

A LEARNING EXPERINCE LIKE NO OTHER:
The significance of student exchange for language students at the University of
Jyväskylä

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena oli selvittää, mikä merkitys opiskelijavaihdolla on Jyväskylän yliopiston kielten opiskelijoille. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset ovat osoittaneet, että vaihto-opiskelun aikana saadut oppimiskokemukset ovat opiskelijoille hyvin monipuolisia, ja niillä on niin henkilökohtaisia kuin ammatillisiakin vaikutuksia. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset ovat keskittyneet yleisesti yliopisto- tai korkeakouluopiskelijoihin, mutta tarkkaa katsausta opiskelijavaihdon hyödyistä kielten opiskelijoille ei ole tehty. Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena oli kartoittaa Jyväskylän yliopiston kielten opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä vaihto-opiskelusta ja kansainvälistymisestä, odotuksista ennen vaihtoa ja vaihdossa saaduista kokemuksista. Tutkimus toteutettiin syksyllä 2008 ja kohderyhmänä olivat kaksi kielten opiskelijaryhmää, joilla on vaihdolle hieman erilaiset lähtökohdat: englannin opiskelijat, joilla ei ole tutkintoon kuuluvaa kieliharjoittelua, sekä saksan opiskelijat, joiden tutkintoon kuuluu pakollinen kieliharjoittelu. Materiaali kerättiin sähköpostitse, käyttäen apuna englannin ja saksan opiskelijoiden sähköpostilistoja. Tutkielmassa käytettiin hyväksi myös englannin opiskelijoiden ainejärjestön Magna Carta ry:n toteuttamaa kyselyä opintojen kehittämistyöryhmää varten, joka kerättiin syksyllä 2008 englannin oppiaineen opetusryhmissä. Tutkimuksessa kävi ilmi, että kielten opiskelijat arvioivat vaihto-opiskelun tai muulla tavoin kansainvälistymisen olevan heille tärkeää opintojen aikana sekä heidän tulevaisuuden ammateissaan. Ulkomailla opiskelun nähtiin olevan tärkeää tutkintoa ajatellen, mutta suurimmat oppimiskokemukset ja elämykset tulivat kuitenkin henkilökohtaisista kokemuksista, kuten vaihdon aikaisista sosiaalisista kontakteista ja oman identiteetin rakentumisesta, maailmankuvan laajenemisen ja omiin kykyihin luottamisen myötä. Tutkielman päämääränä oli myös ottaa kantaa kieliharjoittelun tarpeellisuuteen sekä mahdollisesti erilaisiin keinoihin sen toteuttamiseksi.

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1 Introduction

Studying to become a language expert or a language teacher is a process of various opportunities and a considerable amount of effort. Every student can plan a study programme that is adequate for their needs and that best prepares them for their future plans. The University of Jyväskylä offers its students versatile study programmes and courses to cover different focuses of interest. It is, however, somewhat questionable if the courses alone offered by the university are enough to ensure that students become language experts that are proficient to work as language teachers or as language professionals in various occupational tasks. Students should have an aspiration to improve their language expertise on their own initiative, as the number of courses that improve oral skills and cultural knowledge at the university are limited. There are various ways to improve one's language skills, as for example making friends with international students in Jyväskylä, taking part in international activities where one has the opportunity to speak foreign languages, following the media and reading appropriate literature. One of the most profound ways of improving one's language expertise is to spend a period of time abroad by studying or working. Student exchange programmes offer students the possibility to study abroad with the support of different organizations and it has become very popular among university students (see Appendix III for the different exchange programmes at the University of Jyväskylä).

Student exchange is a subject that has been widely investigated (Teichler 1991, Teichler and Maiworm 1994, Ollikainen 1997, Garam 2000). The results of student exchange have been found to be notably productive, thus an assumption could be made that it would be especially beneficial for language students. However, recent studies have concentrated on university students in general and so far there has not been a focus on language students alone and what their needs and experiences might be. The present study aims to identify the significance of student exchange to language students at the University of Jyväskylä. A further assumption could be made that all language students, future language experts, wish to study abroad because it offers such an extraordinary opportunity to learn languages and the target culture of their studies. Experiencing the culture, living and studying in an authentic environment where the language is spoken provides the student something that cannot be learnt in classrooms at the university. These presuppositions in mind, the object of the present study is to observe and compare the reasons why students decide to study abroad and the final outcomes of the exchange period. Since the assumption is that student exchange is beneficial for language students and most of them want to do an exchange at some point of their studies, it is interesting to also reveal the reasons why some students choose not to undertake the opportunity.

The intention of the present study is not to glorify student exchange in any way, nor is it to

reproach students who do not wish to study abroad. The objective is to explore how language students at the University of Jyväskylä regard student exchange and what the outcomes of it have been, based on the analysis of answers to two separate questionnaires. Considering the positive results of the experience, student exchange or language training could be suggested to all language students. The study also makes an attempt to discuss how students could be encouraged to get international experience and offer an alternative to those students who need to improve their language skills but cannot, for various reasons, afford to spend a longer period abroad.

2 Studying abroad: a comprehensive experience

Studying a language is a demanding process, which takes time and substantial effort. The process is time consuming and requires constant practise. Language students in universities have various resources and opportunities to practise language and their knowledge of the target culture. One of these is student exchange, which means going abroad for a period of time to study in a new environment and taking part in the everyday life of the target country. Many language students choose to study abroad, but the reasons why one chooses to go may differ. I am interested in finding out why students choose to go and what they consider to have gained during their stay, both in terms of practising the language as well as other important skills, such as intercultural knowledge, survival skills and others. It could be assumed that all language students, future language experts, want to spend time abroad in order to improve their language, knowledge on culture and make new social contacts that might help in future studies or work. This is, however, not always the case which makes it interesting to find out the reasons why some people choose not to go or feel that they can not afford to break from their studies in Finland. Previous studies show that the experiences students have while studying abroad are very diverse, and can be divided into five main categories; language, culture, personal learning experiences, academic knowledge and professional skills or the kind that may help in the working life. Studying abroad is a multidimensional process that consists of more learning experiences and possibilities than one might think of at first, and it offers interesting study questions. The main focus of the present study is to find out how students themselves have experienced the exchange process, what their motives were when making the decision to go, and what they feel they gained from the experience. Previous studies suggest that the expectations and goals of students may differ from the official goals of universities or other institutions. These two different points of view set the theoretical framework for the present study.

The goals of student exchange for academic institutions are broadening the students'

understanding of the field of their study, enrolling in interesting and beneficial courses and getting the studies accredited as a part of their degrees so that studying abroad would not prolong graduation. A report based on the CIMO (Centre for International Mobility) workshop discussions notes that “it should be emphasized that the most important task in studying abroad is to keep one's academic goals high. The student should be able to complete courses of high standard in addition to learning the language” (Ollikainen 1997: 5). Furthermore, Ollikainen and Honkanen (1997: 10) also point out in another study that academic institutions regard the most valuable outcome of student exchange to be the mobility of knowledge and international research. From an organizational point of view, academic credit is one of the main issues to see to in student exchange. This is all very justified, because students get study grants from the universities and study programmes, thus students have a responsibility to ensure their studies proceed while they study abroad. When concentrating on students working on their bachelor's or master's degrees, the personal goals of student exchange might be something different from those of post-graduate students who work on research programmes. Many studies show that academic achievements are not the main reason students want to study abroad, rather it usually might be language learning, cultural learning and new experiences. Sagulin (2005: 1) sums it up that linguistic, cultural and personal matters turned out to be clearly more important in studying abroad than matters to do with studying or professional career development. These issues that students consider important might sound somewhat insignificant at first, but when we take a closer look at them it can be argued that those are just the experiences that benefit students in their studies and working life.

2.1 Language and culture

Learning a new language or improving one's language skills is one of the most important reasons the majority of students decide to study abroad. Better language skills help with studying in a foreign language and will give better abilities for future careers. As it was noted above, some university departments favour academic achievements more than improving one's language skills, but it could be suggested that for a language student fluent language abilities are as important as academic knowledge. Thus, it is justified for a language student to study abroad just for the sake of the language. Honkonen (1999: 38) points out that many people master grammar and basic language skills, but oral skills and pronunciation present difficulties. Living abroad for a period of time will help students to become more confident with speaking foreign languages, because that is what they need to do in order to survive without the safety of their native language. Honkonen

(1999: 39) carries on by claiming that many students were altogether relieved as they realized how they do not have to be able to speak a language perfectly according to grammar rules when they were abroad, but instead the most important thing was that despite minor errors one can be understood without major misunderstandings. This realisation will help students to be more relaxed and brave enough to speak, which will result in learning more and becoming more fluent. The Finnish school system has been criticised for not producing fluent speakers, only people who know the grammar but cannot use it in real conversation. Spending some time abroad would help students with this problem.

Languages are closely intertwined with the surrounding cultures. In order to be a language expert or a credible language teacher, it is important to be aware of the culture the language originates from. Ollikainen and Hokkanen (1997) mention in their study that for language and culture students, the main reason for spending time abroad is gaining general knowledge of that culture and living in a foreign country. This notion is connected to the idea that knowing about a culture can be seen as general information of the culture or it could also mean something more profound, more meaningful for an individual. Living and travelling in a foreign country will give a person numerous wonderful experiences in terms of seeing new places, meeting new people and doing things one might not be able to do at home. It is also, in one way, survival in unknown surroundings and language. This might cause a culture shock to students who do not have previous experiences of being alone in that country, but in the end it will turn into a good learning experience for most. In addition, while learning about the host culture students will also get to know other exchange students from different countries and thus being in interaction with them, learn about many different cultures as Sagulin's (2005) study shows.

2.2 A personal matter

The whole process of learning to manoeuvre in the new context will teach a person significantly more about a culture, and themselves, than anything one could study in closed studying environment. Honkonen (1999: 18) explains that once students do not have the familiar support network at hand, they must be exposed to new experiences and face themselves in new ways. This aspect of cultural learning could also be labelled as personal growth, which for students, in retrospect, is one of the most important gains of student exchange. The division of cultural and personal growth is not always clear cut, as also Sagulin (2005: 25) points out, because they are often in a cause and effect relationship together. Different learning opportunities concerning culture

and personal growth that have been reported in previous studies are a new perspective to different cultures, including one's own (Honkonen 1999: 46), a change in attitudes and ways of thinking, tolerance and broadening one's horizons (Sagulin 2005), contrasting life experiences (Teichler 1991: 67), forming of one's world view (Garam 2000: 19) and new intercultural communication skills (Ollikainen and Honkanen 1997: 13).

Student exchange has a very personal value to many students, especially to those who attend exchange early in their studies. These students may be younger and only breaking away from home, still pondering who they are and in the process of becoming independent. For these students, student exchange can be a real eye-opening experience, as they need to face the situation explained above: facing themselves in strange surroundings and surviving with strange people and customs. This situation is in fact one of the most valuable lessons students have pointed out in previous studies. Garam (2000: 19-20) discusses the process of becoming independent, with student exchange giving the opportunity for students to gain more control in their lives, self-government, tolerating uncertainty, making new social contacts and problem solving in everyday life. It can also be a chance of building one's identity and learning how to recognize one's strengths and weaknesses as Honkonen (1999: 72) puts it, or as she suggests, an experience that can teach people to be more empathetic towards others. Some students who study abroad have gone through the whole growing and becoming independent process, as well as lived abroad already previously or in some other ways experienced the vast range of different cultures and peoples. What student exchange gives to a person is very subjective. The majority of students, according to Teichler (1991: 67), would agree that new acquaintances with people from other countries is one of the most important personal gains students get from studying abroad.

2.3 Possible effects on future employment

When talking about student exchange, the possible impact it might have on working life is rarely discussed. It is, however, a possible result of studying abroad. Students themselves do not always see the connection between student exchange and working after graduation, but it can be seen as a definite advantage when applying for a job. Ollikainen and Honkanen (1997) acknowledge the subject various times in their study, since the connection between the international experience and the career of a researcher is very clear. They also point out that for language students, their personal experiences and abilities in working life are intertwined. A person's behaviour in professional life is understood to require personal maturity of him, which is just what studying abroad might give

(Ollikainen and Honkanen 1997: 14). Studying abroad, to complement academic achievements, might not provide all the skills needed in working life, but it certainly may equip one with other qualities that employers seek in a successful candidate. Teichler and Maiworm (1994: 64) show in their study that employers find studying abroad an interesting feature in an applicant's Curriculum Vitae and thus these people tend to be called to job interviews more often. They also note that in these cases one of the topics in job interviews will most likely be the exchange experience. Garam (2000) states that student exchange is regarded as a positive feature by employers because previous international experience shows that a candidate is ready for international projects, as well as able to face intercultural interaction. Garam goes on to explain that in the nowadays uncertain job markets and changing circumstances a formal academic education may not be enough and there is a growing demand for employees that have versatile abilities and experience, ability to learn more, ability to co-operate and communicate, readiness to act in unforeseen circumstances and international skills. Teichler and Maiworm (1994) have come to a similar conclusion as the respondents of their study rate “personal development and ways of thinking” as the most important qualifications acquired while studying abroad that helped them get their first jobs. Sagulin (2005) lists the same findings about personal development and qualities being an advantage in job markets, and owe it to the “informal learning environments” that students encounter while studying abroad. She states that these informal learning environments, as opposed to what happens in formal, academic surroundings, are such as social interaction, travelling and other every day situations. As a result, while studying abroad students acquire various skills, open-mindedness and courage to react to different situations in work, not to forget the practical, hands-on experience of the language and culture which have already been noted to be important for language experts.

3 Research question: language students and student exchange

The object of the present study is to find out how language students at the University of Jyväskylä regard student exchange and what it is they wish to gain from it. The main focus of the study is on how students regard the time spent abroad, as well as what their initial ideas of student exchange were. In short, the study will explore why language students choose to study abroad and whether the experience meets with their expectations. Furthermore, the study proposes to explain the learning experiences that students may have while they are abroad and show why international experience is important to language students. All the findings of the study are based on students' experiences, so consequently the most valuable material for the study were the answers gotten from

the students.

4 Methods

The data was collected via two different written questionnaires. The first one, which is the more specific one and thus gives more valuable information regarding this study, was planned solely for the purposes of this study (see Appendix I). It was sent to English and German major students at the University of Jyväskylä via email on mailing lists of the language students. The questionnaire is divided into seven sections (A-I) with some free space to report more thoughts and experiences after the questions. The questionnaire was mostly constructed by closed questions with multiple choice items and only little space was given for written clarification. For this reason a major part of the study is descriptive. However, the questionnaire brings in also the qualitative aspect to the study, since section I has open-ended questions with which I expected to get the students' own experiences and opinions. This section is notably shorter than the others, but I consider it to be as important as the results from the closed questions. In a sense it is the most important part of the study, because it shows what the students genuinely feel of studying abroad. For this part of the study I got 25 replies of which 11 (44%) are from English majors and 10 (40%) from German majors. Four (16%) of the respondents are other students, with three of them studying German as a minor subject and one of them used to be an English major.

The second questionnaire (see Appendix II) used was carried out by Magna Carta, the student association of English students in the University of Jyväskylä, in autumn 2008. It was given to English students of all study years in their lectures and seminar groups. The part I used for this study was the one regarding student exchange, which includes three open-ended questions. The results gained by this questionnaire are more general thoughts on student exchange and how it is seen by language students. This part of the study got 88 responses.

Further in this study I will refer to the first, broader questionnaire as Q1 and the second one by Magna Carta as Q2. This will make it easier to refer to the two different questionnaires and also it will make the division clearer for the reader.

5 Understanding the experience

Previous studies on student exchange show that the experiences and outcomes are varied and have multiple effects on students. It is important to realise the different aspects of studying abroad, as it is

a comprehensive experience that affects all domains of life. In analysing the experiences, it is necessary to divide the data into four different themes, which in the present study are language, culture, personal experiences and academic and professional matters. In the analysis, the respondent group will be described first as it gives the context for the experiences. The second step is realising the expectations for studying abroad, which gives a good point of comparison to the findings in the actual experiences and outcomes of student exchange. As a result, I expect to illustrate the significance of student exchange or other international experience for language students, future language experts.

5.1 The respondent group

The respondent group in Q1 consists of 11 English majors, 10 German majors and four other students, who either have been major students of these languages or have either of these languages as a minor subject. Of those who have a language as their major subject, 50% are in the teacher education programme. In Q2 the proportion of students in the teacher education programme is 71.6% which shows in the responses as a considerable number of the students are concerned about the language skills and cultural awareness of future language teachers.

An interesting question to find out was how many of the students study abroad on their own account and what percentage go abroad because they have to complete a language training which is mandatory for their degree. At the University of Jyväskylä, all language subjects require of their students to do a minimum of three months of language training abroad, whether it is their major or minor subject. The only exception is the English section, where students are not expected to do any language training abroad, although it is highly recommended. The results show that 42% of the students choose to study abroad, whereas 58% of the respondents study abroad because it is required for their degree. The results also show that of all the exchanges, 61% are to German speaking countries, 35 % to English speaking countries and the remaining 4% to countries where some other language than German or English is spoken. These numbers show that more students go to German speaking countries even though half of the respondent group is English majors. This can be explained by the fact that many English students have German as their minor subject and thus are required to do a language training in a German speaking country. This is also pointed out in Q2 as one of the reasons English majors do not want to do an exchange to an English speaking country, because they are required to do one for their minor subject in other languages and so they cannot afford to do another exchange to practise English. However, a couple of English majors specify that

they want to do an exchange to an English speaking country but do a shorter language training for their minor subject language, for example over the course of the summer holidays, since they want to ensure their English skills improve too. This situation, from the point of view of future language experts, would be ideal but unfortunately it is not possible for everyone.

5.2 Great expectations

Behind the decision to study abroad, there must be different reasons and aspirations students expect of their exchange period. One of the main functions of the present study is to identify the reasons behind the decision to study abroad. Below is a figure based on Q1 section B about the reasons and motivation to apply for student exchange.

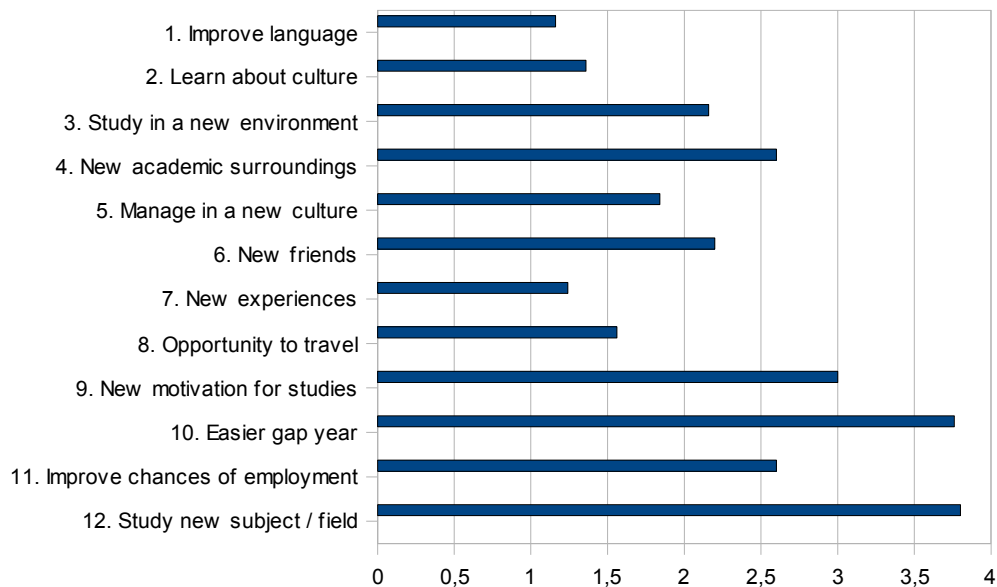


Figure 1 Motivation to go study abroad

In Q1, section B, students were asked to choose the alternative that best describes their feelings when applying to study abroad. The choices were from 1-5, 1 being extremely important and 5 not important at all. The purpose of these questions was to find out what students expect of studying abroad and what it is they are looking for in a successful exchange period.

The results show that the four most important reasons to study abroad are a chance to improve one's language skills (1.16), getting new experiences (1.24), learning more about the host country's culture (1.36) and an opportunity to travel (1.56). Studying abroad for strictly academic purposes was not the first choice for any of the respondents; it should, however, also be noticed that students do not tend to seek to study abroad just expecting a gap year, an easier year with a lighter study load. This is visible on the chart with an average of 3.76 which implies it is the second least

important value when thinking of why to study abroad. Garam (2000: 34) has come to the same conclusion in her study as she points out that if the reason students decide to study abroad are not primarily academic, they are not either because students want a gap year or uncertainty of where their studies are heading at their home universities. This finding can be explained by the fact that students are aware of the reality of gaining enough credits or study points in order for them to keep their study grants and continue getting assistance also after returning from the period spent abroad. It could also be argued that most of the students do not wish their study abroad period to postpone their graduation and thus study conscientiously throughout the exchange. Q2 reveals that one of the reasons why English students at the University of Jyväskylä do not choose to study abroad is the fear of delaying their studies.

It is shown above that students are not intentionally looking for a break from studies and do not consider student exchange to be a sponsored holiday. However, it seems that some students do feel the exchange year is easier than studying at their home university. The courses may not be undemanding, as can be seen in Figure 3 question 1, stating “Studying abroad was more challenging”: 56% totally or somewhat agrees with the statement. The nature of studying abroad is what makes it feel less demanding, as students might be more lenient towards themselves considering studies and achieving excellent grades. The quotes here display how many students feel about studies abroad:

Parasta olivat uudet ystävät ja vapaa tunnelma opiskeluissa. Ei ollut samaa tulostavoitteellisuutta kuin kotona (...) aikaa jäi paljon muuhunkin kuin kouluhommiin.

[I think new friends and the laid-back feeling with studies was the best thing. It was not as grade-oriented as at home (...) there was time to do other things too than just studying.]

Vaihdosta sai myös mahtavia ystäviä ja oli hauskaa viettää vuosi ilman hirveitä tavoitteita ja paineita opiskelussa.

[I made amazing friends during my exchange and it was fun to spend a year without massive pressure or stress about studying.]

The focus is on experiencing the new culture and allowing oneself to enjoy, explore and take time to get to know the people around them.

5.3 Using a foreign language

One of the most important reasons to study abroad is to improve one's language skills, which is evident in Figure 1. Most of the language students who do an exchange have at least satisfactory language skills before going abroad. In Q1 section C. “Language and Language use” the questions

are about language skills and their improvement. Question 1 asks the respondents to evaluate what level their language skills were before the exchange period. Of all the respondents, 8% think their skills were basic, 52% were satisfactory or good, 24% were proficient and 16% feel they had excellent skills in the language of the target country. Here, the division between English and German students is distinct: 80% of the English students state their skills were proficient or excellent, whereas the majority of the German student describe their skills as satisfactory or good (78.3%). None of the German students say their skills were excellent, but 13.3% state they were basic as do another 13.3% evaluate themselves as proficient. This shows the distinction between the two language student groups, as the English students have acquired fluent language skills already before the exchange semester, but the majority of the German students would say their skills were not that proficient yet. This could be explained by the fact that in Finland children start learning English very early and the majority of students study more English than any other languages throughout their schooling. This comes to show how important studying abroad for language students is, because according to Q1 question 6, 78% of the respondents feel their language skills improved considerably and the rest of the respondents think they improved at least to some extent. Student exchange seems to be an efficient way to improve one's language, since all of the respondents say they studied in the host country's language with the exception of one student, who studied in Greece. The language they mostly used in Greece was English, but this is what she went there for, because she is an English student in Jyväskylä. The daily language used with friends for most of the time is also the language of the target country. This situation could be compared with immersion teaching, where the foreign language surrounds the learner. It is the language of everyday life and studying, which is naturally taken in to use by the student as they cannot rely on their native language. The object of learning in this situation is no longer the language itself, but as it is in active use all the time, the student will acquire the language very efficiently in interaction with other people.

5.4 Experiencing culture

Culture is a big part of a language. Culture and language could be defined as two separate things, for example language being the communication system of people in one country and culture being their traditions, ways of living and arts. This is, of course, a very oversimplified definition. However, it can also be argued that language is a part of the culture and vice versa, as they influence each other and certain characteristics of one can be explained by the other. For this reason, it is important for language students to be aware of the culture the language originates from.

Question set D in Q1 examines the familiarity of the culture to language students, and what was the surrounding they learnt more about culture in.

Figure 1 shows that the third most important reason why a student wants to study abroad is to learn more about the culture. One respondent in Q1 is very forward about it, as the following quote shows:

Miksi opiskella vierasta kieltä, jos ei halua tutustua kyseiseen maahan ja kulttuuriin?
[Why study a foreign language, if you don't want to go to know the country and it's culture?]

Other respondents present the same idea too, as they feel knowing the culture is important. For 56% of the respondents in Q1, the exchange period was the first time they visited the host country. 40% had been there once or twice before, and only 4% more often than twice. Regardless of this, 88% say the culture was familiar or very familiar to them before the exchange. The present study does not show how they had studied or experienced the culture before, but it could be through studying, the media, exchange students in Jyväskylä or other. It could also be that they had been to some other country that speaks the language, for example a neighbouring country (Germany, Austria and Switzerland or Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England, the USA and Canada) and have become familiar with the features that are similar in these countries. The answer cannot be deducted from the data because it was not asked in Q1. However, many of the respondents state one of the best things about studying abroad is learning about the culture; thus student exchange does provide outstanding opportunities to gain more information on the ways of the target culture. According to question 6. in section C where students were asked to put different learning environments in order from the best (1) to the least important (5) by giving them a number between 1-5, travelling was rated first with the average of 2.44, friends became second (2.36), then halls of residence (3) and lectures (3.16). The fifth option was “somewhere else, where” which about a third left unmarked. This alternative generated the options of hobbies, restaurants, shopping, media, activities for exchange students and just everyday life in general. These results however, vary significantly between respondents, so it should be mentioned that the best experiences to learn about the culture are highly subjective.

5.5 Personal growth

Various administrative goals have been set for student exchange, which are mainly academic or professional. These are, for example, maintaining the high level of studies completed while abroad (Ollikainen 1997), being able to study courses that could be included in the student's degree thus not delaying graduation (Garam 2000) and improving the chances of employment with skills acquired

during the exchange (Teichler and Malworm 1994). These could be described as the visible goals of student exchange, but personal growth and learning experiences should be regarded as equally important with the administrative goals. As opposed to administrative goals, personal learning might be a covert goal or experience, but it is one that influences a person the most. Section E in Q1 describes the personal learning achieved during student exchange and below Figure 2 demonstrates the results:

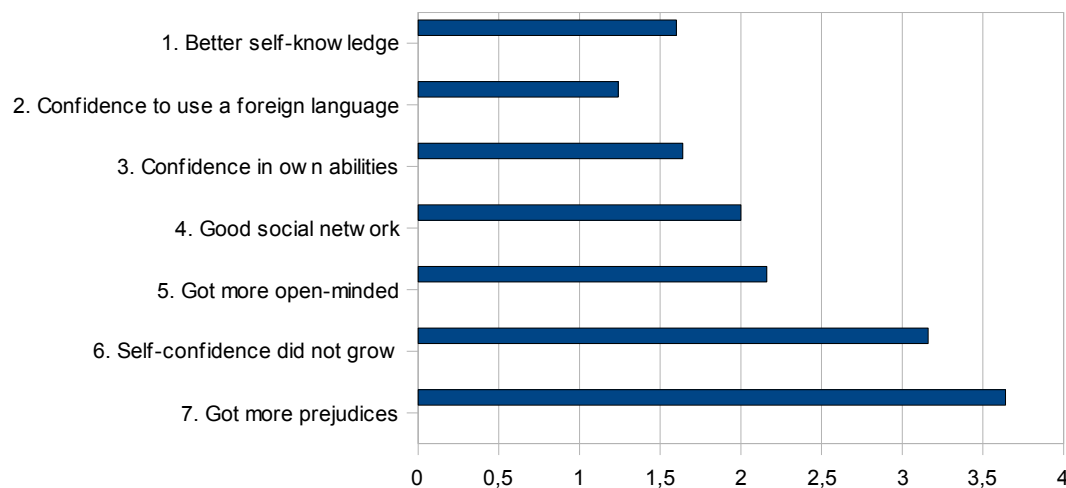


Figure 2 Personal learning experiences

Figure 2 based on Q1 section E shows what students feel they gained personally from their exchange student year. The respondents were asked to choose the alternative that best describes their experiences: 1 = totally agree 2 = somewhat agree 3 = somewhat disagree 4 = totally disagree. This set of questions only has a four-step scale, since the fifth alternative “no opinion” was not given as it has no real function. The results show that getting more confident in using a foreign language (1.24) is what the majority of respondents feel they achieved. This correlates with motivations behind the decision to study abroad, as it is shown in Figure 1: language students study abroad hoping to improve their language skills, and when they return home they feel that they are now better and more confident with the language. For this reason, student exchange could be recommended to all language students. After gaining confidence in using a language, according to Figure 2, the majority of students also note that during their exchange they gained a better self-knowledge (1.6) and confidence in their own abilities (1.64). These three qualities that have been mentioned already could all be influenced by the same things: by noticing that one can cope in a foreign country and foreign language and being able to make new social contacts and succeed in an unfamiliar academic surrounding. It is connected to becoming more independent or confident in

oneself, which many respondents raised as one of the most valuable things they got out of student exchange in Q1 open questions. Even for those students who have been independent before studying abroad, getting more confidence in their skills has been one of the best things about exchange as the following example by a respondent in Q1 shows:

Tietynlainen itsenäistyminen oli jo tapahtunut aiemmin, joten enemmänkin uskallus matkustaa ja kokeilla uusia asioita itsekseen olivat tärkeitä.

[A certain degree of independence had already been achieved earlier, so being brave enough to travel and try new things on my own were important to me.]

This set of questions deals with personal learning experiences so it is understandable that answers to these questions may vary notably and are quite subjective. For example, most of the students disagree with statement 7. “I formed more prejudices during the exchange” as the average answer is 3.5. However, one respondent feels 1 (totally agree) describes her feelings the best and another feels 2 (somewhat agree) is the most accurate. Therefore, claiming that student exchange will be a wonderful and effortless experience for all would potentially be giving the wrong impression for students who are planning their exchange studies. Everybody will have their own personal experiences and respond to difficulties in their own way, depending on the level of difficulties they face. The responses to this study are mainly very positive and the most commonly mentioned negative aspects in Q1 open-ended questions are the unsatisfactory standard of housing, local bureaucracy or not having enough contact with local students, which at 20% percent is the most commonly mentioned downside. However, not many respondents have various negative experiences of their exchange and they mainly concentrate on the things that went well. Having bad days is normal even back home and the following quote could speak for the majority of the respondents:

Negatiivisia tunteita tuli kuitenkin esiin harvoin, eivätkä ne mitenkään kuvaa vaihtokokemustani kokonaisuudessa.

[However, I had negative feelings only rarely and by no means do they portray my exchange experience as a whole.]

Things might not always go the way they were planned and misfortunes are sure to happen to everyone, but the way one deals with them and is able to get over them is more important. Spending time abroad can potentially be a good lesson on it.

5.6 Studying to be a professional

The main purpose of studying is to prepare for the future, to be qualified to do one's job. For language students, a good command of the language and versatility could be important qualities when applying for a job. Section F in Q1 explains how students experienced studying abroad and whether they regard the exchange important for their future working lives. Figure 3 below is drawn based on the results:

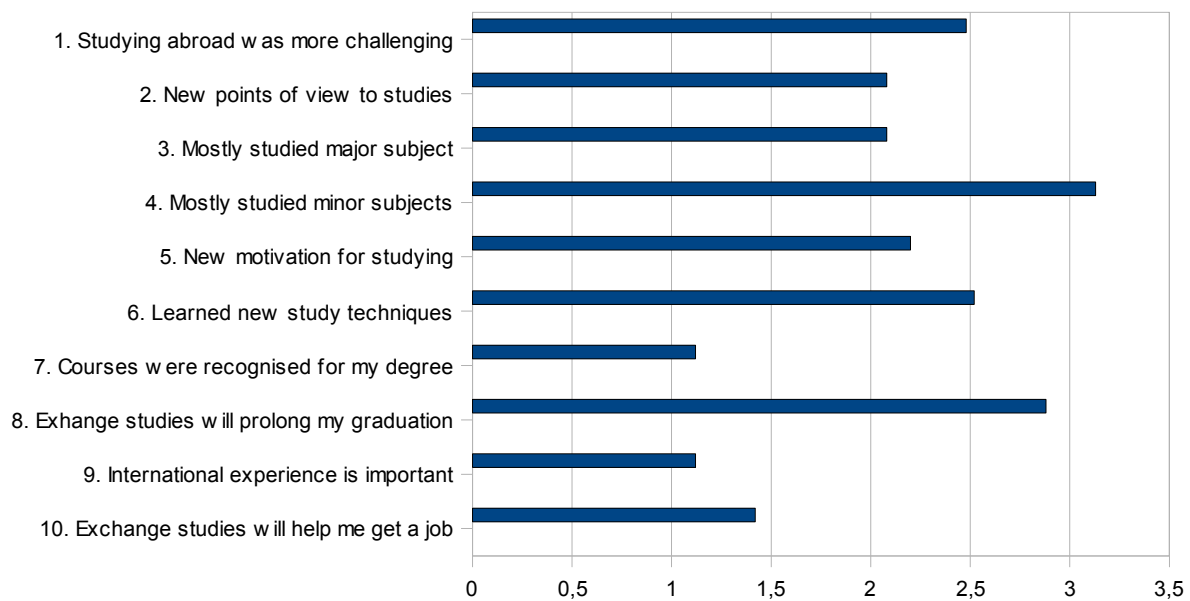


Figure 3 Studies and professional life

Figure 3 is based on Q1 question set F “Studies and professional life.” In this set of questions, the respondents were asked to choose the alternative that best describes their thoughts. The scale is as follows: 1 = the respondent totally agrees, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat disagree 4 = totally disagree and 5= no opinion. One can see in the chart that students think it is important for them to have international experience (1.2), which at degree student stage usually means student exchange. This is in line with Q2 question 3 which asks whether language students regard international experience important for them. 77 out of 87 respondents, which is 88.5%, think it is important. Only one respondent says it is quite important and 10.3% do not have an opinion on the matter. In addition to most language students finding international experience important, it is good to notice that students feel it is easy to get the exchange study courses accredited in their degrees back home as question 7. in section F concerning this matter shows: the average is 1.2, which is the same number as in question 9. “International experience is important for language students”. Getting all

studies converted to study points at the home university is important even if all of them would not benefit the major subject, as students get student grants from KELA (The social insurance institution of Finland) based on whether their studies proceed, that is, whether students get enough study points per year. Not getting all the foreign studies realised as study points in Finland would mean that a greater number of students would be discouraged to do the exchange in fear of losing their grants.

The third popular statement on the chart is 10. “Student exchange will be an advantage in working life” (1.42). This is also well present in open questions, both in Q1 and Q2:

[Ulkomailla opiskelun] huomaa kielitaidon kehityksessä ja sillä on omalla uralla varmasti hyvin suuri hyöty

[Studying abroad helps shows in improved language skills and it will definitely be a great advantage in one's career.]

Ajattelin vaihdosta olevan hyötyä työsaannin kannalta, eli että se näyttää hyvältä CV:ssä.

[I thought student exchange would help me getting a job, because it looks good on my CV.]

A great number of respondents also point out the importance of student exchange for future language teachers, as they need a good working language as well as cultural knowledge. 40% of respondents in Q1 are specializing to become language teachers, which they emphasized in their answers.

6 Discussion

The results from Q1 show that students who have done the student exchange are mostly happy with the outcomes of the period. Student exchange is a relatively short period in a student's life, but regardless of the time spent abroad, the experiences and learning generated by it are substantial. One of the critiques the respondents brought into consideration is the short amount of time spent abroad: on average, based on Q1, the time a student spends abroad is 6.3 months. However, since usually the student exchange periods are over a semester or a whole study year, the actual time spent abroad varies from the most common four or five months to ten months. 44% of the respondents in Q1 spent four months abroad, which is just enough time to get adapted to a new environment and attain new friendships. Longer periods abroad would enable more improvement in language skills and cultural knowledge, as a student could really become a part of the everyday life in the new environment. Short exchanges are more like visits to a foreign country; however, as many students report on Q1, the meaning is still very significant for personal learning and acquiring

new skills to help students in their working lives. Short exchanges are also easier to include in the degree at the student's home university, both content and time wise. The length of the exchange is also related to financial possibilities, since living abroad can become more money consuming than at home.

Comparing the motivations to study abroad (see Figure 1) and the outcomes, it seems that students get what they are looking for in the exchange. Many of the respondents report their language skills improved, they learnt more about the culture and they got an experience of a lifetime. A remarkable thing about student exchange is that students do not anticipate the strong personal growth many experience abroad. One respondent in Q1 sums up the thoughts of many, as the following quote shows:

Ennen vaihtoa kielitaidon kehittyminen oli yksi tärkeimmistä tavoitteistani. Vaihdon jälkeen taas se tuntui vähäpätöisemmältä asialta. Kielitaito kehittyi vain siinä samalla, kun tutustui kulttuuriin ja nautti elämästä.

[Before the exchange, one of my main goals was to improve my language skills. However, after the exchange it felt like one of the most insignificant things. My language improved as a by-product while I got to know the culture and enjoyed life.]

This means that the focus on learning the language may change to learning the culture, improving social skills and making friends together with travelling or in general making the most of the time spent abroad. Being active and making the most of the time spend abroad will almost certainly influence the improvement of language skills, which all the respondents in Q1 report happened to them.

Q2 gives numerous reasons why students decide not to take part in student exchange. Financial matters are one of the main reasons, as students feel studying abroad would become too expensive. Many exchange schemes give students grants to help them cover the cost of the plane tickets and possible higher costs of living. However, student housing, for example is not as well supported in many countries as it is in Finland, which alone raises the cost of living substantially. Also, being away from home would mean that students can not earn money by working part-time while studying, which would mean no supplemental income in addition to the study grant by KELA. Finnish students are slightly hesitant to take out student loans, and if they do not get the extra support from their parents or elsewhere, they might not be brave enough to go. Other reasons for not doing a student exchange stated in Q2 by English students are the difficulties to time the exchange with other studies, the fear of it postponing graduation, a spouse and small children, the obligatory exchange or language training for one or more other languages studied at the university or other practical or personal reasons. These reasons are all valid, but if a language student does not want to study abroad in a country their subject language is spoken, it might be a good idea

compensate for it somehow.

Language students in general, according to the data regard student exchange as an important matter for their studies and careers. As many question, why one would study languages if they are not interested in really being able to speak the language and know the culture, improving their expertise. For this reason, numerous respondents mention that language training abroad should be made obligatory for English students too, as it is in all the other languages in Jyväskylä. The issue of obligatory language training raised many thoughts in the respondents, and in Q1 there is an open-ended question asking if the obligatory training is a positive thing (Q1, I4.). Some respondents revealed their fears for an obligatory period abroad for English students, as many times English students already have a good command of English. This might be due to time already spent in an English-speaking country, and therefore it seems unfair to some if they were obliged to go abroad again. Based on the thoughts expressed in Q2, a suggestion could be made that English students would have to take a proficiency test that shows the level of their skills in English. Taking the results and previous experiences of spending time abroad into consideration, students would not have to do the language training if they did not want to. For those who need more practise or experience, a short period abroad could be seen as practical workplace learning, which could be a language course, working abroad or student exchange. This way English students would get the needed support for spending time abroad, as well as the desirable outcomes. If somebody has a difficult personal situation which would make spending time abroad considerably inconvenient, a student could cover the language training at home by making use of the opportunities on campus, like The Buddy Programme, Each one Teach one, Café Lingua or other international activity (for explanation of these activities, see Appendix III), and writing a report of it to the department. In general, language students could be more active in improving and maintaining their language skills, whatever they way may be.

A notable defect in the study is that the motivation and reasons to study abroad were asked after the actual exchange. If I were to do the study again or continue with similar kinds of studies, the motivation and expectations should be asked in advance, before the study. This would require a group that is willing to participate in the study for a longer period, ie. answer the questionnaire before and after the study. This kind of study would also have to be done over a longer period of time. Furthermore, it would give more reliable answers and would possibly better distinguish between the expectations and outcomes. Asking about the expectations afterwards may give answers that are less trustworthy, as the experiences have influenced the respondents' thinking and the respondents may not remember all their feelings and expectations accurately a long time

after the experience itself. Another area that would need to be improved is the questionnaire, Q1 in the present study. At a couple of points I felt it lacked accuracy. Therefore, the questions should be thought over more thoroughly. Also, in the multiple choice questions I would not use the alternative “no opinion”, because it serves no purpose and does not give any new information.

For further study I would suggest studying how students at a given university, or language students in general on a national level, use the opportunities that could be described as internationalisation at home, or international experiences at home (in Finnish “kotikansainvälistyminen”. See Appendix IV for the different opportunities). The University of Jyväskylä has multiple opportunities for getting international experience and improving language skills at Jyväskylä. There have not been made many studies, if any, on the subject, and it would be interesting to see how students take advantage of the opportunities to improve the same skills as student exchange would, such as language skills, cultural knowledge, personal and interpersonal awareness, not to forget organizational skills important for employment. The presentiment is that a small group is active, but the majority either do not know enough of these opportunities or they have not realised how important they are for language students. Language is something one needs to work on all the time, maintain and improve the acquired skills. This can be done at home too, if students know what opportunities are on offer and are willing to make the effort to practise on their free time outside the course work.

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APPENDIX I - Q1

Vaihto-opiskelun merkitys kielten opiskelijoille

Pyytäisin sinua vastaamaan kyselyyni vaihto-opiskelun merkityksestä kielten opiskelijoille. Kysely on minun englannin oppiaineeseen tekemääni proseminaari-työtä varten. Vastaukset tullaan käsittelemään luottamuksellisesti ja nimettöminä, eivätkä ne ole kytköksissä mihinkään muuhun kielten laitoksen kurssiin. Kysymyksiin ei ole oikeita tai väärä vastauksia.

Kysymykset on luokiteltu omiin aiheryhmiinsä tiedon käsittelyn ja vastaamisen helpottamiseksi. Useimmissa kysymysryhmissä pyydän sinua valitsemaan sinua koskevan vaihtoehdon väittämistä. Jos et löydä aivan täsmäävää vaihtoehtoa, valitse lähimpänä olevin. Kysymyksiin vastataan alleviivaamalla numero (esim. 3) tekstinkäsittelyohjelman avulla. Lue tehtävänanto huolellisesti; kysymyksistä riippuen vastausvaihtoehtoja on joko neljä tai viisi.

Osassa kysymyksiä pyydän sinua valitsemaan sinua koskevan vaihtoehdon a), b) tai c); vaihtoehtojen määrä riippuu tehtävästä. Kysymyksiin vastataan alleviivaamalla koko vastaus (esim. a) kyllä). Vapaisissa kysymyksissä, tai täsmennystä pyydetessä, kirjoita vastauksesi tietokoneella. Tähän saat käyttää niin paljon tilaa kuin tarvitset.

Kyselyn lopussa on vapaata tilaa minne voit tarkentaa omia vastauksiasi halutessasi, tai antaa lisätietoa asioista jotka ovat mielestäsi mainitsemisen arvoisia. Kaikki kokemukset ovat tutkimuksen kannalta tärkeitä.

KIITOS VASTAAMISESTA!

A. TAUSTATIEDOT

Jos kysymyksessä annetaan vaihtoehdot a) ja b), alleviivaa se tekstinkäsittelyohjelmalla

1. Opintojen aloittamisvuosi _____ 2. Vuosi jolloin olit vaihdossa _____
3. Pääaine _____ 4. Oletko aineenopettajalinjalla a) kyllä b) en
5. Sivuaaineet _____
6. Oliko kyseessä a) tutkintoon kuuluva kieliharjoittelu b) vapaaehtoinen opiskelijavaihto?
7. Vaihtokohde ja vaihto-ohjelma _____
8. Vaihdon kesto (kk) _____
9. Erasmus vaihdossa olleet: laitos jonka kautta vaihto järjestyi _____

B. VAIHTOON LÄHDÖN SYYT / MITÄ ODOTIN VAIHDOLTA

Alleviivaa mielipidettäsi lähin vastaus.

1= erittäin tärkeä 2= tärkeä 3=ei vaikutusta 4=vain vähän tärkeä 5= ei ollenkaan tärkeä

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Halusin kehittää kielitaitoani | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Halusin oppia tuntemaan kulttuurin paremmin | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Halusin opiskella uudessa ympäristössä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Halusin tutustua uuteen akateemiseen ympäristöön | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Halusin kokeilla pärjäämistäni vieraassa kulttuurissa | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. Halusin uusia kavereita	1	2	3	4	5
7. Halusin uusia kokemuksia	1	2	3	4	5
8. Halusin matkustella	1	2	3	4	5
9. Halusin etsiä motivaatiota opiskeluun	1	2	3	4	5
10. Halusin pitää väli vuoden, ottaa rennommin	1	2	3	4	5
11. Halusin parantaa työnsaantimahdollisuuksia	1	2	3	4	5
12. Halusin opiskella alaa tai alani suuntautumisvaihtoehtoa, jota kotiyliopistossa ei ole tarjolla	1	2	3	4	5

C. KIELI JA KIELEN KÄYTTÖ

Alleviivaa vastausvaihtoehto joka kuvaa sinun tilannettasi. Täsmennä vastauksesi tarvittaessa.

1. Ennen vaihtoon lähtöä kielitaitoni oli

- a) alkeet b) perus c) hyvä d) taitava e) erinomainen

2. Opiskelitko vaihdossa ollessasi maan kielellä? a) kyllä b) en

2.1 jos et, millä kielellä opiskelit? _____

3. Tuottiko vieras kieli vaikeuksia

3.1 opiskelussa a) paljon b) hieman c) ei ollenkaan

3.2 asioiden hoitamisessa a) paljon b) hieman c) ei ollenkaan

4. Oliko kavereiden kanssa käytetty kieli maan kieli? a) kyllä b) ei

4.1 Jos ei, mitä kieltä käytitte? _____

5. Koostuiko kaveripiirisi suurimmaksi osaksi a) muista vaihtareista b) paikallisista c) molemmista

6. Koetko kielitaitosi kehittyneen vaihdon aikana? a) paljon b) hieman c) ei ollenkaan

6.1 Jos et, miksi? _____

D. KULTTUURI

Alleviivaa vastausvaihtoehto joka kuvaa sinun tilannettasi parhaiten.

1. Kohdemaan kulttuuri oli minulle ennestään? a) ei tuttua b) tuttua c) hyvin tuttua

2. Olitko vieraillut kohdemaassa ennestään? a) en kertaakaan b) 1-2 kertaa c) useammin

3. Onko sinun helppo toimia eri kulttuureista tulevien ihmisten kanssa?

- a) aina helppoa b) usein helppoa c) usein hankalaa

4. Vieraassa kulttuurissa toimiminen oli a) helppoa b) vaikeaa

5. Opin paljon kulttuurista/kulttuureista a) kyllä b) en

6. Missä ympäristöissä opit kulttuurista eniten? NUMEROI 1-5 ympäristöt tärkeysjärjestykseen,
1= tärkein ja 5 = vähiten tärkeä

___ luennoilla ___ kaveripiirissä ___ asuntolassa ___ matkustellessa ___ muualla, missä?

E. HENKILÖKOHTAISET OPPIMISKOKEMUKSET

Alleviivaa mielipidettäsi lähin vastaus. Olen sitä mieltä, että...

1=täysin samaa mieltä 2= jokseenkin samaa mieltä 3=jokseenkin eri mieltä 4= täysin eri mieltä

1. Itsetuntemukseni kasvoi vaihdossa ollessani	1	2	3	4
2. Varmuus vieraan kielen käyttöön kasvoi	1	2	3	4
3. Luotto omiin kykyihini kasvoi	1	2	3	4
4. Onnistuin rakentamaan hyvän sosiaalisen verkoston	1	2	3	4
5. Ennakkoluulottomuuteni lisääntyi	1	2	3	4
6. Itsetuntoni ei kasvanut vaihdossa ollessani juurikaan	1	2	3	4
7. Minulle syntyi entistä enemmän ennakkoluuloja	1	2	3	4

F. OPISKELU JA TYÖELÄMÄ

Alleviivaa mielipidettäsi lähin vastaus. Olen sitä mieltä, että...

1= täysin samaa mieltä 2= jokseenkin samaa mieltä 3= jokseenkin eri mieltä 4= täysin eri mieltä

5= ei mielipidettä

1. Opiskelu oli ulkomailla haastavampaa	1	2	3	4	5
2. Sain uusia näkökulmia opiskelemaani alaan	1	2	3	4	5
3. Opiskelin pääsääntöisesti pääaineeseeni liittyviä opintoja	1	2	3	4	5
4. Opiskelin pääsääntöisesti sivuaineeseeni liittyviä opintoja	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sain uutta puhtia opiskeluuni ulkomailta palattuani	1	2	3	4	5
6. Opin uusia työskentelytapoja	1	2	3	4	5
7. Kurssien hyväksilukeminen omaan tutkintooni onnistui	1	2	3	4	5
8. Vaihtoaikani pitkittää valmistumistani	1	2	3	4	5
9. Kansainvälistyminen on tärkeää kielten opiskelijoille	1	2	3	4	5
10. Vaihto-opiskelustani tulee olemaan hyötyä työelämässä	1	2	3	4	5

I. VAPAITA KYSYMYKSIÄ

-Tässä osiossa sana on vapaa! Kerro omin sanoin mietteitä seuraaviin kysymyksiin. Vastausten pituutta ei ole määriteltä ja tietokoneella vastattaessa voit kirjoittaa niin paljon kuin haluat. Vastausten ei kuitenkaan tarvitse olla pitkiä, jos sinulla ei ole niihin paljon kerrottavaa.

1. Vaihdon parhaat/positiiviset kokemukset

2. Vaihdon huonot/negatiiviset kokemukset

3. Mitkä asiat koin vaihdossa tärkeimmäksi? (esim. kieli, kulttuuri, opiskelu, matkustelu, itsenäistyminen..... mikä vain?)

4. Pakollinen kieliharjoittelu on mielestäsi hyvä asia?

VAPAA SANA (palautetta, lisähuomioita, lisäkokemuksia...)

APPENDIX II – Q2 (section A. and F. used in the present study)

Englannin pääaineopiskelijat: opintojen palautekysely. Perustele aina vastauksesi.

A. Taustatiedot

1. Opintojen aloittamisvuosi _____ 2. Pääaine _____ suoravalittu kyllä / ei
3. Tällä hetkellä opintojen vaihe (ympyröi): perus / aine / syventävät / gradu

B. Englannin opinnot

1. Mitkä englannin kurssit ovat mielestäsi hyödyttäviä? Miksi?

2. Millaisia englannin kursseja kaipaisit lisää?

3. Mitkä englannin kurssit ovat hyödyllisiä oman tulevaisuutesi kannalta ja miksi?

4. a. Minkälaisista kurssien työskentelymuodoista et pidä?

b. Miten parantaisit kursseilla käytettyjä työmuotoja?

5. Vastaako sinun mielestäsi kurssien työmäärä ja siitä saadut pisteet? Jos ei, millä kursseilla näin on? (Huom. 1 op = 27h työtä)

6. Onko sinulla ollut ongelmia opettajien kanssa (esim. poissaolojen, korvaavuuksien, arvioinnin kanssa?)

C. Opettajakoulutuksen suoravalitut. Jos et ole opettajakoulutuksessa voit siirtyä kohtaan D.

1. Olen suorittanut pedagogiset perusopinnot _____, aineopinnot _____.
2. Onko pedagogisten opintojen yhdistämisessä englannin opetukseen ollut jotain ongelmia (esim. Aikataulutus, sisältöjen päällekkäisyys, poissaolot)?

3. Muuta: risuja tai ruusuja?

D. Muut englannin kielen asiantuntijat. Jos olet opettajakoulutuksessa, voit siirtyä kohtaan E.

1. Mitä sivuaineita sinulla on?

2. Onko englannin kielen kurssitarjonta mielestäsi tarpeeksi monipuolinen?

3. Minkälaisia ongelmia sinulla on ollut opintojen kanssa (esim. sivuaineet, kurssitarjonta, asenteet)?

E. Self-study

1. Mitä mieltä olet englannin itseopiskelumahdollisuuksista ja käytänteistä (esim. tenttikirjojen saatavuus, tenttipäivien määrä, aihealueiden monipuolisuus)?

2. Mitä mieltä olet siitä, että yleisenä tenttipäivänä voi tenttiä erikseen määrätty kirjapaketti?

F. Opiskeluvaihto

1. Oletko ollut vaihdossa tai suunnitellut lähteväsi vaihtoon? Miksi / miksi et?

2. Tukeeko oma laitoksesi mielestäsi tarpeeksi vaihtoon lähtöä?

3. Onko kansainvälistyminen mielestäsi tärkeää kielten opiskelijoille?

G. Englannin lukijoiden ainejärjestö Magna Carta

1. Oletko kiinnostunut ainejärjestötoiminnasta? Jos et, miksi et ole?

2. Oletko tyytyväinen ainejärjestösi toimintaan?

3. Oletko käynyt Magna Cartan kokouksissa? Jos vastasit kielteisesti, miksi et ole?

4. Minkälaista toimintaa ainejärjestö voisi nykyisten toimintojen lisäksi tarjota?

Kiitos vastauksestasi!

APPENDIX III – Exchange study programmes at the University of Jyväskylä

BILATERAL EXCHANGE

The University of Jyväskylä has co-operation with foreign universities in Europe, North America, South America, Australia and Asia. All undergraduate students in the university of Jyväskylä are eligible to apply. The programme is mainly for undergraduates, but in some rare cases post-graduates studies are also possible in the host universities.

ERASMUS STUDENT EXCHANGE

Erasmus is a programme designed to support higher education student and teaching staff mobility and exchange. It is funded by the European Union and is open to the Member States of the European Union, the three EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Turkey. To be able to take part in Erasmus exchange, one must be a student of the university of Jyväskylä, be a member of the participating countries and have already completed the first year of their studies. The Erasmus exchange works through the co-operation between the academic departments in universities, so usually students apply through their major or minor studies in Jyväskylä, and will be registered to that department in the host university as well.

ISEP

ISEP is an exchange programme consisting of more than 200 member institutions in 38 different countries. It was founded in 1979 in order to promote student exchange between the United States and the other countries involved in the programme. The programme is for undergraduates, but one has to have completed the first year of their studies in Jyväskylä.

FIRST

The FIRST Network for Intercultural, Social and Business Studies coordinated by the University of Jyväskylä has exchange universities in five different locations near St. Petersburg, Russia. The language used is Russian for most of the time, so a student must have a satisfactory command of the language.

NORDPLUS / NORDLYS

Exchange destinations in the Nordic countries: Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The programme is for degree students in Jyväskylä.

More information on the International services' homepage:

https://www.jyu.fi/hallinto/intl/opiskelijalle/opiskelu_ulkomailla/

APPENDIX IV – Getting international experience at the University of Jyväskylä

There are various ways a student can meet foreign students at the University of Jyväskylä and improve their language and cultural skills.

COURSES AND STUDY PROGRAMMES HELD IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The university has various courses for international students, where Finnish students are welcome as well. The language of instruction is usually English, but courses are held in other languages too.

EACH ONE TEACH ONE (EOTO)

Students teach each other. A pair is formed with students with a different native language. The way this pair meets and how they organize the activity is up to them to decide, but the basic idea is that they will take turns in teaching their native language to the partner. There is a website where students can post their ads with information on what language they speak and what they would like to learn. Also, small study groups can be formed. The language centre will grant 2 ECTS credits for completing a study plan and reporting it to a EOTO teacher.

BECOME A TUTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Student tutoring for international students who come to Jyväskylä to study a semester or a whole degree. The tutor will get a group of students, who she will welcome to Jyväskylä and help with the practical things, such as getting an apartment, taking to the bank and introducing the city and the university. She will also help the incoming students to make their study plans and organize activities. The tutor will be given orientation for the job.

JYY SUBCOMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

JYY (The Student Union of the University of Jyväskylä) has an international subcommittee, that organizes international activities and is concerned of the rights and well being of international students. Everybody is welcome to join, the subcommittee has active Finnish and international members.

ESN IN JYVÄSKYLÄ

ESN (Erasmus Student Network) in Jyväskylä works with the international subcommittee and organizes a lot of activities for international and Finnish students. The language mostly used is English. The most visible things they organize are trips in Finland and the neighbouring countries, Stammtisch-parties, the buddy programme and in general, organizing activity for international students to help them make the most of their stay in Jyväskylä.

-Stammtisch: A party every other Thursday, usually a theme and fancy dress, organized by different national groups

-Buddy Programme: helps students from different national groups to meet each other and make friends. Organizes small groups of people with the same interests. The groups then decide how they want to meet and what they want to do.

-Café Lingua: Every third Monday, a café that has tables for different languages. Students can come and go as they please, like in real cafés. Different tables speak different languages, so a student can choose the language they want to practise, and also go to the table of their native language and help the learners.

More information on international experiences at the campus see:

http://www.jyy.fi/fi/toiminta/jyyn_toimintasektorit/kansainvalisyys/