. By having participants reside in the same area, it makes it easier to gather everyone together for group activities, of which there are many during short-term programs. If the participants were in homestays, they would be scattered throughout a large city with very limited public transportation, making organizing the group much more difficult. Residence halls also make it easier for conversation partners and other volunteers to meet up with participants during free time.

Here is another coordinator's perspective on using residence halls:

"If the university's dorms and staff are reputable and the program participants can room together, it is usually the best option for short / special programs. The dorms are convenient, accessible, give a real picture of "dormitory life" at a US academic institution, and they have all the needed amenities. However, the disadvantage comes with the time of year of the program. In the summer, there are not a lot of university students to interact with and some participants would prefer an option such as a homestay where they have more opportunities to speak and interact in English. And, many international students have a strong desire to see (and possibly live in) an American home. Also, if the dorm or staff is not reputable, there can be many challenges, especially if the program participants are placed in rooms with regular university students (drug / alcohol problems, communication issues, lack of efficiency with the process, unwelcome guests staying overnight in the dorm, etc.). The contract and system (e.g. how to submit complaints, how to request a room change, etc.) can be difficult for students to understand or they may be too intimidated to move forward with the process. For programs with older participants, dorms are not always the best option during the regular academic year because they may be placed in rooms with much younger (and more immature) university students."

Some student participants have expressed disappointment at not having the chance to take part in a homestay at Southern IEP. They wanted to experience what "typical" family life is like in the U.S., and they felt that a homestay would provide more chances to meet native speakers. This may be

worth addressing during pre-departure preparation by highlighting the unique benefits of staying in a residence hall, such as the ease of joining university-sponsored activities that frequently happen on campus.

Identify and Organize Social Networks

Identifying and integrating participants into existing social networks is key for short-term programs because participants have very limited time to develop these bonds on their own. The conversation partner aspect of Southern IEP programs has been very popular. Many student participants have indicated that it was their favorite part of their study abroad experience. Interestingly, Baker-Smemoe et al. (2014) found that social networks with English speakers were most beneficial for study abroad participants whose L1 is English. These English-speaking friends served as an access point for study abroad participants to join groups, using both their L2 and L1. Many of these English-speaking friends had traveled abroad and wanted to help the participants because they could empathize with the experience of residing in a foreign country. The benefits of having friends in the host culture who speak one's own L1 and who have experience living abroad may extend to short-term program participants and not just U.S. students studying abroad. Southern IEP has been successful in recruiting student volunteers from foreign language classes (e.g., Japanese learners for Japanese study abroad participants). Additionally, applied linguistics and ESL students, as well as students who have already studied abroad, have been excellent volunteers. Coordinators usually schedule a volunteer orientation in which they discuss intercultural interactions and the importance of sticking mostly to English when talking to participants. The most active volunteers return for later cycles of the program, often take part in other short-term programs, and recruit their friends for future cycles.

One program coordinator had the following advice: "Tell everyone you know about the program. You never know whose interests will match up with one of the participants' or who might know of a great event somewhere in the city to take the group to. Also, connect with local organizations and student clubs. Get the word out as much as possible."

In addition to preparing a social network of volunteers, coordinators can organize their own social networks as well. A Southern IEP coordinator who enjoys bird watching invited participants to go to the park with her bird watching group. A small group of participants went with her and they met several other bird watchers, one of whom they met up with again later. In another short-term program, a participant had a strong interest in music but had not yet had a chance to play any musical instruments during his stay. Someone in the program knew a professor who is a music enthusiast, and they went to a music store to play music together. These types of introductions to

people within our own social networks go a long way in making study abroad more meaningful for participants.

Another seemingly small activity that participants really enjoyed at Southern IEP was having dinner in a local home. During a four-week program, small groups of participants (two to three) went to the homes of people who were mostly working in the program for dinner. This is especially nice for participants staying in a residence hall because many have never been inside the home of a local family, much less shared dinner with a family or group of friends. The following is a brief description of these dinners from a coordinator:

> "Dinner with an American family is often quoted as the "best night" of the entire program. Students really enjoy getting a tour of an American home and interacting with an American family. When I hosted two Koreans last year, they jumped on the trampoline with my 4-year-old daughter, played with my dog, and helped me to make the food. Students really want to take an active role in those sorts of activities and often feel that they are getting a more authentic experience."

Not only do these activities provide opportunities for interaction and extending social networks, but they can add a sense of belonging, comfort, and trust to our programs, which Castañeda and Zirger (2011) found to be important to the success of social networks.

Social Media

Southern IEP's short-term programs have used Facebook groups, with varying levels of success as discussed below. Depending on the program, coordinators will set up a private Facebook group for participants, volunteers, and others involved in the program. This group functions like an online town square where everyone can communicate. Program coordinators can make announcements here, alert volunteers to changes in the schedule, and inform everyone about a local festival they might want to attend in their free time. Participants and volunteers can interact, making plans of their own and posting photos, of which there are hundreds in each group. Most participants lack cell phone connectivity during their stay, so the Facebook group makes it much easier for them to make plans with volunteers. The Facebook group also provides a space where we can stay in touch with participants long after the program has ended. Volunteers have used these groups to notify former participants that they are going to visit their countries, posting photos of their reunions on the group page. Although the program has ended, the networks can remain intact through social media.

Regular or full-time IEP students enrolled during the semester have reported that they have made friends through meetup.com, a website where you

can find local groups related to almost any hobby. This could be a great resource for both study abroad participants and coordinators, although we have not incorporated this into a program yet.

Community Engagement

Service-learning is frequently cited as a good way to promote interaction, learn about the local community, and get away from exclusively touristic experiences (Castañeda and Zirger, 2011; Kaplan, 2013; Isabelli-García, 2006; Riley & Douglas, 2016). During a four-week teacher/language training program, Korean English teachers observed and participated in real classrooms at Southern IEP. While the Korean teachers were somewhat skeptical about the relevance of observing ordinary classrooms in the U.S., this ended up being one the best experiences of the program for the Korean teachers. They appreciated being able to teach lessons about their culture and language to real students in the U.S. By the end of the two weeks of observations, they had bonded with their host teachers and students, exchanging gifts and letters.

Touristic excursions can still have a place, especially for short-term programs when classroom time is limited by B-visa requirements in the U.S. However, coordinators should try to go beyond standard tourist offerings by requesting more unique experiences for students (Kaplan, 2013). By fostering relationships with cultural organizations in their community, coordinators can be aware of events and possibly develop special programs for participants. Being flexible about changing plans can lead to unique experiences, as highlighted by this quote from a program coordinator:

> "The best activities that often develop during special programs are the unplanned ones. Through interactions with the participants, we find out more about their needs and interests. We've taken students to hip hop concerts, music stores, hospitals and more based on our interactions and conversations with them. One of the key components of a successful special program is in listening to the students – really listening to them and then trying to make customized activities based on what was heard."

Sample Activity: Repeat Photography

Yan Lo-Philip, Carroll, Li Tan, Ann, Heng Tan, and Hwee Seow (2015) and Lemmons, Brannstrom, and Hurd (2014) found that having study abroad participants use visual anthropological methods to explore the local culture can promote intercultural competence, critical thinking, and reflexivity. Rather than passively receiving information, participants must actively seek and construct knowledge, analyzing their own assumptions and beliefs in the process. These activities have also enabled participants with very little L2

proficiency to have positive encounters with the host culture, although this may be unique to learners whose L1 is English because of English's contemporary position as a lingua franca internationally.

Lemmons, Brannstrom, and Hurd (2014) had participants use repeat photography, where they are given an old photograph of a location in their community and must find the location and take a photograph from the same spot. There are four steps to this process: (1) find historical photographs of different locations in your community; (2) participants must examine and research the photograph to identify the exact location where it was taken; (3) take a new photograph from the exact same location (or as close as possible); and (4) compare the two photographs to examine physical, economic, and cultural changes (Lemmons, Brannstrom, & Hurd, 2014, p. 87). One instructor from Southern IEP applied this approach to his group of participants and reported that:

> "This activity is particularly relevant to me and our location in the city because massive changes have taken place not only over the last 100 years, but even just in the last 10 years. The effect of the Olympics on a local community, for example, can push participants to go beyond the surface and critically evaluate their surroundings. This activity also requires participants to ask strangers for help in finding the exact location where the original photograph was taken, increasing their interaction with the community."

Figure 1 features a sample of the activity described above from the Facebook group.

Figure 1. Sample repeat photography activity

This is for challenge #2!
Looks so different from the old one.
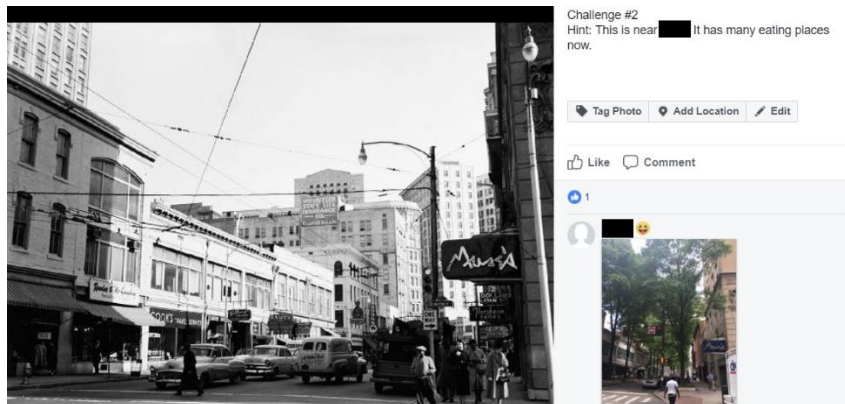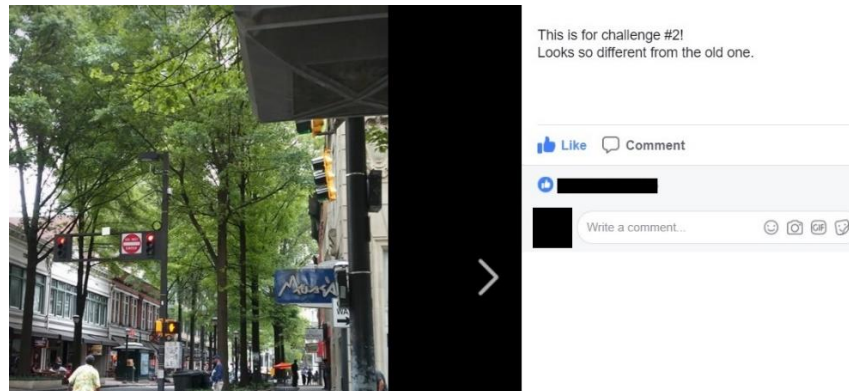
Program Assessment

Lastly, coordinators should consider how they assess both student development and their short-term EAP program. Quantitative, outcomes-focused methods will reveal if participants have gained in language proficiency or cultural understanding, although some measures may obscure more subtle gains by more advanced learners (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009). The results of these measures can be used to evaluate the efficacy of programs, which can also be used in proposals to host future short-term programs. Ethnographic methods go beyond outcomes to reveal what actually happens during Sothern IEP programs, as in Castañeda and Zirger (2011) and Allen (2010). These include student journals, participant-observers, and formal and informal interviews. Although this approach is labor-intensive and time-consuming, it will reveal the relationships between different factors and participant development, allowing for in-program intervention for participants instead of only post-program adjustments. For interviews, it may be beneficial to have the interviewer be someone with minimal power-distance with the participants, as this could encourage more honesty. Additionally, participants may not want to admit they disliked some aspects of the program. One graduate student described how the participants in one program opened up more with him than with teachers and coordinators:

> "As a graduate assistant, I drove participants around in a van in a four-week program. We bonded during this time in the van, and they felt comfortable venting to me about difficulties they were having. They may not have felt as comfortable discussing these frustrations with their teachers."

This is why it is helpful to include everyone while conducting the program assessment, including assistants and volunteers.

As a final note of caution for assessing the program, improvements in intercultural competence and cultural understanding may take months after the

program to appear, as in Ziamandanis (2013), where participants initially regressed immediately after the program. This is likely because participants need time to unpack and reflect on their experience abroad.

Coordinators should also try to stay in touch with the participants and volunteers, which is easily done through the Facebook groups described above. Southern IEP has had many success stories, such as participants returning to their city and university for graduate school. One graduate assistant described one such story:

> "After the program, one student switched her major to American literature from English education because her career goals had changed. Initially, she planned to teach English in Japan, but after the program she decided that would like to work abroad. This student is currently taking part in a year-long exchange program, which she said she would not have done had she not taken part in our short-term program."

> An IEP coordinator has this advice: Special program students often come back to the host university for long-term programs like degree programs (undergrad, grad). They establish a special connection with the host institution and the people and want to come back. It is important for IEP program coordinators to maintain relationships with partner coordinators and students. Even writing a quick happy birthday message on Facebook or a mass email to the group sharing a memory from the program the previous year can help. In addition, it is important for IEP coordinators to give and review a program evaluation at the end of the program. Modifications to future programs can be arranged via both coordinators based on the results of these evaluations."

Finally, Southern IEP volunteers have gone on to study and teach in the countries from which participants have come. These stories, especially when told by the students themselves, are not only great advertisements for potential participants and volunteers, but they are evidence that short-term programs can have lasting effects on the lives of all involved.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was three-fold. First, to explore, through study abroad or education abroad literature (i.e., outbound, short-term programs originating from the U.S.), whether short-term, inbound U.S. programs can also successfully enhance student learning. Second, to explore the assumptions about how participants learn during study abroad in the U.S.; and lastly, this paper sought to apply a theoretical framework based on promoting interaction with the host culture to short-term EAP programs within IEPs in the U.S.

Coordinators should strive to provide access to social capital and prepare participants to take advantage of the affordances around them. Pre-departure preparation has been identified as a critical factor in student learning in many study abroad settings (e.g., Allen, 2010; Briggs, 2015; Ingram, 2005). By preparing participants for the realities of studying abroad (e.g., making friends is not the norm, and takes effort and time), they may be more likely to notice and utilize the social capital around them. Paige's (1993, 2015) ten intensity factors is one such way we might alert participants to struggles they might encounter while abroad.

In addition to preparing participants for study abroad, IEPs should attempt to provide access to social capital, which was defined as the social networks that give language learners access to language and culture benefits (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011). This include introducing participants to a diverse network of contacts and designing activities, such as repeat photography, that require them to interact with their surroundings. As more coordinators evaluate their programs and share their findings, specific recommendations will arise that will enable coordinators to make the most of their unique contexts.

Future Directions

At the moment, the literature on short-term EAP programs (in U.S. IEPs) is relatively small compared to overseas study abroad for U.S. college and university students and longer exchange programs, but it is certainly growing. However, there is a gap in available research regarding hosting students from different institutions, as is the case for IEPs. For example, what specific pre-departure preparations empower participants to seek out interactions and develop social networks? What are the long-term results of participating in a short-term program (e.g., enhanced employability, changes in career trajectory, etc.)? What are best practices if participants come from multiple cultural backgrounds?

There may be more research available in other languages about English-learners studying in short-term programs, but until this is translated, this information will not be available to IEPs. In addition to translating this research, there is a need for collaborative research between IEPs and their partner institutions to provide a better picture of the entire study abroad experience and its lasting effects on participants. As the landscape of IEP funding and recruitment changes, short-term study abroad programs for which the IEP serves as the hosting component will play an increasingly important role in IEP success. Thus, IEP coordinators would do well to evaluate their programs and share their successes and failures in order to provide the best experience for participants.

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