Students’ reading habits and their impact on curriculum and instruction in a study abroad program

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There is an increased effort toward internationalization in post-secondary institutions in Canada (Jones, 2009). With growing numbers of international students, educators and administrators in such institutions should be concerned with issues related to reading instruction for English as an Additional Language (EAL) for young adults. They should also consider ways to design educationally appropriate curricula as well as promote literacy skills in order to help these students read academic and non-academic texts proficiently.

This study, conducted at a western Canadian university with young adult international students from Japan (ranging from 19 to 21 years old) in an Academic Exchange Program (AEP), surveyed reading habits and reading preferences to investigate how such literacy practices influence and are influenced by curricular and instructional contexts. In all, N = 42 students randomly selected from a cohort of 100 students participated in this study. An online survey, specially designed for this study, was used to collect the data pertaining to participating students’ reading habits and preferences for different reading materials. The reading habits surveyed refers to the number of hours students spent reading, whether they read English and/or Japanese academic and/or non-academic materials online and/or in print. The survey data, as well as further data from short exit interviews conducted with a smaller group of the participants, suggest implications for instructional design and academic support as students’ access to use of English was limited by the kinds and amount of reading they indulged in. This paper will highlight some of these findings and discuss ways to support students’ learning in such study abroad contexts. We intend to address aspects of both the first and second focus questions of the conference (i.e., “What is the culture of study abroad and study abroad participants? and “What is cultural learning on study abroad and its relationship to language acquisition?”).

References