

Towards maximising intercultural learning for Australian university students in an English-speaking study abroad program in Malaysia

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The current political, institutional and global influences impacting on Australian university students' participation in study abroad is largely under researched. In distinguishing between study abroad for linguistic gain and for non-language learning purposes, I highlight that the linguistic context in study abroad research is generally unexplored, yet timely and relevant. I report on exploratory research conducted with Australian undergraduate Commerce students embarking on a compulsory study abroad experience to Malaysia. Data collected were analysed from a theoretical framework that includes both identity orientations and the Process Model of Intercultural Competence. With Australia's closest regional neighbours embracing internationalisation of education, and thus the English language, I argue that further knowledge of students and their study abroad experiences in such destinations has implications for the design and implementation of study abroad programs. Without this knowledge, universities may not be able to provide sufficient support, through student mobility, for students to become truly interculturally competent.

Key Words

Intercultural competence, study abroad, internationalisation of education