Homestay: What Factors Contribute to Second Language Learning?

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I. Introduction

As the globalization spreads all over the countries, it seems that foreign or second language learning becomes popular in many countries and that people seek for immersion contexts for their target language learning. In this flow of globalized language learning stream, the homestay environment is one of the least examined areas of study abroad although it has been considered sine qua non of language study in immersion contexts (Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). This lack of studies on homestay seems to bury the potential of homestay for second language and culture learning. In fact, so many homestay students have been disappointed with their experience which they have had in homestay programs after spending a great amount of money, time, and energy.

Students often find mismatches between their expectations of homestay

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experience and the reality (Venema & Russell, 2007). This may affect their beliefs of second language and culture learning through homestay experience in a negative way. According to Yang and Kim (2011), a mere change of second language learning contexts for study abroad students does not guarantee the success of language learning unless they align their beliefs with the contexts. This means that merely being immersed through a homestay program may not be effective for second language and culture learning. There may be also important factors that enhance or maximize the effect of homestay. The present study examines those factors in the hope that it contributes to enhancing the effect of homestay for those who are expected to join the flow of globalized language learning stream through homestay.

II. Literature Review

There is little research on the effect of homestay in the Korean context of second language learning. Instead, Kim and Yang (2010), and Yang and Kim (2011) examined the learners' beliefs in the context of study abroad. There are, however, a few foreign studies examining the effect of homestay on learners' beliefs, perceptions of success, language and culture learning, contributing factors to language learning, etc.

Ronson (1998) stated that though approximately one-third of adult ESL learners in the college or private language schools choose a homestay option when it is offered, they often become disappointed with the homestay program later. They arrived with the expectation that homestay families would spend an enormous amount of time with them for their English and American culture learning. However, soon they realize that both parents have jobs and should spend even their evening time taking their children to various types of after school programs. In other words, as Venema and Russell maintained (2007), there is often a gap between