



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

LEI STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AFTER ATTENDING A SUMMER CAMP:

A NARRATIVE APPROACH

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A NARRATIVE APPROACH**

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degree of**

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Abstract

In recent years many students from Facultad de Lenguas BUAP have participated in summer camps around The U.S.A. This kind of experience could provide useful information about learning a second language and the influence of culture. Therefore this research attempts to provide information about students' experiences after attending a summer camp. We use narratives provided by the students from LEI generation 2009 this will contribute to explore these students' experiences. The instrument provided us more information about the students' life during their stay in the summer camp through the introspective method because it focuses on the observation of human behavior by the examination one's own conscious experiences, thoughts and feelings. (Schultz, 2012 p.77)

The research findings showed that, students attended to a summer camp because they had reasons such as; cultural, linguistic and of course for the experience itself. Likewise, most of the students reveal issues that they had to face during their stay at their camps, mentioned in their narratives; on the one hand, they experienced job issues, linguistic barriers and social problems. On the other hand, they mentioned compensations and difficulties that influenced their experiences. The conclusion of this research indicates that the kind of experience that students have when attending to a summer camp depends on different aspects that they face during their stay such as the staff member position, the type of camp, the work schedule, location of the camp and their behavior during the stay .These results and their implications are described within this thesis.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Language students are always looking for new ways to improve their English skills; likewise they are interested to know the culture and other places abroad. However they do not have many opportunities to improve their English skills out of their country. They do not have the opportunity to acquire and put in practice the language in a real context. They just practice the language in the classroom without experimenting the language in other environments. As Krashen (2002) mentions: *“two sorts of linguistic environments are contrasted: artificial or formal environments, found for the most part of the classroom, and natural or informal environments”*. Students are so used to the artificial environments, and when they face a natural environment it is difficult for them to speak the English language.

Students need to find new ways to practice the language in a real context. For this reason a summer camp seems to be a suitable option to help them to reach their maximum skills in the language and at the same time learn more about the culture of the country where they will travel. A summer camp can be the means to facilitate students' learning and acquisition of the language, in different areas like; vocabulary, pronunciation and skills like; listening, speaking and others. A summer camp seems to be the opportunity that students need to practice their language skills in a real context, to give them the opportunity to explore new places and get in touch with the culture of other countries in this case The United States.

As we mentioned above the students see the summer camps as an opportunity to improve the English skills but also to have the experience to travel abroad and meet people from different countries, the problem is that students have a perspective of the culture and the country, so once they are in the camps, when they are finally in touch with the culture, develop their language skills completely can be difficult because of the cultural clash, besides they are driven by the adventure and for the long hours of work, all these make them put aside the language, when they come back the final result seem to be a good experience but not much learning as they thought before attending to the camp.

1.1 Justification

This study attempts to identify the LEI students' experiences after attending to a summer camp, the study aims to showed some light into three main aspects: 1) to find out how the experiences helped them in their learning language process, 2) to identify how they helped them improve their language skills and 3) to explore the role of culture once they arrived to the United States of America.

1.2 Significance of study

This study could help future applicants to have an idea of what they could face during the whole stay; since they arrive to the USA, the work that they will have to do, since the moment they are hired for the job, as support staff, the cultural challenges they might face while they are living in the country. Taking into account the LEI students previous experiences, the future applicants may benefit from the information of these experiences to be prepared by the positive and negative aspects from these experiences,

when they are in the summer camps they might be able to fully exploit their own experience.

1.3 Location of the research

The focus of this study will be the experiences of students in the Bachelor degree in language teaching, Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés (LEI) in the Facultad de Lenguas at Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, after attending to a summer camp. Some of these students were asked to write their experience after attending to a summer camp to take a sample to carry out the research.

1.4 Methodology

The methodology of this research is qualitative; it means we are primarily concerned on the process, in this case the experiences, people concerned about the people, the situation and their behavior in a natural setting. The primary instrument for data collection was narratives, which have been analyzed inductively, from the most general aspects to the particular ones.

1.5 Research questions

This project intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most common reasons students of Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés at BUAP report when attending to a summer camp?

2. What issues did those students reveal in their narratives when attending to a summer camp?
3. How those students perceive their experiences at the summer camp?

1.6 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is a twofold; 1) to identify LEI students' experiences after attending to a summer camp in order to know if the experience was useful for their English language learning; and 2) to know what were the results from this experience. This may facilitate future applicants to have a better idea of what a summer camp is, what their job may be as staff member in a summer camp and how this may help them improve their English language skills. This research may help them to get better results during the stay in the summer camp, also to fully exploit the camp experience but most of all for fully learning of the language and the culture.

1.7 Key terms

- Language
 - “A language is a symbolic system used by communicators to construct and convey information”. (Findlay,1998 p.103).

➤ Learning

- “Learning is often defined as a change in behavior (Birkenholz, 1999), which is demonstrated by people implementing knowledge, skills, or practices derived from education. Basically, from an educator’s perspective, learning involves helping people along the learning process, and learning includes all of the things that we do to make it happen. As an end result, we know that learning occurs when people take newfound information and incorporate it into their life. For example, if we are working with an audience that lacks basic financial management skills for budgeting, one of our objectives is to see people gain knowledge in this area and to actually implement the new skills – hopefully, over a long period of time”.(Birkenholz, 1999).

➤ Culture

- “Culture is a difficult concept. It is so basic to human societies and so intertwined with our natures that its workings are seldom acknowledged or thought about those who are internalized it. Culture is composed of traditional ideas and related values, and it is the product of actions” (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952 p. 66); “it is learned, shared and transmitted from one generation to the next” (Linton, 1945 p.66); and “it organizes and helps interpret life” (Gordon, 1964 p.66).

➤ Acculturation

- “Acculturation is the gradual adaptation to the target culture without necessarily forsaking one’s native language identity”. (Acton & Walker, 1986 p.20).
- “Acculturation is the process of becoming adapted to a new culture”. (Brown, 1986 p.33).

➤ Culture shock

- “An individual experiences culture shock when contact with a culture different from his or her own results in anxiety, fear, disorientation and inability to cope with the communicative and environmental conditions of life in a non-native context.”(Johnson& Johnson, 1998 p.93)

➤ Lingua Franca

- “Languages that permit communication across linguistically diverse populations and regions are called lingua franca. Lingua franca, sometimes called trade or link languages, often allow widespread communication for the purposes of carrying out trade or international diplomacy”. (Findlay, 1998 p.118).

➤ Pidgin

- “An auxiliary language created by people with no language in common. A pidgin is nobody’s mother tongue, and it is not a real language at all; it has

no recognizable grammar, it is very limited in what it can convey, and different people speak it differently”. (Trask, 1999 p.240).

➤ Summer camp

- “Summer camp is a major American tradition. Beginning over 125 years ago, the US is now home to over 10,000 summer camps, each and every one unique. With over 10 million children going to summer camp each year, the need for staff to run the camps is huge and that’s where YOU come in. The camp directors (the people who own the camps) like to hire international staff to bring culture and diversity to their camp, whilst providing a broad skill-set for their campers”. (Camp Leaders, 2012)

➤ Intercultural learning

- “The process of becoming more aware of and better understanding one’s culture and other cultures around the world. The aim of intercultural learning is to increase international and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding. This can take lots of forms- intercultural learning is by no means only a part of EFL, but has exponents in all fields of education”. (Rose, 2003).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter has the information used to support this research. In this literature review a brief definition of foreign language and second language is given to address the difference between them, also we review the three most important theories of language learning; Behaviorism, Cognitive theory and Sociocultural theory, and as learning a language means learning a new culture we talk about the important aspects that learning involves a new culture; Acculturation, Culture shock and Social distance. Besides the former aspects we mention the Relationship between Language and Culture, what Intercultural Language Learning is and finally we present what some International Work and Travel Programs offer.

2.1 Second and Foreign Language Learning

On one hand a foreign language (FL) is a non-native language taught in school that has no status as a routine medium of communication in that country. On other hand, a second language (SL) is a non-native language that is widely used for purposes of communication, usually as a medium of education, government or business.

Smith (1994, p.7) quotes Klein (1986) in *Second language learning: Theoretical foundations*, second language will normally stand as a cover term for “any language other than the first language learned by a given learner or group of learners a) irrespective of the

type of learning environment and b) irrespective of number of other non-native languages possessed by the learner”. This includes both “foreign” languages (for example, French as a foreign language for Austrians) and languages which are not one’s mother tongue but are nevertheless spoken regularly in one’s own community (for example, French for English-speaking Canadians) Smith (1994 p.7).

As seen in the previous descriptions the difference between one and the other is that, the foreign language occurs in an artificial environment, like the classroom, the speaker does not use the language to communicate on a daily basis, and the second language occurs in a natural environment, the speaker is in touch with the language every day, for example, a Mexican learning English in the USA. However Smith emphasizes that there is no difference between one and the other, because both are not one’s mother tongue. Thus we have come to conclude that any language that is not your mother tongue may be considered as a second language.

2.2 Theories of Learning

The theories of learning have changed from behaviorism to cognitive and sociocultural theories through the years. As presented in the following sections.

2.2.1 Behaviorism

Behaviorism emerged in the 1940’s and 1960’s was based on stimulus-response associations. This theory focuses on observable behavior rather than thinking. The learner

accumulates pieces of knowledge that are sequenced and ordered hierarchically therefore each piece of knowledge is to be learned independently making the learning more manageable. Every single part of the learning has to be assimilated in order to proceed to the next part in the hierarchy, gradually leading to complex knowledge. The learning in this theory is based on stimuli and responses. Given that the stimulus is an important factor in this theory, positive motivation is a factor of reinforcement for all the small steps of the learning process. “Behaviorist theories attempt to explain how learners can learn the more difficult aspects of the L2, that is, the elements which are least like their first language (L1)”.(Macaro, 2003 p.23).

The major concerns with this theory are that:

- Learning is broken down into ever-smaller, analytic parts are no longer integrated to form a whole
- Learning entails much more than to a stimulus
- Learning is task and context dependent

2.2.2 Cognitive learning theory

This theory sees the learning as a process of active construction where each individual makes sense of new information based on his/her existing knowledge. The incorporation of new knowledge leads to restructuring one’s previous knowledge. In his theory the learning involves a process of making connections; therefore the learner has to reorganize the new pieces of knowledge to integrate them into his/her previous experiences. That is why students learn by relating new experiences to what they already know. Learning, language,

meaning and thinking are closely related, because learning involves creating new meanings which are generally expressed through language.

Xiangui, (2005, p.122) quotes McLaughlin (1987), “Cognitive learning theory views SLL as the acquisition of a complex cognitive skill. Some of the sub-skills involved in the language learning process are applying grammatical rules, choosing the appropriate vocabulary, following the pragmatic conventions governing the use of a specific language”.

From a cognitive learning perspective, learning involves the transformation of information in the environment into knowledge that is stored in the mind. Learning occurs when new knowledge is acquired or existing knowledge is modified by experience.

2.2.3 Sociocultural learning theory

As we have seen cognitive theories highlight thinking, sociocultural theories take into account the relationship between thinking and the social, cultural, historical and institutional context in which learning occurs, as quoted below.

Sociocultural theory holds that specifically human forms of mental activity arise in the interactions we enter into with other members of our culture and with the specific experiences we have with the artifacts produced by our ancestors and by our contemporaries. Rather than dichotomizing the mental and the social, the theory insists on a seamless and dialectic relationship between these two domains. In other words, not only does our mental activity determine the nature of our social world, but this world of human

relationships and artifacts also determines to a large extent how we regulate our mental processes. (Landolf, 2000 p.79)

The learning in this theory is developed through social interaction, which involves a social process of interaction that takes a part in the construction of knowledge; this one leads to the individual's development of a framework for making sense of experiences that are congruent with the cultural environment in which the learner and learning are located. It occurs through a social and cultural process where students socialized, communicate and "be" in ways that are culturally appropriate in the communities in which they participate as members, and where their identities are formed.

Sociocultural theory holds that language is not just a private, "in the head" affair, but rather a socially constructed phenomenon. Language learning is not only a cognitive task but more of a social activity where the process is participating in a knowledge-building community, a community of practice, or a community of second language learners (Kern & Warschauer, 2000).

The cultural dimension of sociocultural theories of learning is highlighted by Gee (2008) as follows.

A sociocultural approach places a premium on learners' experiences, social participation, use of mediating devices (tools and technology), and position within various activity systems and communities of practice. The word "culture" has taken on a wide variety of different meanings in different disciplines. Nonetheless, it is clear that as part and parcel of out early socialization in life, we each learn ways of being in the world, of acting, and interacting, thinking and valuing and using language, objects and tools critically shape our

early sense of self. A situated/sociocultural perspective amounts to an argument that students learn new academic “cultures” at school (new ways of acting, interacting, valuing and using new culture, the acquisition of these new cultures interacts formidably with learners’ initial cultures. (Gee, 2008 p.100)

As we have seen the learning language process is not only an individual process, this one involves a social interaction in a cultural environment where knowledge is built through experiences, the learner needs to communicate with others and be in touch with the cultural setting where the language occurs.

2.3 Learning a Second Culture

The process of acquiring a second culture has been studied from a number of perspectives. In the perspective of Acton & Walker de Felix (1986) acculturation is the gradual adaptation to the target culture without necessarily forsaking one’s native language identity and they propose an acculturation model that entails the following four stages:

1. Tourist. The early phase, in which the new culture is almost totally inaccessible; the phase often referred to as entailing some degree of culture shock. The language spoken might be termed “phrasebookese”. Learners draw extensively on first language strategies and resources.
2. Survivor. The stage of functional language and functional understanding of the culture. One must pass through this stage to be considered an educated, competent speaker of the language. Many do not, for example, manual labor jobs often require

little more than “survivor” competence in language and culture. To remain at this stage is to speak something akin to a “pidgin”.

3. Immigrant. The degree of acculturation we expect of an educated learner, one who is literate in his or her own language. It is the stage reached by most literate people who spend an extended period of time working and living in a foreign culture. Most, however, do not progress beyond this stage.
4. Citizen. The stage that is almost at the level of the native speaker, in which one has acculturated to the degree that one, is only rarely tripped up by the subtleties of the language and culture. This person is expected to have both pronunciation and gestures very similar to those of natives.

Wong-Fillmore (1983) has a different perspective; she characterized the important stages in second language acquisition came to somewhat similar conclusions, but with a finer set of distinctions. Focusing on relatively specific language skills, she noted five qualitative different stages in second language acquisition.

- 1) Novice speakers depend almost exclusively on situational clues and first language strategies and vocabulary.
- 2) Advanced beginners understand most face-to-face conversations and can use rules to produce languages but are generally limited to functional kinds of tasks and interactions.
- 3) Competent speakers know most basic rules of grammar and conversation, think in the language, and make relatively few serious mistakes.

- 4) Proficient speakers can select language affectively to meet specific goals, even if they have to bend the rules to do so; they have developed reliable intuitions as to which word form is most appropriate.
- 5) Ability to write professional-quality poetry in the second language.

Acculturation is a significant degree and one manifestation of a general human response to new learning situations and growth a reflection of mind as well as culture. The Acton & Walker de Felix's model reaffirms the importance of socio-cultural factors or variables, but it also highlights the interrelationships involved as well. On other hand the Wong-Fillmore perspective highlights the skills that the learner develops in each stage of his/her learning process.

Brown (1980) quotes Guiora (1979) who said that "second language learning in some respects involves the acquisition of a second identity". For this reason second language learning is often second culture learning. In order to understand what second culture learning is, it is necessary to understand the nature of acculturation, culture shock and social distance; these concepts are presented next.

2.3.1 Acculturation

According to Brown (1980 p.33) "acculturation is the process of becoming adapted to a new culture". The acculturation will depend on the purpose of learning a second language and each type of second language situation involves different degrees of acculturation. For this reason is important to establish the context involved in the

second language learning. Brown considers 2 types of second language learning contexts:

- 1) One context is technically referred to as the learning of a second language, or learning another language either a) within the culture of that second language (for example, an Arabic speaker learning English in the United States) or b) within one's own native culture where the second language is an accepted *lingua franca* used for education, government or business within the country (for example, learn English in the Philippines).
- 2) Foreign language learning that is learning a non-native language in one's own culture with few immediate and widespread opportunities to use the language within the environment of one's own culture (for example, learning French or German in the United States).

2.3.2 Culture Shock

The process of travelling to a different place often brings feelings of excitement, happiness, nervousness and so on, most of the time people do not realize the cultural shock they will face when arriving to a different country. According to Brown (1980 p.35) "culture shock is a common experience for a person learning a second language in a second culture. Culture shock is associated with feelings in the learner of estrangement, anger, hostility, indecision, frustration, unhappiness, sadness, loneliness, homesickness, and even physical illness".

The learner is not prepared for acquiring a new culture at the beginning of her/his experience in a different country. Edward Hall (1959 p.35) describes a hypothetical example of an American living abroad for the first time:

At first, things in the cities look pretty much alike. There are taxis, hotels with hot and cold running water, theatres, neon lights, even tall buildings with elevators and a few people who can speak English. But pretty soon the American discovers that underneath the familiar exterior there are vast differences. When someone says "yes" it often doesn't mean yes at all, and when people smile it doesn't always mean they are pleased. When the American visitor makes a helpful gesture he may be rebuffed; when he tries to be friendly nothing happens. People tell him that they will do things and don't. The longer stays, the more enigmatic the new country looks.

Peter Adler (1972) describes culture shock in more technical psychological terms: Culture shock is thought to be a form of anxiety that results from the loss of commonly perceived and understood signs and symbols of social intercourse. In other hand the anthropologist George Hall (1962) described culture shock in extreme terms: Culture shock is a mental illness, and as is true of much mental illness the victim usually does not know he is afflicted. He finds that he is irritable, depressed, and probably annoyed by the lack of attention shown to him.

As the acculturation process, the culture shock is a process which has different stages:

- 1) Period of excitement and euphoria over the newness of the surroundings.
- 2) Culture shock the individual feels the intrusion of more and more cultural differences into his own image of self and security.

- 3) First tentative and vacillating, recovery.
- 4) Near or fully recovery, acceptance of the new culture and self-confidence in the “new” person that has developed in this culture.

2.3.3 Social Distance

Social distance refers to the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures which come into contact within an individual. “Distance” is obviously used in abstract sense, to denote dissimilarity between two cultures. (Brown, 1980 p. 39).

Schumann’s hypothesis is that the greater the social distance between two cultures, the greater the difficulty the learner will have in learning the second language, and conversely, the smaller the social distance (the greater the social solidarity between two cultures), the better will be the language learning situation.

We do believe the distance is one of the main factors that affects the learning process, when two cultures are alike it is easier for the learner to relate similar concepts or situations with the knowledge that he/she already has, but if the distance between one culture and the other is bigger the learner will have troubles adapting to a new culture, therefore learning process may take more time and might be complicated.

According to Acton (1979) “when a learner encounters a new culture, his acculturation process will be a factor of how he perceives his own culture in relation to the culture of the target language, and vice versa”. Taking this into account we can imply that when the learner learns another language and therefore the culture of that language this creates in the learner an interest for his own culture.

Acton makes a classification of three dimensions of social distance: (1) distance (or differences) between himself and his countrymen in general; (2) distance between himself and member of the target culture in general; and (3) distance between his countrymen and member of the target culture. Acton found that in the case of learners of English who had been in the United States for four months, there is an optimal perceived social distance ratio (among the three scores) that typifies the “good” language learner. If a learner perceived himself as either too close to or too distant from either the target culture or the native culture he fell into the category of “bad” language learners as measured by standard proficiency tests.

2.4 The Relationship of Language and Culture

Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways. Kramersch, (1998). Therefore, in consequence we can say that there is no way to separate the relationship between culture and language, because learning a language implies learning a new culture.

This relationship between language and culture is unbreakable since language is used to maintain cultural ties. According to Brooks (1964) physically and mentally everyone is the same, while the interactions between persons or groups vary widely from place to place. Patterns which emerge from these group behaviors and interactions will be approved, or disapproved. Behaviors which are acceptable will vary from location to location, forming the basis of different cultures.

It is from these differences that one's view of the world is formed. Therefore, everyone's views are dependent on the culture which has influenced them, language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next (Emmitt & Pollock, 1997).

2.5 Intercultural Language Learning

Intercultural language learning involves developing learners' understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture. According to Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) learners engaged in intercultural language learning develop a reflective stance towards language and culture, both specifically as instances of first, second, and additional languages and cultures, and generally as understandings of the flexible ways in which language and culture exist in the world.

It is impossible to picture language without culture, and vice versa. Culture shapes the way we speak, write, listen and read, from the most simplest and fundamental language forms that we use to the most complex ones. Therefore language has a central role in the transmission of cultural codes; language forms and the messages conveyed by them provide cultural knowledge, making impossible the idea of separating language and culture. As Liddicoat et. al. mention, the Intercultural Language Learning requires students to reflect on the knowledge and assumptions they make about their own cultures as well as of those of the target language. They also reflect on the ways that languages embody cultures and manifest culturally significant attitudes and behaviors.

Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) describe Intercultural Language Learning as follows:

Intercultural language learning involves developing with learners an understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture. It is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognized, mediated, and accepted. Learners engaged in intercultural language learning develop a reflective stance towards language and culture, both specifically as instances of first, second, and additional languages and cultures, and generally as understandings of the variable ways in which language and culture exist in the world. (Liddicoat et al, 2003 p.46)

Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) propose a set of five principles which provide a starting point for developing intercultural language learning. As can be seen on table 2.1

Table 2.1 Principles for developing intercultural language learning

1	Active construction	Learning involves purposeful, active engagement in interpreting and creating meaning in interaction with others, and continuously reflecting on one's self and others in communication and meaning-making in variable contexts. For students, it is more than a process of absorption of facts but continuously developing as thinking, feeling, changing intercultural beings.
2	Making connections	Learning is developed firstly through social interactions (<i>interpersonally</i>) and then internally within the mind of the individual

		<p>(<i>intrapersonally</i>). In the interpersonal process previous knowledge is challenged, creating new insights through which students connect, reorganize, elaborate and extend their understanding. In this process, constant connections are made between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language and culture and learning • existing conceptions – new understandings • language and thinking • first language – additional language(s) • previous experiences – new experiences • the intercultural self – intracultural self – others.
3	Interaction	<p>Learning and communication are social and interactive. Interacting and communicating interculturally means continuously developing one's understanding of the relationship between one's own framework of language and culture and that of others. In interaction, participants engage in a continuous dialogue in negotiating meaning across variable perspectives held by diverse participants, and continuously learn from and build upon the experience.</p>
4	Reflection	<p>Learning involves becoming aware of how we think, know and learn a language (first and additional), culture, knowing, understanding and their relationship as well as concepts such as diversity, identity, experiences and one's own intercultural thoughts and feelings.</p>
5	Responsibility	<p>Learning depends on learners' attitudes, dispositions and values, developed over time. In communication, it involves accepting</p>

		responsibility for one's way of interacting with others within and across languages and for striving continuously to better understand self and others in the ongoing development of intercultural sensitivity.
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These previews subjects are important to take into account when travelling to a new country, where in this case language students will experience a change of culture and where the language is a different one than their mother tongue, in order to be prepared and to know what they might have to face when attending to a summer camp.

2.6 International Work and Travel Programs

Every year university students in this case LEI students from BUAP look for opportunities to travel abroad to practice and improve their English skills and also to know different cultures. However the whole process and procedures that are carried out in order to travel abroad are very tiring and difficult as a student. There are some agencies around the world that facilitates these procedures to students. The agencies mentioned below are some of the most applied by students. The programs they offer to travel and work abroad are mentioned below.

Smaller Earth is part of the Smaller Earth Groups and sister company of Camp Leaders, providing small opportunities for young people to work at American summer camps since 1999. Smaller earth offers different types of programs such as shown on the advertisement:

Work & Travel		
By country	By category	By Duration
USA	Au Pair	Up to one week
	Summer Camps	Up to two weeks
	By Continent	Up to one month
	North America	Up to three months
		Up to six months
		Up to one year
		Up to 18 months
		Any duration

These programs are divided by country, USA, by continent, North America, by duration that can be from one week up to 18 months depending on the program and finally by category, smaller earth has 2 main categories to travel and work in the USA, these are Au Pair and Summer Camps.

Au Pair – USA

Au Pair Jobs mean living with an American host family, looking after children of different ages. The main duties will be focused on childcare and a typical day will include waking the children and preparing them for their day, preparing meals for the children, driving them to and from school and activities sharing home country through games, storytelling, cooking and all this by putting in practice English language skills. It is in this way that Au Pair spend a gap year or two, as the program allows applicants to work from 12 -24 months

Summer Camp Work & Travel – USA Offers to spend the summer working as part of the support staff at a summer camp in the USA. Working at a camp will, without doubt, be the most rewarding, challenging and unforgettable job you'll ever have. You will work hard but will do so in amazing surroundings, having great fun and making new friends to last a lifetime.

Camp Leaders is part of the Smaller Earth Group and have sent thousands of international support staff to camp since 1999. They provide the opportunity to work in various support positions at summer camp in the USA, such as in the kitchen, maintenance or cleaning staff. They also give the opportunity to travel afterwards. Camp Leaders, in association with visa sponsor Cultural Homestay International, will assist candidates in getting their J-1 work and travel visa, which enables people to spend at least 9 weeks working at a camp and then have a few weeks afterwards in which to travel America and explore!

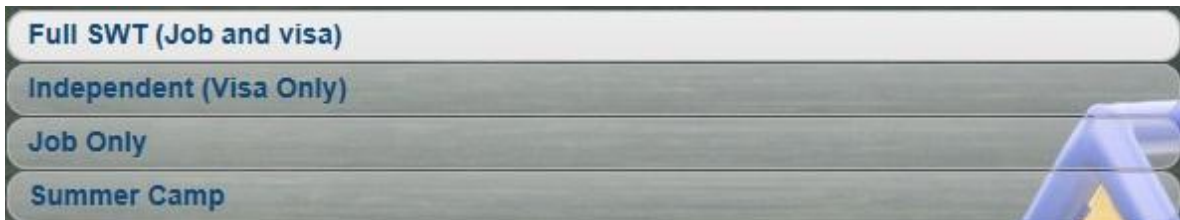
American Camp and Work Experience (ACAWE) are International staffing partner, hardworking International Staff for seasonal employment during summer in the United States. As an authorized program sponsor of the International Cultural Exchange Program of the US State Department, ACAWE offers International students the opportunity to experience the culture of the United States and then return home to share their experiences.

The International Cultural Exchange program allows individuals to participate in a variety of cultural exchanges in the United States, ranging from camp counselor to any number of positions within the Leisure and Resort Industries. Through this Program, ACAWE can offer an unlimited supply of International workers of college age, to ease the burden associated with seasonal staffing demands. Today, more and more employers are turning to

Work and Travel Program participants as an important component of their seasonal hiring strategies.

The Summer Work and Travel Program is a program operated by the US Department of State using designated sponsors and allows full time students to come to the United States during the summer vacation in their home country, to work and travel. ACAWE is a designated sponsor and they can offer you the opportunity to travel to the United States to work, make some money and travel all over the USA. ACAWE offers students several programs and options, depending upon needs. With experienced staff, they will guide people through the process of completing the paperwork, getting a job, obtaining the visa and arriving to the United States. An ACAWE representative and the candidate will be able to determine which program will most suit needs.

These are the 4 different programs that ACAWE offers:



Full SWT (Job and visa)

In this program ACAWE will provide you with all your needs. They will provide a job, visa documentation, insurance and full support throughout the program. They will walk you through the process and assist you when needed. This program suits those that are looking to make some money to cover expenses, maybe save some money, but they will need not to worry at any stage.

Independent (Visa Only)

Visa and Insurance Only – you find your own work place, they only provide you with documentation, DS-2019 and insurance. You will get ACAWE's support during the visa process. This program suits those that have the initiative to look for their own job and students returning to the USA who just need the paperwork done.

Job Only

In this program they will provide you with a job with one of our employers. You will arrange your own visa and insurance for the length of the job offered.

Summer Camp

Working in an American summer camp is not only a great way to make friends from all over the world; it is also an opportunity to learn about American culture from the inside. When camp is over, there's time to travel with your new best friends and see the 'real' America.

The Program is open to students and young people from the age of 19, with experience in various fields, who are available to arrive in the USA during the month of June for approximately 9 weeks.

ACAWE provides for you:

- ❖ J-1 Visa (subject to approval by the United States Local Embassy). CCS is an approved sponsor of the J1 Cultural Exchange Visitor Program of the United States Department of State
- ❖ Basic Accident and Sickness Insurance for the time spent in camp

- ❖ The camp provides free food and accommodation

In addition, you will:

- ❖ Earn a stipend based upon your position, skills and experience that will cover all your costs and much more
- ❖ Experience a fun, challenging and greatly rewarding summer
- ❖ Enhance your experience of working in a team and working with children
- ❖ Gain valuable life skills
- ❖ Have a great opportunity to see North America
- ❖ Form friendships that can last a lifetime!

In the summer camp program ACAWE offers 2 types of positions to work:

Program Staff:

Specialists teach, coach and instruct groups and individuals for 4-7 sessions a day. In some cases, the specialist will organize competitions, shows and special events in camp and/or with other camps. They will direct different activities for a variety of ages, from young with no experience to older campers with talent, capabilities and experience. Specialists may be expected to live in cabins with children and serve as a general counselor when not working within their specialty area.

Support Staff:

As a support staff you can work in the positions of guard, chef/kitchen, maintenance and housekeeping.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the process that was followed to obtain the necessary information about LEI students' experiences after attending to a summer camp. The methodology used in this research was the introspective method and students' narratives were used as instrument. The subjects for this research are presented, as well as the data collection procedures to obtain the necessary information for this study. We mention how the data were analyzed and finally the conclusion of this chapter.

3.1 Subjects

The selection of subjects was based on specific requirements, having participated in a summer camp in the United States and being a LEI student. The participants were 6 students studying the BA program in English language teaching at BUAP; all the students were from the 2009 generation. We selected 3 male and 3 female, from 21 to 23 years old to carry out this study.

3.2 Research methodology

This is a qualitative research, a research that will be concerned primarily in the process, in this case the students' experiences through narratives. It focuses on people's lives, the situation and their behavior in a natural setting, in this particular case a summer camp. Ochs and Capps (1996, cited in Golombek and Johnson, 2011) view narrative as "an essential

resource in the struggle to bring experiences to conscious awareness, narrators construct two worlds, one of action and one of consciousness—what one does and what one thinks and feels” (p. 6). Therefore experiences through narratives will provide us more information about the students’ life during their stay in the summer camp. This study will be carried out with the introspective method; it means the systematic study of mental phenomena by contemplating the processes in one's own conscious experiences. To a better understanding we will give a brief definition of introspection. According to Nunan (1992) introspection “*is the process of observing and reflecting on one’s thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning processes, and mental states with a view to determining the ways in which these processes and states determine our behavior*”. Introspection refers to an observation and, sometimes, a description of the contents of one’s own consciousness. Introspection is believed to be a reflexive, metacognitive process, attending to or thinking about oneself or what is currently being experienced by oneself.

As seen in the previews descriptions introspection refers to a basic method and provides direct observation of mental processes and human behaviors. It is the only method in which the person can be aware of his own experiences, and how these experiences influence his life.

In this research one instrument was used to obtain the results: Written experiences. These will be described in the following section.

3.3 Data collection procedure

To collect the data for this research, LEI students were asked to write their personal experiences about attending to a summer camp. In this instrument the purpose was that students expressed everything about their experiences taking into account some important aspects that were useful for them to have a better idea on how to write the experience. We sent them via e-mail (see appendix A) in a word file a guide. We gave them 3 weeks to write about their experience.

3.4 Data analysis

After receiving all the 6 written experiences, those were carefully read and analyzed, taking into account several aspects; age, gender, quarter that they were studying when they enrolled for the camp, summer camp's name, location of the camp, staff position/area of work, work schedule, length of stay in the camp, times they have been in a summer camp, the experience at the beginning, at the middle and at the end and reasons for attending to a summer camp.

3.5 Conclusion

As it was seen in the previous sections, the research methodology was the introspective method; the reason of this is because the research focused on peoples' experiences, specifically summer camp experiences. Likewise these were collected through written experiences of students 2009 cohort.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter describes in detail the results and findings about this research. This chapter shows the data collected through written experiences from 6 LEI students. Before presenting the main results, it is worth giving general information about the subjects to a better understanding of the results.

As we mentioned above, 6 subjects, 3 male and 3 female were the participants in this research. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy. In the study they are referred to as:

Male ones: Blake James, 21 years old, Cody Vega, 22 years old and Nicolas Macedonio, 22 years old.

Females ones: Dakota Akemi, 21 year old, Renata Avila, 21 years old and Ingrid Galicia, 21 years old.

They were asked to write their personal experience after attending to a summer camp. From the 6 students, 4 have attended a summer camp once, 1 has been twice and 1 student has already participated three times.

4.1 Research questions

1. What are the most common reasons students of Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Ingles at BUAP report when attending to a summer camp?

2. What issues did those students reveal in their narratives when attending to a summer camp?

3. How those students perceive their experiences at the summer camp?

4.2 Presentation of results

In this section we present the results from the written experiences of the LEI students, based on the research questions.

Research question number 1

What are the most common reasons students of Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Ingles at BUAP report when attending to a summer camp?

Table 4.1 Reasons to attend to a summer camp

Name of the participant	Categories	Vignettes
Blake James	Cultural reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I enrolled with “Camp Leaders” which is an international agency that deals with this kind of cultural interchange experience for those students and people who wish to travel abroad in within a cultural-job program.• I wanted to travel abroad.• I really wanted to live an international experience abroad.

	Linguistic reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wanted to improve my English.
	Fun/travelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wanted to spend a time out of home to see things by myself and feel kind of independent.
Cody Vega	Cultural reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet people and places.
	Linguistic reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To practice and improve my English.
	Fun/travelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wanted to have a great traveling experience.
Nicolas Macedonio	Cultural reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting People
	Fun/travelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • High salary
Dakota Akemi	Cultural reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet new people. • Visit new places.
	Linguistic reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve my English. • Acquire more vocabulary. • Educate my ear to the pronunciation of the words.
Renata Avila	Cultural reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wanted to know people. • Learn about different cultures.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet people and places.
	Linguistic reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can practice your English.
Ingrid Galicia	Cultural reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have the chance to meet people for other countries. • The places are totally different that the ones that you already know. • I felt lucky because the fact of meeting new people from another countries.
	Linguistic reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You definitely are going to improve your English speaking skill.

Most of the reasons for students to attend to a summer camp were cultural and linguistic reasons. Cultural because the majority wanted to travel abroad, meet people and visit new places and Linguistic because they wanted to practice and improve their second language, in this case English. As can be seen in table 4.1

Research question number 2

What issues did those students reveal in their narratives when attending to a summer camp?

Table 4.2 Issues the participants face.

Name of the participant	Categories	Vignettes
Blake James	Linguistic Barriers: Accent, Vocabulary and Speed of talk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the very beginning of this experience it was really difficult to me understand Americans. • When I first got to the airport and the camp director picked me I barely understand a word of what she was saying, <u>it was a completely different way of talking from what I was used to in the classroom with my classmates and teachers.</u> • When I listened to guys from England, Scotia and Ireland, it was even more difficult to me to get what they were saying, <u>due to their accents, vocabulary, and speed of their talk.</u>
	Social Problems: Adaptation problems and Discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the job environment, <u>it was really difficult to me to adapt to the work schedule,</u> and even to work because I had never worked before in my whole life. • I finished work really tired, <u>I also feel tired of eating American food</u> such as hamburgers, fried chicken, fries, etc. • Some guys at camp especially Americans <u>were kind of mean with foreigners,</u> but nothing bad happened.
Cody Vega	Linguistic barriers: Accent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I did have some problems with English like getting used to the

		<p><u>accent.</u></p>
<p>NicolásMacedonio</p>	<p>Job Issues: Overworking, Bad organization,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The truth is that the first week was hard; <u>I had to get used to my work</u>, I had to make friends and I had to buy things I thought I would not use at camp or even get used to the weather. • Work hours (in this case) went up to 12 or 14 a day. • Soon with all Jewish aspects come “very important” and you have to work extra to fill all their requirements at meals. • Guys from Latin America were a problem because <u>they were lazy</u>. • Our bosses (American ones) <u>did not know how to organize everything</u> and usually meals were a disaster, the director of camp got mad every time that happened. • Europeans guys declined then we were treated as “<u>slaves</u>” so new guys from Europe and more ones from Latin America were hired. • Now <u>we are at least 13 hours per day or even more</u>, our contract says we cannot do more than 10, there are days when we don’t have break, and is it not because the chef doesn’t want to, is a lot of work. • <u>Not all people work as they should</u>, as other who works more to get it every day. In fact is not possible that everyday gets worse. Yesterday we worked 14 hours straight.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are days when <u>there are fights inside kitchen</u> because we run out of food. • We can't do our best when moments and <u>environment are so stressful</u>. • Law says that <u>we cannot work more than 8 hours per day</u>, we must be paid as an American worker 7.55 dollar per hour and if we consider the extra hours would be more. • Our concern is that camp wants to save money not hiring more personal, they have to pay us as law says. We don't have to ask for our rights, do we?
	Linguistic Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obviously language was a problem for almost all, except for the European ones and me.
	Social Problems: Discrimination/ Stereotypes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native North Americans were mad when things go wrong and think because of you are from a "poor country" you are more than used to things like these.
Dakota Akemi	Job issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have some personal problems with the cook and our communication was affected for that.
	Linguistic Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first problem that I had to face was the communication with the native speakers; I had troubles to understand them.

	Social Problems: Ethnic barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other kind of communication problems was inside of the kitchen, the cook was a black women thus her English was totally different, I did my best to understand her because when I didn't understand her she always got mad with me.
Renata Avila	Linguistic Barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes I did not understand what they said to me, because American people speak so fast and with informal English
	Social Problems: Self-confidence problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wanted to know people, but I felt fear of talking with them.
Ingrid Galicia	Job Issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being at the laundry was not an easy job because the journey was from 9am to 7pm at the beginning, then from 9 to 5 or 6, and you were just there, waiting for the washing machines and the dryers to be able to fold the clothes and deliver the laundry bags to their owners.
	Social Problems: Adaptation problems and Self-confidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the food... well it's tasty but the same food every week bores. • I consider a little bit funny this fact: no matter how much English you know, when you are in a situation with native speakers of English in a foreign country, nerves are going to appear,

Issues that students face when attending to a summer camp
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Job issues: Overworking, Complains and Bad organization.➤ Linguistic barriers: Accent, Vocabulary and Speed of talk.➤ Social problems: Stereotypes, Discrimination, Ethnic barriers, Adaptation problems and Self-confidence.

As it can be seen in the table 4.2 there were three kinds of issues for the students. These were categorized in linguistic barriers, social problems and job issues. Firstly, the linguistic barriers; the accent was the main obstacle for students to communicate with native speakers also vocabulary and speed of talk were issues in the process of communication. Secondly, social problems played an important role in the students' experiences because all of the students above presented issues such as adaptation problems, discrimination/stereotypes, ethnic barriers and self-confidence problems. Finally, job issues; these were the least frequent problems that the students above presented in their experiences, only 2 students had issues such as overworking and bad organization in their jobs. As shown on the table 4.2.

Research question number 3

How those students perceive their experiences at the summer camp?

Table 4.3 Students opinions about their experiences

Name of the participant	Opinions: Categories	Vignettes
Blake James	Compensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes I did not understand the whole message, but I did catch the main idea. • I usually got the weekends off because the cooker realized that I was really doing my best, and it was like an award for working hard. • Now, the experience with the campers had a strong impact on my own; the camp treats people with especial needs so each week we received campers with different disabilities. It was quite hard to me to see campers without arms, legs, and people blinded, burned, with cancer, people about to die, among many other situations campers were going through; then, I kind of get used to it when a month passed by. • In the middle of my stay (in the second month) things were going good; I got used to the work environment, the vocabulary used in the kitchen, and the type of talk of the cook and native speakers of English. • Linguistically talking, with my roommates and closest friend the language was not a problem, I got used to it, and I even adopt some expressions people use frequently at camp. • I think their friendship really helped me in my English development while being at camp.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things with my friend were going really good, we spent some time out of camp at the malls, restaurants, in Huston, and some pubs; we usually had a lot of fun together. • After camp, I spend a week in Minnesota with some relatives, and I really enjoyed America as a tourist. • The experience was awesome even though I worked really hard, I made some really good friends (I actually keep in touch with them), I improved a little bit my English and I added an international experience in my life.
	Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have to accept that I usually finished work pretty tired.
Cody Vega	Compensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were people from all around the world, which made it more exciting. • Although I was at support staff I had to do some activities or events with all the people that were at camp and that was great. • After 5 weeks I felt much better, I felt like if I had been there for a long time, by this time I had no problem at work or problems trying to communicate in English, I was even practicing to speak in French. I already had like a routine or that was what I felt like. I was making new friends. • At the last weeks at camp I felt totally satisfied with the whole

		<p>experience, even though there were happy and sad instants, difficult and easy moments, I felt and still feel great the way they happened. I got the opportunity to travel, to meet people from many parts of the world and to practice and improve my English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used English in and out of camp.
	Difficulties	None
Nicolas Macedonio	Compensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I had the “lucky” to be one of first ones (five) to have a camp at the beginning and place in the kitchen for having the ability to speak English. • The first year was in certain way good then all guys working on the kitchen were great workmates and some even excellent friends. • Second time I decided to go back was my director asked me to return thanks to my “marvellous” job also salary was higher and some friends were going back. • All of us learnt and got used to be here at least 12 hours per day, our capacity of getting along well was something that helped us to do our best, we had some fun after all, and also some things were nice.
	Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like all business they picture you a nice job, sometimes they mention it will be hard but no like it is going to be in reality. • All the process to travel is way too complicated and costs a lot; as a job it is not profitable and you go for the

		<p>experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step by step you realize is not how it is supposed to be, I mean I know there are a bunch of nice camps, however not all. • You have no right to decide where you want to go or which camps to go due to an application you upload.
Dakota Akemi	Compensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I met a friend who spoke a little bit Spanish, so she tried to explain me the things in their own words. • At the middle I could understand them better I had learned more words, I felt more sure about my pronunciation, I made a lot of friends and all of them foreigners English native speakers thus I had a real interaction with the language, I visited a lot of places during my stay there at the camp. I had less problems with the cook because I understood her better and more. • I really improved my pronunciation and I got to have that self-confidence to speak with others.
	Difficulties	None
Renata Avila	Compensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I had to work at 8:30 and I finished before 4 pm. It wasn't bad if I compare it to others people's schedules. • I got a friendship with the Poland girl, she was one of my favorite people at camp I spent so much time with her, but my special friends

		<p>were two boys, they were from Mexico and Colombia and they had good relations with American people, so I began to spend time with those people and little by little I felt more confident to talk with foreign people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the middle of the camp, I was accustomed to do the same routine and I felt part of this place. • And in the last part of this first experience, I felt different, I mean, I was another girl with different ideas, perspectives and I was so happy and I was thankful with God. • In the middle of the camp I spent more time with some counselors, some kids and we the staff group and it was great, people from camp did activities in which everybody could participate and I liked this, it is called “ MahKeeNac way” • At the end of the camp I traveled with a cousin and his wife to Florida and there I practiced all the time the English language, I spent almost a week there a I met people from Rumania and I improved my second language. • I recommend having an experience like this; you can practice your English, learn about different cultures, meet people and places and have a great experience.
	Difficulties	None

Ingrid Galicia	Compensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything was new, the people, the place, the food... On the other side, my experience was really exciting. • Randy was the name that my boss uses to refer to the old van used to carry the laundry bags. I was the only one who learnt to drive “him” so that was the thing that I enjoyed doing the most every day
	Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of my job position I had no much contact with the campers and the other staff members.

In table 4.3 according to the students’ narratives about their experience, they said that during their stay they had compensations and difficulties. As compensations they declared that they practiced their English in a real context, they had good working experiences, they had life experiences, they improved their vocabulary, they met people and made friends from around the world, they were in touch with a different culture, they adapted to a new culture, they had some time to visit new places, they improved their pronunciation, they were more self-confident when speaking English and in general they improved their English language skills. In terms of difficulties for instance, they had to get used to a working routine, they had a complicated travelling process, agencies might not mention all the duties staff members will have to do once in the camp, camp directors chose the position applicants have to work on and work organization varies from camp to camp.

4.3 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter the results of the students written experiences were displayed in order to show the important aspects that each student had to face during their stay in a summer camp. To a better understanding the results were categorized and presented in tables. In the next chapter we present the conclusions of this research.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Introduction

This last chapter presents the conclusions from this research describing the next points; the research findings, implications, limitations of the study and finally suggestions for further research, these points take an important role to conclude this research and are explained to provide a clearer description of the results.

5.1 Research findings

The main purpose of this research was to explore how helpful these experiences were for students of Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés at BUAP. In order to determine if these experiences helped them in their language learning process, to improve their language skills and to know the role that culture took once they arrived to a foreign country. In this particular case when they arrived to the USA.

Also this research attempted to answer 3 research questions these were answered as follows:

Research question number 1

What are the most common reasons students of Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés at BUAP report when attending to a summer camp?

Based on the results given by LEI students about the most common reasons when attending to a summer camp, we have concluded that there are 3 main reasons; cultural,

linguistic and for fun/travelling. Cultural because most of the students answered; “I want to go to a summer camp; to travel abroad, to meet new people, to visit new places and to learn about different cultures”. Linguistic because they said things like; I wanted to improve my English, acquire more vocabulary, educate my ear to the pronunciation of words, improve my English speaking skills”. And finally Fun/travelling because some of them mentioned some others reasons like; “I wanted to spend a time out of home to see things by myself and feel kind of independent, to have a great traveling experience, for a higher salary and for curiosity”.

Research question number 2

What issues did those students reveal in their narratives when attending to a summer camp?

According to the results, most of the students reveal in their narratives that they had to face different kinds of issues during their stay at their camps. We found 3 main kinds of issues; Job issues, Linguistic barriers and Social problems.

In the category of Job issues the participants revealed in their narrative things like:

“Being at the laundry was not an easy job because the journey was from 9am to 7pm at the beginning” “Work hours (in this case) went up to 12 or 14 a day”, “Europeans guys declined then we were treated as “slaves” so new guys from Europe and more ones from Latin America were hired.”, “We can’t do our best when moments and environment are so stressful.”, “Our concern is that camp wants to save money not hiring more personal, they have to pay us as law says. We don’t have to ask for our rights do we?”, “There are days when there are fights inside the kitchen because we run out of food.” and “Our bosses

(American ones) did not know how to organize everything and usually meals were a disaster, the director of camp got mad every time that happened.”

It is a little appalling to see these kinds of comments, because in terms of work, the agencies said that is a hard job and they do not tell them how tough it would really be. It is obvious reading these narratives that things like the job that they apply, takes a very important role in the whole experience, for example people that applied for the housekeeping position did not have many job issues as those who had the kitchen staff position, therefore the job that they apply makes a difference in the kind of experience they can have.

In the category of Linguistic barriers, most of the students agreed in the same kind of issues; “At the very beginning of this experience it was really difficult to me understand Americans.”, “When I first got to the airport and the camp director picked me I barely understood a word of what she was saying, it was a completely different way of talking from what I was used to in the classroom with my classmates and teachers.”, “When I listened to guys from England, Scotia and Ireland, it was even more difficult to me to get what they were saying, due to their accents, vocabulary, and speed of their talk.”, “I did have some problems with English like getting used to the accent.”, “The first problem that I had to face was the communication with the native speakers; I had troubles to understand them.” and “Sometimes I did not understand what they said to me, because American people speak so fast and with informal English.”.

The majority said that the accent, vocabulary and speed of talk were an obstacle to understand each other, because they are used to academic and more formal English and they only used it in the classroom, also to listen just one type of accent, thus when they are

in a natural environment where accent, vocabulary and informal English are always present, these aspects represents a challenge for the students.

Finally in the last category, social problems, A variety of issues were found; Stereotypes, Discrimination, Ethnic barriers, Adaptation problems and Self-confidence problems. The participants expressed things like; “In the job environment, it was really difficult to me to adapt to the work schedule, and even to work because I had never worked before in my whole life”, “I feel tired of eating American food such as hamburgers, fried chicken, fries, etc.”, “About the food... well it’s tasty but the same food every week bores”, “Some guys at camp especially Americans were kind of mean with foreigners, but nothing bad happened.”, “The truth is that the first week was hard; I had to get used to my work, I had to make friends and I had to buy things I thought I would not use at camp or even get used to the weather.”, “Native North Americans came mad when things went wrong and think because of you are from a “poor country” you are more than used to things like these.”, “Other kind of communication problems was inside of the kitchen, the cook was a black women thus her English was totally different”, “I wanted to know people, but I felt fear of talking with them.”, and “I consider a little bit funny this fact: no matter how much English you know, when you are in a situation with native speakers of English in a foreign country, nerves are going to appear”.

The participants had a rough time adapting to their job, the food and even the weather of the foreign country, also it seems that people’s beliefs towards a different culture are a problem, that is when things like stereotypes and discrimination take place, not pretty at all, but something that is inevitable to avoid, and to conclude this question, self-confidence was

also a problem for some of the participants, it is shown that no matter if they had a good English level they doubt of their knowledge in presence of a native speaker.

Research question number 3

How those students perceive their experiences at the summer camp?

About what students perceive about their experience, they mentioned compensations and difficulties. Compensations such as; “Sometimes I did not understand the whole message, but I did catch the main idea”, “There were people from all around the world, which made it more exciting”, “I really improve my pronunciation and I got to have that self-confidence to speak with others”, “Everything was new, the people, the place, the food... On the other side, my experience was really exciting” and many others from all this we can conclude that in general have a summer camp experience let students put in practice their English skills in a real context, also experience a new culture and travel to another country. As difficulties we noticed that the students mentioned things such as; “I usually finished work pretty tired”, “All the process to travel is way too complicated and costs a lot”, “Because of my job position I had no much contact with the campers and the other staff members” in other words that is hard to adapt to a new place and a new life.

Finally it can be concluded that a summer camp experience turns out to be a useful tool for language students to develop and improve their language skills and contribute to their learning process as it is shown in the results but at the same time a shocking and harsh experience, especially when it comes to issues of stereotypes, discrimination and in general sociocultural barriers. Thus, taking into account all mentioned before, it can be affirmed

that is more possible that students who want to travel to the USA to work in a summer camp, have a pleasurable experience.

5.2 Implications

For many years, the United States have been considered as a strong country since its economical level has optimized its scientific and technological development, becoming a first world country. Therefore in Mexico, as in all over the world, people are interested in learning English to have opportunities in a first world country, such as the United States. This fact has made LEI students pay more attention on their professional development, leading them to exploit and improve their intellectual capacity. They have considered that as a foreign English speaker, they must be emerged in an English speaking country to improve their language skills and reinforce their professional development. Consequently, LEI students have seen cultural exchange programs (summer camps) as an opportunity to promote their academic and professional growth.

This study can be seen throughout the lenses of Bakhtin, (1981, cited in Golombek and Johnson, 2011), Holquist (1990 cited in Golombek and Johnson, 2011) and Shore (1996 cited in Golombek and Johnson, 2011 p.490):

“The telling or retelling (either oral or written) of an experience entails a complex combination of description, explanation, analysis, interpretation, and construal of one’s private reality as it is brought into the public sphere. Although a narrative may represent one’s own self-interpretation, how one constitutes oneself in story

has as much to do with the construction of self as it does with the purpose for and the specific time and place in which the narrative is constructed The process of narrating imparts significance to events and concretizes the meanings infused in those events, in essence, through narrative “experience is literally talked into meaningfulness”

5.3 Limitations of the study

As in many studies some troubles were encountered though the development of this process. Fortunately those troubles did not affect the research process at all, the information was completed and the project done. Some of the limitations faced were for example; in chapter 3 the methodology we knew that it was a qualitative research however we did not know what method we were going to use that later we decided that it was going to be the introspective method. Also when we asked to 10 students to write their narratives of their experience a lot of them took more time that they should to deliver their narratives and just 6 students gave us their written experiences. So we decided to work with these 6 students experiences, that at the end we realized that it was a better choice because the analysis of each experience was complicated.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

As it was mentioned before we had the opportunity to analyze 6 narratives where students expressed everything that they lived in the summer camps, most of their comments were similar in some cases, and we believe that with a larger group of participants we would

have found other aspects that were not mentioned by the these participants; like the economic payment, the expenses during their stay, etc.; aspects that we thought they were going to mention. This issue is just an example that could lead to a new research.

Some of these examples for further research can be:

Analyze and compare these experiences to those of students from other careers.

Explore the same narratives with an age variable or with a gender perspective.

Compare and contrast with students from other states and/or countries.

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APPENDIX I -Guide to write a narrative about your summer camp experience

Age:

Gender:

Quarter that you were studying when you enrolled for the camp:

Summer camp's type:

Location of the camp:

Staff position/area of work:

Work schedule:

Length of stay in the camp:

How many times have you been is a summer camp?

How was the experience at the beginning, at the middle and at the end?

Mention the reasons for attending to a summer camp:

APPENDIX II – Samples of students narratives

Summer Camp experience

Hi, my name is Blake James. Currently I am almost 23 years old, but by the time I attended the summer camp I was 21 (2011). I'm not sure in which period I was in before attending the summer camp, but for sure it was in the third year of the major and I had just finished target language four. By that time I had decided to enrolled to a summer camp job experience and I stared to cover all the requirements the institution asked me to cover; I enrolled with "Camp Leaders" which is an international agency that deals with these kind of cultural interchange experience for those students and people who wish to travel abroad in within a cultural-job program. I decided to choose Camp Leaders because they contacted me through Face Book, and I think the process was a lot easier than in other agencies.

Around May, I got accepted to work in the kitchen in a camp located in Burton, Texas; the name of the camp was "CAMP FOR ALL", and it was a huge camp; the closest city from this camp was Huston, which was I hour far. This camp treats people, especially children with special needs, so I took the chance and traveled to this camp over May the 23th 2011. Linguistically talking, at the very beginning of this experience it was really difficult to me understand Americans; I remember when I first got to the airport and the camp director picked me I barely understand a word of what she was saying, it was a completely different way of talking from what I was used to in the classroom with my classmates and teachers; even a partner from Sinaloa (who was a lot proficiency than I was) had to translate into Spanish what the camp director was saying so that I could understand. Then, when I

listened to guys (who were also staff in the camp) from England, Scotia and Ireland, it was even more difficult to me to get what they were saying, due to their accents, vocabulary, and speed of their talk. It took me like two or three week to get used to their way of talking, sometimes I did not understand the whole message, but I did catch the main idea. In the job environment, it was really difficult to me to adapt to the work schedule, and even to work because I had never worked before in my whole life; my work schedule was from 7 to 8 (from Monday to Thursday, except Friday that was from 7 am to 11 am) with 2 hours for getting some rest and then go back to work again. I usually got the weekends off because the cooker realized that I was really doing my best, and it was like an award for working hard. Now, the experience with the campers had a strong impact on my own; as I said before, the camp treats people with especial need so each week we received campers with different disabilities. It was quite hard to me to see campers without arms, legs, and people blinded, burned, with cancer, people about to die, among many other situations campers were going through; then, I kind of get used to it when a month passed by.

In the middle of my stay (in the second month) things were going good; I got used to the work environment, the vocabulary used in the kitchen, and the type of talk of the cook and native speakers of English. I have to accept that I usually finessed work pretty tired. Linguistically talking, with my roommates and closest friend the language was not a problem, I got used to it, and I even adopt some expression people use frequently at camp; we just had some little problems of miscommunication. I got along and we were good friend with two guys from Hungary, one from Germany and another one from Huston (who was in a wheelchair due to his disability. So every day we spend after work a lot of time together, messing around, playing basketball, watching movies, even going to Huston on

weekends (we actually met some relatives of the guy from Huston, they were very kind); I think their friendship really helped me in my English development while being at camp.

The last month was the worst for me because I finished work really tired, I also feel tired of eating American food such as hamburgers, fried chicken, fries, etc. I wanted to come back home and have a good meal such as chilaquiles, mole or so. Things with my friend were going really good, we spent some time out of camp at the malls, restaurants, in Huston, and some pubs; we usually had a lot of fun together. Some guys at camp especially Americans were kind of mean with foreigners, but nothing bad happened.

After camp, I spend a week in Minnesota with some relatives, and I really enjoy America as a tourist. In total, I spent three months in USA; the reasons I attended the summer camp was in the first place, because I wanted to improve my English, in the second place because I wanted to travel abroad and finally because I really wanted to live an international experience abroad and spend a time out of home to see things by myself and feel kind if independent ; I think I reached my goals, the experience was awesome even though I worked really hard, I made some really good friends (I actually keep in touch with them), I improve a little bit my English and I add an international experience in my life.

Summer Camp experience

My name is Dakota, I am 21 years old, I'm a female. When I was studying the fourth quarter at the university, I was accepted in Camp Summit in Argyle, Texas. I have the kitchen staff position I worked from 7:00 am to 12:00 and from 4:00 to 8:00 pm it was from Monday to Friday, on Saturday I worked from 6:30 am to 12:00 and Sundays from 12:00 am to 6:00 pm. I worked from May 12th to August 15th having break of 2 weeks in July. I have been once in a summer camp and my experience is the follow.

At the beginning of the camp the first problem that I had to face was the communication with the natives speakers, I had troubles to understand them, but I met a friend who spoken a little bit Spanish, so she tried to explain me the things in their words, other kind of communication problems was inside of the kitchen, the cook was a black women thus her English was totally different and nobody of my friend could help me because all of them was counselors, so I did my best to understand her because when I didn't understand her she always got mad with me.

At the middle I could understand them better I had learned more words, I felt more sure about my pronunciation, I made a lot of friends and all of them foreigners English native speakers thus I had a real interaction with the language, I visited a lot of places during my stay there at the camp. I have less problems with the cook because I understood her better and more.

At the end of the camp I have some personal problems with the cook and our communication was affected for that, but I really improve my pronunciation and I got to have that self-confidence to speak with others.

The reasons that I have to attending in a summer camp was to improve my English, to acquire more vocabulary and to educate my ear to the pronunciation of the words and as an extra to meet new people and to visit new places.