What is this research about?
When learning a second language (L2), many believe that time spent immersed in that language and culture will lead to improved fluency. This research examined the impact of participating in a short term bilingual exchange (for a period of less than two weeks), 6 to 10 years after the exchange.

Specifically, the researcher examined the following three questions: 1) What are the long-term linguistic outcomes for exchange participants as identified years following their exchange experience?; 2) What are the long-term non-linguistic outcomes (participation in other program opportunities, career choice) for exchange participants as identified years following their exchange experience?, and 3) How do former exchange participants link the above outcomes to the exchange experience?

What did the researcher do?
The researcher developed and administered an on-line survey to 238 former exchange participants who participated in a Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC) exchange between 2000-2003. The questionnaire included a combination of 15 closed and open questions including questions about: biographical information, self-assessment of their L2 ability, perceived ability to learn a L2, and frequency of use. The researcher also

What you need to know:
This study examined the long term benefits of short-term bilingual exchanges 6—10 years post exchange. The researcher identified a number of lasting benefits including linguistic advantages (language learning and use of second language), and non-linguistic benefits (enhanced job opportunities). The researcher also reported that the majority of participants attributed their improved L2 skills to their participation in an exchange experience.
conducted follow-up telephone interviews with a random selection of 25 of the participants who completed the on-line questionnaire.

What did the researcher find?

Long Term Linguistic Outcomes

The researcher found that with regards to participants’ self-assessment of their L2 ability:

- 46% of Anglophones and 62% of Francophones reported having better L2 ability than their peers;
- 54% of Anglophones and 72% of Francophones found learning an L2 easy;
- 55% of Anglophones and 81% of Francophones seek out opportunities to use their L2

Long Term NonLinguistic Outcomes

The researcher also found

For Francophones:
- 59% have sought bilingual job opportunities;
- 84% found greater job opportunities;
- 70% use English on their jobs

For Anglophones:
- 37% have sought bilingual job opportunities;
- 38% found greater job opportunities;
- 32% use French on their jobs

Results of Exchange Experience:

- 84% of both the Anglophone and Francophone students (breakdown not provided) linked improvement in their L2 to their exchange experience

Other important findings were that exchange participants continued to seek out other cultural experiences and travel to places in the world where their second language is dominant.

The researcher concluded that participating in a short-term exchange program can have positive long-term effects including increased confidence in their L2 ability as well as seeking out other opportunities for L2 use. According to the researcher, the findings highlight the importance of expanding student access to short-term exchange programs.

How can you use this research?

Teachers and administrators may wish to:

- Consider additional research on the lasting benefits of exchanges for learning a second language;
Examine current provisions for student exchanges to enhance second language acquisition

Original Article:

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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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