What is this research about?
Second language exchange programs provide students with an opportunity to practice their language skills with speakers outside the classroom. In previous research, exchange programs have been shown to impact students’ willingness to communicate in their second language (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004).

This particular study examined the impact a short-term Canadian bilingual exchange program had on Anglophone and Francophone language learners’ willingness to communicate in their second language.

What did the researchers do?
The researcher administered pre and post-program online questionnaires to 107 Anglophone and 136 Francophone second language learners who were participating in a two-week exchange program. The majority of participants were female with an average age of 14.

What you need to know:
This study examined the impact of a short-term Canadian bilingual exchange program on Anglophone and Francophone language learners’ willingness to communicate in their second language. The researchers found that there were no significant changes to students’ willingness to communicate in their second language before or after the exchange program. Both groups, however, reported increased ease in communicating in their second language after the program.

Students spent one week immersed in a second language community and another week in their first language community, hosting another second language learner. Francophone students were all from Quebec and spent a week in one of four Canadian provinces, including Ontario. Anglophone students were from four provinces, including Ontario, and all spent a week in Quebec.
The researcher administered a pre-program survey that included three sections:

**Section 1** collected data on student demographics, including their home province, age, gender, and previous exchange experiences;

**Section 2** collected data on students’ willingness to communicate in their second language prior to the exchange. Students were presented with statements related to their willingness to communicate and asked to indicate (on a Likert scale) whether they felt these statements represented how they felt. For example, students were asked about (a) their *attitudes* towards communicating with others in their second language (e.g. “I like to meet English/French speaking people), (b) their *self-confidence* with their second language abilities (e.g. “I can do things as well as others”), setting second language goals for themselves (e.g. “I plan to watch TV in English/French”) and communicating in their second language (e.g. “I take opportunities to speak English/French”).

**Section 3** collected data on students’ language skills and strategies. Students were asked to self-assess their language skills by indicating how easily they could do certain tasks related to speaking, listening, reading, writing in their second language, and using strategies that help them overcome barriers to communication. For example, “when I don’t have the exact word, I can still explain what I want to say in another way”.

A post-program survey was administered to student participants at the end of the two week period, which consisted of the same questions from sections 2 and 3 of the pre-program survey. All participants completed the surveys in their first language, under the supervision of a teacher.

Statistical analysis was used to analyse data collected from both surveys.

**What did the researchers find?**

The researcher found that both Francophone and Anglophone students generally reported a high willing to communicate in their second language *prior* to their exchange experience.

Both groups also reported increased ease in communicating in their second language after the program; however, there were no significant changes between students’ pre and post exchange
responses regarding their willingness to communicate.

After the exchange program, Francophone students reported significant improvements in their ease of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in their second language and in using strategies to help them overcome barriers to communication in their second language.

The post-program questionnaires of Anglophone students, however, revealed significant improvements only in their ability to speak their second language.

The researcher concludes that, despite a lack of significant improvements in willingness to communicate, students entered the program with a strong willingness to communicate, and that this was maintained after the program concluded. The researchers suggest that further studies are needed to examine the factors influencing students’ willingness to communicate, including the impact of longer-term programs.

How can you use this research? Teachers and administrators can use this summary as a starting point for discussions about language exchange programs. Educators will want to consult the larger body of research on short and long-term exchange programs, their influence on students’ willingness to communicate in their second language, and the other potential benefits and drawbacks of these programs.

Original article: To learn more about this research study, we invite you to read the original research article:


Other references:

About the researcher: Callie Mady is an Associate Professor in the Schulich School of Education at the University of Toronto. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 2.5 Canada License.
Nipissing University. Her current research focuses on second language learning and exchange programs.
calliem@nipissingu.ca

Keywords:
French as a Second Language (FSL), English as a Second Language (ESL), exchange program, second language education

About this summary
The Ontario Education Research Exchange (OERE) is a project of the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research, an Ontario network promoting the use of research in education. The OERE’s clear language summaries of academic research aim to support this mandate.

This summary has been adapted from the ResearchSnapshot series developed by York University and ResearchImpact and has been developed according to writing and design principles unique to OERE. For more information about this summary or the OERE network please contact oere.knaer.oise@utoronto.ca.

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