

## US Students Bond with Locals While Studying Abroad

Difficulty:



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### *Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson*

Today's report is about how American students are now benefiting more from study abroad programs. What sort of things do they learn? What advantages does such a program give the students?

### *Extension discussion topics*

#### **A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text**

*Introduction = How are American students now benefiting more from study abroad programs. What sort of things do they learn? What advantages does such a program give the students?*

1. How many American students go abroad to study each year, for how long, and where do they go?
  - Over 250,000.
  - A summer or a semester.
  - Examples given in the report were China, South Africa, Jordan, Czech Republic.
  
2. What is different about the latest type of study abroad program?
  - Not just in classroom.
  - CET Academic Program students are placed with a local roommate, in the past American students spent most of their time with each other.
  - At Stellenbosch University, students go into a township, help in daycare centers or libraries where they teach computing skills to young adults.
  - They learn how to adjust to local life, culture, learn from misunderstandings.
  
3. How do these programs help the students later on?
  - They are more employable, for example, by being fluent in Chinese.
  - Learn more about themselves and the world they belong to.
  - Become global citizens.

How do you think such programs teach the students more about themselves?

## B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

*Topic = Learning a foreign language.*

1. How many languages can you speak? Where did you learn them? Do you find learning languages easy or difficult? Why did you learn them? (*forced to at school, bilingual family, own choice, necessary for your job...*) Why are you learning English now?
2. What advantages do you think speaking more than one language bring? (*in life generally, finding a job...*) Which languages do you think are the most essential to learn nowadays? Why?
3. Have you ever heard of Esperanto? Esperanto was created in the late 1870s and early 1880s by Dr. Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof, an ophthalmologist of mixed cultural heritage from Bialystok, then part of the Russian Empire. According to Zamenhof, he created this language to foster harmony between people from different countries.  
(see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esperanto> for more info)  
What do you think of Zamenhof's idea? Would it be a good thing or a bad thing if everyone spoke the same language? Why? Would you like to learn this language or indeed do you already speak it? If so, was it easy or difficult for you to learn it, compared to other languages?

## C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

*Topic = Finding a job.*

1. In today's world finding a job is not easy for students who leave university. If you are already working, how did you get your first job? How many applications did you make before you found your first job? If you are still studying, what do expect it will be like trying to find a job afterwards, or are you already trying? How many jobs have you / do you expect to have to apply for before you find a job? Many students end up taking jobs they are over-qualified for such as a shop assistant, bar tender, waitress. Would you do this? Do you know anyone who has had to do this? What would you / do they feel about the situation?
2. Make a list of all the qualifications and qualities that you can / could bring to a job (as in your CV for example). Which ones do you think would make you more employable than another applicant? Do you think your sex gives you an advantage or disadvantage in the modern world? Why?
3. Now imagine you are an employer. Make a list of all the qualifications and qualities that you would look for in someone who wanted to join your company / organization. Which ones are essential? Which are desirable? Under what, if any, circumstances would you employ someone who did not fulfill all of your "essential" requirements? Would you consider the sex of candidates when looking at their application? Why / why not?
4. No compare the two lists. Would you be likely to be employed by your imaginary employer? Why / why not?

Did this exercise make you change any of your ideas about your own employability?

## Audioscript

Each year, about a quarter of a million Americans study abroad. For many of them, a summer or a semester in a foreign country now involves more than just sitting in a classroom and hanging out with other American students. Instead, they're encouraged and sometimes required to be involved in the local communities they're studying in.

On his first morning in Beijing, one American study-abroad student was dropped off in a distant part of the Chinese capital with five dollars and instructions to find his way back home on his own. It took a while, but he made it.

That's one example of how American students are being pushed out of their 'comfort zone' so they can fully experience another culture.

"It's absolutely crucial that they know something about how people in other parts of the world live and think and how they behave." William Finlay, heads the sociology department at the University of Georgia. "Often those students go in large groups and they hang around with each other. We felt that they really weren't getting to know the local inhabitants as well as they could."

In 2008, he co-founded a study abroad program with South Africa's Stellenbosch University. It combines traditional academic in-class learning with community involvement. "We've been working with a particular NGO in the township and they do two things. They run a number of these creches, which are basically daycare centers for children whose parents are working, and the library in the community where there are some computers. Our students typically work either with the little kids in the daycares or they work in the library and teach very basic computer skills to mostly young adults."

While many study abroad programs focus on helping Americans learn foreign languages, some are taking a more intensive approach.

"In all of our locations, we place students with local roommates." Mark Lenhart is executive director of CET Academic Programs, which sends more than 1,000 students to China, Jordan, the Czech Republic and other countries each year.

He says American students benefit from such one-on-one interactions, in spite of the challenges they face.

"Not just in terms of language learning, but they also find the local culture can present challenges, and perhaps misunderstandings. They have to adjust to local life. It's no longer okay just to have a little Chinese, for instance. If the student is studying Chinese, they want to come home from a program like this fluent in Chinese. And so this will enable students to become more employable when they graduate."

Preparing American students to be more competitive in the global job market is one of the goals of the recent trends in study abroad, according to Allen Goodman, president of the Institute of International Education, which promotes educational exchange. He says study abroad also prepares young people to become global citizens.

"You really can't have that global citizen perspective by just reading a book or just connecting to somebody who lives in Egypt on the Internet. I think you have to go and see the reality of another place. That's what study abroad promotes."

IIE's Allen Goodman predicts that study abroad programs will continue to evolve and attract more students who find it a unique and valuable opportunity to learn about themselves and the world they're part of.

For writer Faiza Elmasry, I'm Faith Lapidus, VOA News, Washington.