Impact of study abroad on language teachers’ language, culture, and legitimacy.

Monique Bournot-Trites, University of British Columbia, and
Sandra Zappa-Hollman, University of British Columbia.

A shortage of French immersion teachers has been reported in British Columbia (Ewart, 2009; Grimmett & Echols, 2001; Veilleux, 2003; Woo, 2014; Zimmerman, 2014) and with the steady increase in French-immersion enrollment in BC, many school districts have difficulties filling positions or maintaining a reliable list of French immersion substitute teachers. Furthermore, several scholars have expressed concern about the French language competence of some French immersion teachers (Day & Shapson, 1996; Flewelling, 1995; Frisson-Rickson & Rebuffot, 1986; Moeller, 1988; Obadia & Martin, 1995). One study (Macfarlane & Hart, 2002) found that some school districts in Canada have had to compromise the level of French expected of French immersion teachers. Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) called for Canadian standards to measure French immersion language competence across the country. Study abroad is another possible way to tackle the problem of language competence.

This paper reports on the experience of seven language teachers participating in a four-month study abroad in France (5) and Spain (2). The participating teachers have Bachelor of Education degrees specializing in foreign languages from a western Canadian university. Multiple types of data were collected, including pre/post recorded audio interviews, questionnaires, online discussions, and structured journals. One of the goals of our mixed methods study, conducted over a two-year period, was to answer the question: What is the effect of study abroad on the language competence and cultural awareness of language teachers? Content analysis of the interviews, discussions, and journals as well as quantitative analysis of the questionnaires showed that participants increased their language competence, confidence in speaking in a second language, cultural awareness, and sense of legitimacy as language teachers as a result of study abroad.

References


