Development of racial awareness as cultural learning in study abroad.

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This paper addresses conference topic 5: “What are the cultural interests and concerns of language students moving from, to, and within Asia?”

There has been increasing scholarship in recent years in the field of Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) that critically investigates the relationship between race and language. However, this trend does not seem to have expanded to other fields of language studies (Crump, 2014). While there is growing interest in the effects of study abroad on students’ identities, Block (2007) points out that race is yet another aspect of identity, and one that has so far been mostly ignored in research on study abroad. I am aware of a limited number of studies (Craig, 2010; Jackson, 2008; Talburt & Stewart, 1999) that paid critical attention to racial issues in a study abroad context. Talburt & Stewart (1999), too, were struck by the silence of other researchers on this topic. In this paper, I argue that the kind of racial awareness that can develop during and after study abroad can be a very meaningful and important form of cultural learning and that it is time that researchers in study abroad research begin paying critical attention to this important issue. I will draw on preliminary data from my ongoing doctoral research project, in which I am focusing on Canadian students who have studied abroad in China and will share how I have been grappling with the question of how to frame issues of race, racism, racialization, and racial awareness in my study. I will share what I have learned from my process and why I believe that it is time for research on the effects of study abroad for foreign language learning to focus not just on the subject-as-heard but also acknowledge and actively investigate the subject-as-seen (Sarkar, Low, & Winer, 2007).

References