



An EFL Instructor's Study and Teach Abroad Experiences and Complementary Views from Learners

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ABSTRACT

The present qualitative case study aimed to explore the influences of an EFL instructor's study and teach abroad experiences on her classroom implementations. It additionally investigated her students' responses to the reflections of her study and teach abroad in the classroom. The findings revealed that these experiences contributed to the instructor's both personal development and professional learning and further had impacts on her teaching practices. An in-depth analysis of multiple data tools; a semi-structured, individual interview with the instructor, her journal entries, and an open-ended questionnaire from 43 language learners, informed that study and teach abroad experiences contributed to the instructor's world knowledge and intellectual growth through her teaching and other academic endeavors at an abroad university. It was also found that the learners appreciated the instructor's explicitly referring to her international contacts as a means of providing authentic input, enriching the lesson content, fostering engagement in the class, and raising learners' intercultural awareness. This study suggests developing teacher interculturality via study and teach abroad programs should be encouraged to better address intercultural topics in the language class. The process of preparing intercultural language teachers could be aided by teacher study and/or teach abroad programs.

Keywords

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Introduction

In foreign language instruction, the development of intercultural competence is one of the key goals. In addition to the development of communicative competence which consists of linguistic, discourse, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic dimensions (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980), language learners should also have the sociocultural or the intercultural competence (Littlewood, 2011). According to Byram (1997), intercultural communicative competence consists of attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of

discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (pp. 50-63). Deardorff (2010) similarly discusses that intercultural competence is formed by a set of (i) attitudes (e.g., respect, curiosity, openness, discovery), (ii) knowledge (cultural self-awareness, sociolinguistic awareness, culture-specific knowledge), (iii) skills (e.g., observation, analysis, relation), and (iv) internal and external outcomes of developing an ethno-relative perspective and turning intercultural competence into behaviors. When the intercultural component of language classes is examined, not only language learners but also teachers who bring their personal intercultural backgrounds to the classroom as well should be taken into consideration.

In Liddicoat (2011), the intercultural element in language learning and teaching is discussed in relation to three perspectives: cultural orientation, intercultural orientation, and cultural knowledge. Cultural orientation refers to having some knowledge about a specific culture that is viewed from a modernist point (Kramsch, 2009, 2010). It is about the acquisition and accumulation of a certain culture-specific knowledge. On the other hand, intercultural orientation aims at engaging learners with different cultural backgrounds rather than the accumulation of cultural facts so that learners could be more aware of intercultural sensitivity and reconstruct their views on culture, diversity, and interculturality. Cultural knowledge focuses on the ways to interact and communicate with different cultures. Accordingly, the key goals in English as a foreign language (EFL) class regarding intercultural learning arise as “cultural awareness, acceptance of cultural differences, and interest in the specific culture of the language being taught, as well as in intercultural topics in general” (Göbel & Helmke, 2010, p.1572).

Since an intercultural perspective has become prominent in language learning and teaching (Liddicoat, 2011) with the aim “to prepare language learners for meaningful communication outside their own cultural environment and to develop in language learners a sense of themselves as mediators between languages and cultures” (p.837), the intercultural orientations of language teachers also gained more importance. One of the practical implications of the intercultural orientation in language learning and teaching and language teacher education has become sending pre-service and in-service teachers and learners for long-term or short-term study-abroad programs. While there is a need for further research that reveals positive outcomes and sustainable growth in increasing cultural awareness and improvement of language skills after participation in these programs (Gleeson & Tait, 2012; Harbon, 2007; Harvey et al., 2010), teachers’ intercultural experiences and contact to English-speaking countries are found to foster learners’ intercultural competence (Göbel & Helmke, 2010). Byram (1991) has as well argued that teachers’ having intercultural experiences is the prerequisite condition in order to achieve intercultural language teaching. Teachers construct their own personal intercultural perspectives that will allow them to integrate relevant intercultural content into their instruction (Biraimah & Jotia, 2013) after study and teach abroad programs.

Teacher study and teach abroad

In their review of the literature on teacher interculturality, Smolcic and Katunich (2017) summarize that there are several program types in terms of teacher study abroad such as (i) stand-alone courses or professional development programs, (ii) international study tours, (iii) overseas student teaching, and (iv) immersion programs and field experience. The synthesis of

reported outcomes in their review reveals that participation in such programs leads to the development of (i) culture-general and culture-specific knowledge, (ii) an awareness of the role of culture in teaching, (iii) cultural self-awareness, (iv) sociopolitical awareness and consciousness, (v) skills and attitudes in cross-cultural interactions, and further contributes to (vi) personal growth. It is concluded that it is “a multifaceted and dynamic endeavor” (p.56) to develop teacher intercultural competence. That is to say, teachers continuously engage with different types and sources of cultural knowledge along with a heightened level of awareness of the self and culture in their individual ways.

The investigation of teachers’ teaching abroad experiences is an emerging field of research (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021) since teachers are getting more internationalized and having experiences to teach in other countries than their own (Moorhouse & Harfitt, 2021). In the related literature, there are research studies that look into the impacts of study abroad programs when teachers and academics return to their classrooms (Jarlais & Stein, 2005; Kruger et al., 2009; Millar, 2006). In this regard, Hamza (2010) examines the role of international experiences of American instructors and suggests that the instructors have experienced personal and professional attitude shifts, seen novel learning styles and learner behaviors in class and broadened their intercultural and global insights. It is suggested that teachers transfer the global perspective to their home contexts to share their international experiences and views on global interconnectedness, which, in turn, creates positive changes in students’ learning. Likewise, focusing on the impact of study abroad programs on teachers’ content knowledge and professional perspectives, Biraimah and Jotia’s (2013) findings suggest that teachers go through personal and professional growth, raising their self-cultural and intercultural awareness. It is argued that these make teachers more effective and develop their teaching methodologies accompanied by their better choices of curricular content that addresses cultural diversity.

Another case study (Göbel & Helmke, 2010) in Germany looks into the connection between EFL teachers’ intercultural contacts and their instruction. The teachers with more intercultural contacts are found to integrate cultural topics into their classes in a more explicit manner, focus on topics that allow for cultural comparison and subjective culture, and allow students to build their own ideas and share experiences. Having dual perspectives from pre-service teachers from Hong Kong and in-service teachers hosting them during their study abroad in China, Moorhouse and Harfitt (2021) examine the aspects of professional learning during teach abroad and suggest that teachers benefit from exchanging ideas on pedagogical issues, raise their cultural self-awareness, and add to their professional and contextual knowledge. All in all, the literature suggests that teachers should be encouraged to experience more intercultural contacts (Göbel & Helmke, 2010) and participate in international study or teach abroad programs (Moorhouse & Harfitt, 2021).

Yet, there exists a gap in the literature regarding the effects of study and/or teach abroad experiences from teachers’ standpoint and how teachers actually transfer their sojourns to their teaching practices and classroom implementations (Gleeson & Tait, 2012; Göbel & Helmke, 2010). The literature on study and/or teach abroad programs mostly focuses on pre-service teachers’ experiences rather than in-service teachers’ (Biraimah & Jotia, 2013) with a quite scarce longitudinal focus after the completion of these programs (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). Thus, how teachers and academics- who have worked in a culturally different country than their own- benefit personally and professionally from these experiences and how this is reflected in classroom practice require further investigation (Hamza, 2010). It should be noted that

preparing “culturally responsive or intercultural teachers” (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017, p.48) is a challenging task to handle.

In line with these, we asked the following research questions:

- In what ways do study and teach abroad experiences influence an EFL instructor’s teaching?
- In what ways do study and teach abroad experiences influence the students’ perceptions on and experiences in language learning?

Methodology

The current study employed a qualitative case study method (Creswell, 2013). The influences of study and teach abroad experiences of an EFL instructor on her teaching and the students’ perceptions and views regarding language learning are examined through instrumental (Stake, 1995) and exploratory (Yin, 2009) case approaches. Since such a qualitative orientation necessitates an interpretive and a naturalistic perspective acknowledging the multiplicity of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), multiple data collection tools and sources were consulted for an intensive bottom-up analysis of the case.

Context and participants

This study was carried out at the Civil Aviation and Cabin Services (CACS) Program of a private university in Turkey in 2015. The students who successfully graduated from the program were to be recruited at a local or foreign airline company as cabin crew personnel. As speaking English would be an urgent and required skill in the aviation industry they were to enter, the students had to take mandatory and elective English language courses as a fundamental part of their curriculum and these courses were stated to teach language skills in an integrated manner. Furthermore, there was a specific emphasis on English speaking skills to raise globally competent speakers of the language. In this regard, 43 freshmen-year students who were enrolled in the mandatory ENG111 course of ten class hours per week and their instructor, Ela, were asked to share their views and experiences on the ways the instructor’s participation in an exchange program influenced her teaching and the students’ perceptions of language learning.

The participants were decided on the purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013) and their participation was on a voluntary basis. The students were a mixed-gendered group of ages ranging between 18 and 22. The proficiency level of the participants was acknowledged to be A2 according to the Oxford Quick Placement Test (Version 1) and the institution’s own exams. At the time of the data collection, the instructor, Ela, had been teaching English for two years and she was a former Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program grantee teaching Turkish for one year and taking non-degree courses at a southern U.S. university. The data was collected during the semester she started teaching English again at the CACS program. She had a BA in English Language Teaching and was in her first year of her MA in the same field. She did not have any prior living abroad experiences when she went to the U.S. for her study and teach abroad.

Data collection

The data were collected through teaching journals and a semi-structured interview with the instructor and open-ended questionnaires from the students (see Appendix A). At the beginning of the semester, the instructor was asked to keep a teaching journal and take notes of instances in which she related the content of the lesson to her previous abroad experiences. The journal included the cultural contents she elaborated on, related language foci, immediate student feedback upon her sharing, and her comments. She registered five journal entries in total in English.

At the end of the semester, the researchers carried out a face-to-face semi-structured interview with the instructor. It lasted nearly 45 minutes. The interview entailed questions about her educational background, the process of going abroad, her educational take-outs of abroad experience and its influence on her teaching, professional development, personal growth, and her opinions about students' attitudes toward her sharing abroad experiences in teaching. The interview was conducted in English and audio recorded.

In order to explore language learners' perceptions on their instructor's utilizing her abroad experiences in teaching, an open-ended questionnaire was administered. Since they were learners at the A2 level, the questionnaire was designed in Turkish in this way the language was not a barrier for them to express their thoughts. The questionnaire and the responses were collaboratively translated and reviewed by both researchers. The learner participants completed the questionnaire through an online platform (Survey Monkey), to which only the researchers had access. The participants had two weeks to respond to the questions.

Data analysis

The analysis process started with the transcription of the interview. As Brinkmann (2013) states, the very act of transcribing is a part of qualitative data analysis. The researchers verbatim transcribed the audio-recorded interview, collated all the data sources (interview transcript, journal entries, and open-ended questionnaire responses) and composed a case study database (Yin, 2018). They utilized thematic content analysis (Patton, 2015) to reach a conclusion from the data. They assigned descriptive codes to all data sources, combined similar codes to reach categories and themes inductively (Saldaña, 2013). In order to ensure credibility of data analysis, the researchers coded and analyzed all sources separately. Then, they discussed the emergent codes and categories and reached an agreement. Additionally, they utilized member checks in order to remove any misinterpretations generated from the data (Maxwell, 2013). They sent their interpretation of the interview to the instructor and received confirmation on its accuracy. All the participants gave their consent at the beginning of the study, and the instructor and students were assigned a pseudonym and numbers so as to ensure their confidentiality.

Findings

In order to answer the first research question "In what ways do the study and teach abroad experiences influence an EFL instructor's teaching?", the data coming from the interview and the teacher journal were analyzed. As the instructor stated in the interview, her personal development and professional learning out of one-year long study and teach abroad experience

should be expressed firstly since the combination of personal and professional gains constituted the foundations of her classroom teaching in relation to international experiences.

Personal development and professional learning

The instructor data from the interview and the journal entries illustrated elements of her enhanced world knowledge, intellectual growth and international networking which all contributed to her intercultural competence. The study and teach abroad experiences were further found to be conducive to the instructor's professional learning through her classroom teaching and academic endeavors.

In addition to overcoming personal challenges about living in a dorm "That was the first time that I stayed in a dorm" and surviving the US food "The US diet was not for me, that was quite challenging both to observe my health and eating routines", she mainly talked about the expansion of her world knowledge and intellectual growth thanks to meeting people from different parts of the world. Via making friends from different cultures with different backgrounds, she expanded her intercultural knowledge: "I had a close Chinese friend, she told me about their cuisine when we celebrated Chinese New Year" and "I had an Indian American friend. She was thinking about changing her major Philosophy from accounting. When we had meals together, we were chatting even about abstract issues like how philosophy makes us think this way or that way". Additively, she put particular emphasis on her improved communication skills in English; inclusive of attentive and sympathetic listening and oral debating skills: "I had an Armenian friend who had a great knowledge in history. At the end of the year, both he and I learned a lot from each other on, say, wars, its long-lasting impacts on nations etc.". She also added that despite diversity among her newly formed relationships, she was able to focus on similar points that enabled her to feel belonged, united:

I had two friends from Israel, one of them is a really close friend of mine. One of them was an atheist and we used to discuss women rights in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. She knew a lot about those and other faiths. The three of us met a lot. Actually, it was feminism keeping us together.

Building on her knowledge and skills in ELT from her student-teacher learning and experiences as a novice teacher, the participant narrated that her professional development as a language instructor was informed by 1) her classroom experience of teaching Turkish to American university students, and 2) webinars and courses she took. The participant expressed that she became knowledgeable about the educational system in the U.S. as she had the opportunity both to present and listen to sessions in one of her classes: "In our Education in America class, toward the end of the semester, each week one of us introduced some level or subject education, the educational system either of the U.S. or another country" adding "I was both a student and a teacher on the campus that made me experience how that schooling system worked".

As for her professional gains out of webinars and graduate courses she attended, she paid attention to her developed theoretical knowledge in applied linguistics and communication studies. She stated that she learned more about brain-based language teaching, endangered languages, and she attended a webinar on teaching Spanish as a second language. In addition, she participated in seminars in teaching language in a meaningful context:

One of them was entitled as using the target language in a meaningful context, they were about input-interaction - output model, successful implementation of 5C's in our teaching paradigm like how to make it more concrete, 5C's are communication, culture, connection, communities and comparisons and how they should organically come together in the language class.

She further reflected on her improved technological skills. She shared her knowledge through her blog as well: "I designed web pages, created my digital portfolio, shared web tools on my blog, this is something that I learned in one of my classes, Instructional Technology". As she clearly underlined, all these educational endeavors paid off in the end for her development as an instructor: "As a teacher I feel more confident both from the aspect of teaching ... and speaking the target language and understanding it. I now have more intuition about the daily language".

Study and teach abroad experiences in the classroom

Combining all these perspectives into her own language teaching expertise, the instructor claimed that her experiences abroad affected her classroom practices mainly at two levels: 1) providing authentic language use and so decreasing speaking anxiety, and 2) motivating and engaging students to learn the language and the target culture. The instructor journal data also supported the participant's teaching practice enhanced with study abroad experiences.

Providing authentic language use; consequently, decreasing speaking anxiety

The instructor underscored her improved skill of providing authentic language use in the classroom as a result of her international experiences. By referring to her learning from one of the seminars she attended abroad, she began to attach a great amount of significance to making use of and teaching authentic language use in her classes: "use the target language at every moment possible- That's something that I do this year, the more we use the language the more we respect it, that's why we should prioritize using it in any case". She believed that such authentic expressions enabled students to speak more confidently and fluently and overcoming their speaking anxiety which was very observable at the beginning of the academic year:

When students want to learn more about something, I could easily give examples ... what would an American say in such a situation... express they're surprised. I think this makes students feel more confident while they're speaking because they know that these are the real sentences that someone would use in the target language context. They feel more fluent when speaking English with those structures because they keep them as frozen expressions in their mind. They were mostly anxious in the beginning.

The entries in the journal also attested the instructor's emphasis on teaching authentic language use. She related teaching formulaic expressions to authenticity by noting down "how an American would react":

Teaching Journal- Entry 5: In fact, useful expressions for daily life are not specific to one situation. Whenever I feel the need, I give examples how an American would react in such and such situations. Generally, this need is inferred from the utterances of students. Some examples would be "it depends /

my apologies / literally / my bad / FYI / ... rocks / ASAP". They felt it would be easier to speak fluently if they knew some phrases.

As a means of motivating and engaging students

The instructor emphasized that she tried hard to motivate students to learn not only the language itself but also the culture: "They have to know about the culture and use English in that manner while talking to any international person". Her abroad experiences seemed to serve this purpose. For instance, the entries about Cool Technology and Celebrations (e.g., Bonfire Night, New Year's Eve, Thanksgiving) displayed that the instructor enriched her teaching with her personal photos taken in the USA and lived experiences with her international friends, which contributed to increasing student engagement with the content, culture and language. For instance, in one of the entries, the teacher noted down that the students found her personal experiences-integrated language teaching amazing and entertaining:

Teaching Journal- Entry 1: I showed the photos of MIT buildings and the famous MIT sign. Later, I continued with giving some facts through a real photo at the school. Other notable universities like Harvard, Princeton and Stanford University were also discussed through some photos from my personal experience. The students seemed engaged. They liked seeing the famous statue at Harvard and the Harvard Square and hearing about the urban myth related. They learned about those prestigious schools.

As for the celebration-themed course, the entry indicated she also shared her personal experiences with her international friends. She stated that that the students listened to her attentively and this increased student involvement in the lesson:

Teaching Journal- Entry 3: I asked the dates of Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve and whether they are celebrated in Turkey or not. Then I told what type of food is prepared for Thanksgiving meals and how important it is to have dinner with the family members. Then I moved on to New Year's Eve, and I was told that it is a big deal to spend New Year's at Times Square. I talked about "Ball Drop" and the internationality of the Square at New Year's Eve. I also mentioned my adventurous NYC New Year's Eve experiences with my Indian, Pakistani or Far Easterner friends. Students wanted to celebrate New Year's Eve in NYC one day.

The data coming from EFL learners to answer the second research question "In what ways do the study and teach abroad experiences influence the students' perceptions on and experiences in language learning?" also affirmed the realization of their instructor's international experiences as a valuable input in the form of 1) an authentic daily language provider and 2) a native-like pronunciation example. Student responses further supported that the personal experience-incorporated language teaching motivated students and enabled them to get a better understanding of the target language.

In line with the instructor data, the students believed that the instructor's experiences abroad facilitated their learning of daily language use in American English. By linking the instructor's international experiences with native speaker usage, they expressed their appreciation. For instance, ST13 claimed that the instructor's talking about her own international experiences provided contextual cues for her to recall the language structure: "For

instance, she gives an example of her experiences abroad, and this helps me remember it. We are learning daily English rather than fixed structures. For example, I started to say, ‘Are you kidding me?’ a lot”. Similarly, ST32 drew attention to the fact that the instructor offered daily language structure based on her work-abroad experiences, which enhanced the course-book learning: “The instructor’s sharing her experiences with us is very useful for us, learning authentic language use... for instance I have learned the phrase ‘book a seat’ through her narration although it isn’t in our coursebook”. Likewise, ST38 listed the phrases he learned through the instructor’s experience-sharing: “There are lots of phrases we don’t know and thanks to her we have a chance to use them like *take note, be mad at someone, make a mess*”.

What is not present in the instructor data but frequently raised in the student responses was the instructor’s exemplifying native-like pronunciation. Nearly all of the students appreciated their instructor’s pronunciation by taking her as a role-model. ST31 stated that she became familiar with native speaker pronunciation thanks to the instructor whom she called “having a native speaker teacher accent”: “Since she lived abroad, she has a native speaker teacher accent. This helps us get used to native like pronunciation”. ST37 emphasized that since the instructor experienced accent and language use in the target culture country, she helped them have a better understanding of how the language is used: “She learned the accent, how English is used by experiencing it herself in the USA, which was very useful as she enabled us to understand the language use better”. ST9 expressed that the instructor’s study-abroad experiences were useful in terms of trying to pronounce words like her: “Her experiences in the USA were very useful in terms of speaking. She has great pronunciation, and we are trying hard to pronounce the words as she does”.

The second highly articulated influence of the instructor’s international experience in the language classroom was its motivational power. The students found the instructor’s sharing as quite inspirational and engaging. For example, ST14 stated that he found the instructor narration more effective than coursebook learning “It draws our attention to the lesson when we are distracted. I personally think that it is more effective to listen to her personal experiences in the USA than to read something in the book”. Besides, these narrations are not only engaging students in the lesson but also arousing interest and motivation to visit different countries: “When we are exhausted at the end of the lesson, listening to Teacher Ela’s experiences in the USA energizes us as well as aspires us to see that culture, visit those places” (ST14); “As a class we love her sharing, it motivates us towards the language and going abroad” (ST16). As one of the students also raised, these experiences were also professionally related to the students as they would work as cabin crew personnel: “The instructor showed some photos she took in the Niagara Falls. It is really nice to visit those places, I also would love to. It further motivated me to become a flight attendant and visit that place”.

In this relation, the instructor’s experiences also functioned as a means of getting a better understanding of the target culture from the students’ perspectives. As their responses demonstrated, the instructor’s international experiences contributed to their intercultural knowledge and raised awareness on cultural diversity. The emphasis on cultural variation focuses not only on materialistic culture as food or cloth but also on non-materialistic culture as interaction, dialogue patterns or giving direction: “She helps us learn about different cuisines from different countries. She helps us realize the differences about dialogues, human relations and interaction between different countries” (ST31), “Unless you live within the target culture, you cannot understand even the simplest joke. So, it is quite helpful of her who personally

experienced another culture to inform us” (ST11), and “we learnt what they preferred to eat, to watch, to laugh at, what they like or how different they are even while giving directions” (ST9).

Discussion and Conclusion

Using an interpretive analysis, we found that teacher study and teach abroad overall represented a positive experience. It was argued to contribute to the instructor’s personal development and professional learning and have direct influences on classroom implementations. The instructor’s connecting her personal growth to her professional development in study and teach abroad could signify the multiplicity and dynamic nature of making sense of intercultural experiences. Her statements were quite similar to the academic participants’ post-reflections on their work-abroad in Hamza (2010). Similarly, they emphasized the interconnected nature of personal and professional improvement in international experiences. From the instructor data, it could be seen that expansion in her intercultural knowledge was accompanied by her intellectual growth in the forms of debating some religious, national and philosophical issues with her international friends. The development in her advanced mental thinking and globally informed point of view were consequences of her daily interaction, communication (i.e., discussing philosophy over meal). This is in line with the assertion that global experience facilitates intellectual stimulation (Mossberg, 1990 as cited in Hamza, 2010).

The reflection of intercultural experiences in classroom teaching was expressed in four distinct ways: 1) motivating and engaging students, 2) enriching the lesson content, 3) valuable teacher talk, and 4) increased student intercultural awareness. The instructor’s own stories, her personal visual and oral additions to the course content were appreciated by the students. Both the teacher and the students emphasized the heightened authenticity in the language input. The previous research underlined the significance of using authentic materials and tasks in increasing students’ intercultural awareness (Gómez & Fernando, 2012; Pinzón, 2020). In the present study’s situation, the instructor’s conscious efforts to utilize daily authentic language use appeared as the result of international experiences and greatly valued by her students.

Based on the instructor and the learners data, there were instances of cultural comparison and room for students’ reflection on the shared cultural information and experiences in line with Göbel and Helmke (2010). Specific cultural similarities and differences between cultural groups (i.e., home and the U.S. cultures) were discussed and this demonstrated the development of culture-general knowledge similar to the findings of Smolcic and Katunich (2017) that building knowledge of culture was an outcome of teachers’ participating in cultural immersion programs. In Hamza (2010), the teacher participants underlined how study and teach abroad broadened their global perspectives. In this study, this finding is further supported by the students’ perceived improvement in their intercultural perspectives on the instructor’s sharing of her study and teach abroad experiences in addition to the teacher’s perspectives. Likewise, study and teach abroad was suggested to help the instructor to better address student needs (Hamza, 2010), (i.e., CACS program students to serve an international group; of cultural differences on their graduation).

As previously discussed, the learners developed enthusiasm to visit different countries and learn more about the instructor’s experiences. Their comments on the instructor’s teaching could be voiced as “a tour of a different place” (Hamza, 2010, p. 58). One of the participants in Hamza (2010) stated that her students found her classes like “a tour of a different place” (p. 58)

as she touched upon multiple cultural, international topics in her teaching as a result of study-abroad. Similarly, the teacher participant in this study expanded the content through her study and teach abroad experiences and promoted a desire to be on this tour. The instructor's content knowledge and professional perspectives were positively influenced by her one-year long study and teach abroad, similar to Biraimah and Jotia's (2013) findings that underlined the more informed choice of curricular content addressing cultural diversity (i.e., using real photos of her visit in a warm-up activity before a reading text on different cultural traditions). In this regard, the instructor was stated to explicitly deal with intercultural topics in class in line with the earlier literature (Göbel & Helmke, 2010).

One of the significant findings of this study is the learners' interest in the instructor's pronunciation. Although the instructor data do not reveal much about an association between her native-like pronunciation and international experiences, the student data offered an immediate connection. The students appreciated their instructor's native-like pronunciation and interpreted it as a result of her study and teach abroad experiences. Comments like trying to imitate the instructor or linking the better understanding of the language use to the instructor's pronunciation suggest that this group of students believe that sounding like a native speaker is a great asset for teachers and directly related to international experiences.

In conclusion, as the schools and classes turn into a more culturally and linguistically diverse arena, teachers with interculturality are becoming in demand (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017) and there is a clear gap in the literature for investigating the influence of teachers' study and/or teach abroad experiences on their professional practices when they return to their home teaching contexts. In this vein, the present research study aimed to investigate the influences of an EFL teacher's international experiences upon her language teaching and her students' responses to the reflections of her study and teach abroad in the classroom. This study illustrated how an EFL teacher put this interculturality into practice in the classroom from the perspective of the teacher and learners as well. Byram (1991) argues that in order for successful intercultural teaching to take place, the first requirement is intercultural experience itself. The students' responses in terms of being aware of how different cultures work with the language (e.g., various dialogue patterns, direction giving) thanks to their instructor's international experiences support Byram's argument. In addition, Göbel and Helmke (2010) put forward that the outcomes of intercultural learning are satisfactorily achieved if students raise cultural awareness, accept cultural diversity, and show interest in the culture of the target language. In this study's context, the learners' increased awareness of cultural differences and growing willingness for visiting the target country or listening more to intercultural experiences could suggest that teacher international experiences could promote student intercultural learning.

It is hoped that the current study will contribute to the limited literature on the effects of study and teach abroad experiences of teachers and the ways these sojourns inform teachers' instructional practices in everyday classes. However, this study is not without its limitations such as the lack of in-class observations and longitudinal data. Further research could investigate teacher study and/or teach abroad in different contexts other than tertiary level education and English language teaching and incorporate other professional stakeholders' views: colleagues, content area teachers, administrators, professional development coaches and so on. Vogt's (2016) call for educating language teachers "especially in ways that trigger intercultural learning processes in their learners on the basis of teachers' own intercultural awareness" (p.101) stays pertinent. Since there is an acute need for teachers to develop teacher interculturality, language teacher education and in-service training programs should look into

the ways that teachers could utilize their study and/or teach abroad experiences to create language classes serving as venues to foster learners' intercultural competences. Language teachers' engagement with more intercultural contacts and participation in international study and/or teach abroad programs should be encouraged.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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APPENDIX A

The Instructor Interview Questions

1. Please tell us about your educational background.
2. Please inform us about your teaching experiences- which classes, levels, courses and age groups you have taught.
3. How did you get a chance to both study and work abroad?
4. What did you do within the scope of teaching and learning there?
5. When did you return?
6. When you think about this abroad experience, what can you say about its influences on your
 - a. Teaching
 - b. Language competency
 - c. World knowledge
 - d. Professional development
 - e. Personal growth
7. Please tell us whether (and to what extent) you make use of your abroad experiences in your teaching and exemplify.
8. What do you think about the students' attitudes towards your narrating abroad experiences in the lessons?

The Instructor's Teaching Journal Outline

Please register your journal entry on the intercultural elements in your class:

1. Subject:
2. Date of teaching / Week of the term:
3. Student Profile:
4. Cultural content elaborated:
5. Language focus:
6. Immediate feedback from students:
7. Comments:

The Student Questionnaire

1. Do English lessons influence your learning about culture? How? If yes, give examples.
2. Does your instructor's abroad experience influence your classes? How? If yes, give examples.
3. What are your overall comments on the influences of your instructor's abroad experience in your classes?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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