

# Unexpected Benefits of Study Abroad

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## Abstract

When people consider study abroad the purpose is most often to acquire a foreign language. While language acquisition can be a huge benefit of studying abroad, this research aimed to discover other benefits of short-term study abroad for non-language major undergraduates. The study focused on a group of 22 Japanese education majors on a two-week study abroad program in Australia. Most of the students were aiming to become day-care centre teachers. They had very low levels of English ability and were not motivated to study English. On the contrary, they were eager to study abroad in Australia to learn about the Australian education system and to visit various Australian day-care centres and schools. Before departing on the study abroad program qualitative data was gathered from all the students, which was analysed to discover what they thought they would gain from studying abroad. On returning from the study abroad program qualitative data was again gathered to find out what they learned, and the benefits they perceived of participating in the study abroad program. The results showed that although the students did not feel that their English ability had improved significantly, other benefits had made this a very worthwhile experience. Through this research it is hoped that more programs can be developed for non-language majors as well as knowledge on how to prepare students for this type of program and insights into setting up a program that does not require students to have a high level of foreign language ability.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communication; Internships; Language Learning; Pre-service teachers; Teacher training