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Peer interactions in study-abroad SLA: Insights from complete learner networks

Second language acquisition (SLA) during study abroad (SA) has been a burgeoning field of enquiry. The experience of immersion in the target-language culture coupled with the opportunity to engage in meaningful communication are commonly believed to be conducive to accelerated progress. However, despite “folk beliefs” that mere presence in an L2-speaking country will automatically facilitate language acquisition virtually through osmosis, not all learners benefit equally from SA sojourns, and considerable variation has been evinced in their linguistic attainment.

One line of enquiry that has attempted to explain the varied picture has investigated students’ social networks as a factor conditioning their interactions and—subsequently—L2 gains, as well as the potential external factors shaping these interactions. This talk will demonstrate how social network analysis, especially in a longitudinal design with multiple measurement points, can reveal non-trivial results on the influence of peer interactions among second language learners on their attainment, basing on the speaker’s projects ranging from research on international student exchanges to courses for Ukrainian refugees to intensive programs for U.S. foreign-language majors. The approach contributes novel methodology and rigorous insights into the impact of out-of-class communication patterns on progress in intensive immersive SLA, and offers practical implications.

References:

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