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**Learning English during the summer: A comparison of two
domestic programs for pre-adolescents**

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L2 learning contexts have been the subject of much attention in recent years in the field of second language acquisition (Llanes, 2011). Yet, the impact of learning contexts in the case of school-age learners has been little explored, despite the variety of language programs available for these students. In many countries, the foreign language (FL) instruction provided in regular schoolsⁱ is limited in time (what Stern, 1985, refers to as ‘drip feed’ instruction), so it is not uncommon for families, aware of the limitations of such instruction and of the advantages of proficiency in foreign languages, to seek to complement their children’s language education by enrolling them on extracurricular programs. In order to characterize such programs we will go over the topics of formal/informal education and intensive learning in the following two sections. Then we will introduce our own particular study about two L2 learning contexts outside the school setting embodied in two language learning programs for school-age learners.

1. Formal and informal education and foreign language learning

The terms ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ education (Richardson & Wolfe, 2001) are useful for describing the various language learning programs available for school-age learners. In general education, formal education is delivered by trained teachers in the context of the classroom, while informal education is delivered outside the formal classroom setting and learning is experiential, occurring mainly through casual interactions. When applied to language programs, however, the boundary between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ learning is “not always unambiguous” (Feuer, 2009). But while informal language programs may include some periods of formal instruction, the former are mainly characterized by their location and pedagogy (Benson, 2011). In informal language programs a considerable amount of time is spent outside the more¹ conventional classroom and the kinds of activities that are performed there are meant to replicate or promote a naturalistic context with no focus on explicit language learning or assessment. We can usefully

distinguish between four common programs of language learning outside the school setting: two formal – outside-school language instruction and long-term study abroad, and two informal – short-term programs held either in the home country or abroad (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1

In many countries outside-school language instruction at a language school or academy is the most popular type of domestic program chosen to complement school-based language instruction. Learners typically dedicate a few hours a week during the regular school year to studying a foreign language in such schools, but when they enroll on summer courses, the programs tend to be of a more intensive format. In all circumstances, language school classes tend to have fewer students and oral skills tend to be given greater priority, despite the fact that similar textbooks are used in both settings.

Long-term study abroad is an activity reserved to a minority of the school-aged population and involves attending regular school abroad during the academic year. The chief motivation for these students (who may attend boarding schools, stay with a host family or be accompanied by one of the family members) is frequently the desire to improve language skills. Song (2011) refers to this mode of formal education as ‘early study abroad’ and the practice has grown considerably in recent years among the wealthy families of East Asia and Russia (Kampfner, 2014). A distinct case is that of stays motivated by family circumstances (referred to as ‘stay abroad with the family’ by Muñoz, 2010), which typically involves international professionals and academics that move abroad with their children for variable periods of time.

The two programs of informal education (domestic short-term language immersion and short-term study abroad) usually attract learners of different agesⁱⁱ: the former being more popular among comparatively younger learners. Short-term language immersion programs (organized either as day or overnight camps) are usually designed for primary/early secondary school children and take place during school vacations. Chief among the ingredients of these programs are the development of language learning along with the promotion of socialization skills through a range of indoor and

outdoor group activities (sports, crafts, performing arts, games, trips, etc.) (Feuer, 2009)ⁱⁱⁱ. Short-term study abroad programs, in contrast, are primarily addressed to secondary school students and include both school exchange programs and trips organized by private institutions. In the summer, short-term study abroad (SA) programs typically range from two to five weeks and attract language learners from various countries.

Informal contexts can constitute an enriching source of learning experiences and can complement formal contexts. The complementarity of the two settings can be explained from within a learning ecology framework (Barron, 2006), a perspective that has recently been used by Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015) to examine out-of-school English learning. According to this view, the learning environment constitutes an ecological framework made up of a set of contexts found in formal or informal and in physical or virtual spaces that enrich each other and help provide a balance in learning. In the case of language learning, research has shown that individual out-of-school activities such as watching subtitled films, surfing the internet or reading books, among others, tend to be associated with language learning outcomes (Lindgren and Muñoz, 2012), especially when learners engage in a variety of self-directed activities (Lai et al., 2015) or when out-of-school activities require learners to be quite active (Sundquist, 2009). In contrast to individual out-of-school activities, which often rely on receptive exposure to the language in the private domain (Hyland, 2004; Lai, Zhu and Gong, 2015), programs of informal language education should be able to provide even greater opportunities for language production and interaction. Considering that in many countries this type of programs are becoming more and more popular among families, the present study aims to examine whether L2 learners benefit from the increased opportunities for L2 use this context offers. More specifically, the present study makes a comparison between two summer domestic language programs for school-age learners of English: one informal – a summer camp; the other formal – a language school course.

2. Short-term intensive programs for school-age students

The two programs we focus on are intensive – comprising a minimum of 15 hours a week of L2 contact – short-term programs organized in the summer over three to four weeks. In this section we review previous studies of intensive, short-term programs, both domestic and abroad, addressed to school-age learners. These programs are often between one and four weeks long but they can also have a duration of less than one

semester and still be considered 'short' according to the criteria set by the US Institute of International Education (2015).

Studies of intensive, short-term language programs addressed to children and teenagers are few and far between (Llanes, 2012). Collentine (2009 p. 221) noted that this gap was particularly evident in the case of summer camps:

There are important pockets of SA contexts and learner profiles that have yet to be studied. Students are attending so-called language camps with increasing frequency. Korean.net, for instance, reports that nearly 40,000 Korean students enrolled in domestic EFL immersion programs in 2005. The *New York Times* recently reported that nearly 75 percent of American summer camps have foreign nationals attending their activities (...)

In contrast, the literature on intensive school-based programs is comparatively broader. This is especially true of intensive ESL classes in Canada (see Lightbown, 2012 for a summary), the European Schools program (see Housen, 2002, 2012) and, more recently, the bilingual program in the region of Madrid (Spain) (Dobson, Pérez Murillo & Johnston, 2010).

Evidence from short intensive programs abroad comes from studies of learners staying for varying periods of time in the host country. In Llanes (2012), the learners were Spanish children (aged 10-11) attending Irish schools for a period of two months. In Llanes and Muñoz (2009), teenagers spent from 3-4 weeks in the UK where they attended a summer language school. In Evans and Fisher (2005), British learners (aged 13-14) participated in a school exchange visit to France that lasted from 6 to 11 days. Despite differences in the duration of these programs, the learners in all three studies were found to make significant progress as determined by measures of their productive skills (either oral or written) and in terms of their listening comprehension. More importantly, this progress was found (1) to be superior to that of the corresponding control group 'at home', and (2) to be sustained one/two years after the intensive experience (Llanes, 2012 and Evans & Fisher, 2005, respectively). According to Evans and Fisher (2005), the benefits of the program were more evident among the exchange students that used the foreign language most frequently during their home stay and who received most linguistic support from the host family.

Short intensive domestic programs are the focus of Feuer (2009) and Hinger (2003; 2006). Feuer analyzed three US day camps for children aged 5-12 employing a dialogic, sociolinguistic framework. The three programs (Camp Israel, Chinese Culture Camp and Camp Beijing) were designed to promote bilingualism and biculturalism among campers of disparate backgrounds and language levels. The analyses highlighted how the welcoming atmosphere in the Hebrew and both Chinese camps facilitated language acquisition and ethnic socialization. Additionally, the counselors-in-training were identified as being important role models and language mediators between the native-speaker instructors and the campers. The analysis of learning experiences was also the primary goal in Hinger's (2006) study, conducted with 16-year-old students learning Spanish in the formal context of an Austrian high school. The experiences of an intensive group of nine learners (12 hours/week over four weeks) were compared with those of nine learners in a standard format group (three 50-minute lessons per week over a period of four months). Both groups received a total of 48 hours of instruction in otherwise identical conditions. Applying the framework of small group research, Hinger reported that the intensive learners produced a greater variety and a higher number of group-building utterances, indicative of greater group cohesion in the intensive group. An analysis of the spontaneous oral speech data from these same learners (Hinger, 2003) also showed them to be better at acquiring certain morphosyntactic features and expressive language.

In short, the results of the few studies that have examined short intensive programs for school-age learners seem to indicate that such programs are beneficial for both L2 development and for non-linguistic outcomes. This seems to apply to programs held abroad as well as to those organized 'at home' in both formal and informal learning contexts.

3. Background to the study and research questions

Given the positive outcomes that seem to derive from intensive language learning experiences, we sought to compare different types of short-term programs for school-age learners. In a recent study by Serrano, Tragant and Llanes (2014, 2016), a group of teenagers (aged 13 to 17) that received intensive classroom instruction during the summer (formal program) was compared with another group of learners (with similar ages) who spent a comparable amount of time abroad (informal program). Our results showed that while both the formal and informal L2 learning programs led to significant

language gains, neither program could be considered better, despite the fact that language use was more frequent among the students studying abroad.

The present study also seeks to compare a formal and an informal L2 summer learning program, but here the participants are younger (aged 11 to 13) and both programs were held in the home country. One group of learners attended a formal intensive course at a language school where they spent most of the time in the classroom, while the other group attended an informal language program at summer camp spending a large part of the day on non-language-related leisure activities. The specific questions that we seek to answer in this study are the following:

- Do pre-adolescent EFL learners' experiences at summer camp differ from those of their counterparts on an intensive language course?
- Do pre-adolescent EFL learners make significant improvements in their L2 skills after a short summer program in their home country, regardless of its formality?
- Are there any differences in the L2 development of the pre-adolescent EFL learners on the two programs (summer camp vs. intensive course)?

4. Context and methodology

The study uses a pre-test/post-test design to assess language gains. Data were collected simultaneously in the two contexts over the consecutive summers of 2011 and 2012 (see Table 2) and the same procedures were followed in both years. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of each program and there were a total of 18 days of L2 exposure (each day of the week on the summer camp and class days at the language school) between the two testing times. The learners performed the same tasks at the two testing points, with the exception of the questionnaire, which was only completed during the post-test.

Insert Table 2

4.1 The two programs

The two programs examined in this study were carefully selected to facilitate their comparison. Both were organized by two prestigious institutions in two affluent neighborhoods of Barcelona (Spain). The two programs were of a similar duration and were held in July. The specific characteristics of each program are described below.

The summer camp – organized on a commercial camping site in the Pyrenees mountain region – was a residential program for children aged between 10 and 15 and lasted for 21 days. The summer camp shared the facilities with other smaller residential summer camp programs, where the languages of communication were Catalan/Spanish, as well as with a few private campers. The counselor/camper ratio was 1:5, and, with the exception of one counselor^{iv}, the camp policy was for counselors to address campers in English at all times. To facilitate this, on the first day, counselors introduced themselves as native speakers with ‘English names’, even if there was only one counselor who was a native speaker of English. The proficiency level of the rest of the counselors ranged from B2 to C2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages^v, CEFR for short), an assessment that was based on an oral interview previous to recruitment. Their academic/professional backgrounds varied but they had all had prior experience as counselors at similar language camps.

The principal activities each day on the summer camp were: (a) morning English lessons (2 h 50 min), (b) afternoon sports, crafts, or adventure activities (3 h), (c) camp-wide evening activities (1 h 30 min) and (d) camp announcements (usually around meal times). All activities were supervised directly by the counselors in English. At other times of the day (meals, cabin and shower times, free time) the campers were not directly (or only loosely) supervised, some of the counselors being off-duty. This was most obviously the case in the dining-room, where learners and counselors sat at different tables, and in the sleeping facilities, where learners slept in cabins for four and counselors stayed in a different building. Counselors worked shifts so that those teaching the English lessons in the morning were off-duty in the afternoon and vice versa for those in charge of the afternoon activities.

English lessons were taught by those counselors with a minimum of C1 according to CEFR, even though most of them had C2 level. They did not necessarily have language teaching experience but they were asked to produce a written lesson plan as part of the recruitment process. Campers were organized into groups of between 7 and 14 learners, according to their language level and age. Language instruction was given at various locations on the camping site using minimal teaching resources. The first period of instruction usually focused on some aspect of grammar and/or vocabulary. The second and third periods had a functional focus (e.g. games and songs) with little attention to form. During the third period, students were given some time to work on a film-making project with the support of an instructor. Campers also used

their free periods to work on this semi-autonomous project, which was an ongoing activity throughout the camp. The project involved their devising a simple plot, writing a short script, obtaining or making the props and costumes, and finally filming the scenes. Periods 1 and 3 were taught by one counselor and period 2 by a different counselor.

The intensive language program was designed for learners aged 8 to 17 and was organized in a well-known language school. The four-week long summer program offered language courses at seven levels of proficiency, but the timetable and general structure of the program was the same for all levels, comprising 4 h 30 min of English lessons each day Monday through Friday. The students had two breaks of 10 minutes and one of 20 minutes. The students were grouped by age and proficiency, the latter based on a level test administered upon registration. There were a maximum of 15 students per group and levels ranged from A1 to B2 according to CEFR. All the teachers held TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) qualifications and had an academic background in the social sciences. The teachers were native speakers of English with prior teaching experience.

Each group was taught by two different teachers: one taught the first and third sessions and the other the second session. The courses were structured around popular EFL textbooks (used between 40 and 70% of the time), while the teachers also used other resources and activities, some involving the use of technology and media. All the classrooms were equipped with a computer and interactive white board. Instruction in all classes provided practice in the four skills and included work on grammar and vocabulary; however, all the teachers reported giving priority to speaking activities and vocabulary practice. Students in all classes were required to produce a number of pieces of written work, ranging from 7 to 13 depending on the group. Homework was assigned daily. The following table summarizes the main features of the two programs.

Insert Table 3

4.2 The participants

A total of 105 young learners participated in the study – 58 on the summer camp program and 47 in the intensive language program. All the participants were aged between 11 and 13. The respective mean ages of the learners on the summer camp and

intensive program were 11.72 and 12.31 (for the age distribution by program see Table 4). In terms of gender, more girls than boys attended summer camp (37 vs. 21) while the opposite was true at the language school (13 vs 32^{vi}). The 47 learners in the intensive language program correspond to all learners in the program aged 11-13 who had been placed in classes corresponding to either A2.1 or B1.1 (CEFR). The 58 learners on the summer camp included all the campers in the program aged 11-13 irrespective of their proficiency level.

Insert Table 4

The participants, all Spanish/Catalan bilinguals, were enrolled at a wide range of schools during the school year, mostly ‘semi-private’, and came from well-educated families: 95% of the students in both settings had parents with tertiary studies. Most of the participants had started learning English at the age of 6 (40 and 45% on the summer camp and language course, respectively) or earlier (50 and 30%, respectively). However, a greater proportion of students on the summer camp (67% vs. 34%) had been enrolled on extracurricular English courses during the preceding two years. Although the number of learners that had taken part in similar summer programs previously was the same in both contexts (62%), the proportion of students actually participating in the decision to enroll on the programs (as opposed to it being mostly a parental decision) differed – in the case of the summer camp the proportion was 48% whereas the proportion was just 11% in the case of the language course.

4.3 The instruments

A number of different instruments were employed at different times in the study. For the program descriptions, we drew on the information provided by the program directors, our own on-site observations, and a questionnaire administered to the teachers/counselors on both programs. To respond to the first research question regarding the respective experiences of participating on the summer programs, we rely on the participants’ questionnaires, while to respond to the second and third questions regarding linguistic gains, we administered three productive tasks – one oral and two written.

The gathering of descriptive data about the programs. To familiarize ourselves with the main features of each program, we interviewed the respective program

directors and spent a full day visiting each summer program. During the visit to the summer camp, we kept field notes of the activity in progress every ten minutes and recorded how campers and counselors communicated with each other. The questionnaire administered to the counselors was designed to elicit information about their use of English with the campers throughout the day and the most common activities they employed during the English lessons. During the visit to the language school, a semi-structured schedule was used for classroom observation. The questionnaire administered to the teachers was designed to elicit information about the most common activities and materials used in class as well as about the amount and type of homework assigned.

Student questionnaires. Two questionnaires (one for each context) were designed to elicit information about the students' language learning history as well as about their experiences and opinions of the program. Although some questions differed slightly, the items addressed the same concerns: their motivation for participating in the program, self-perception of the amount of English learnt, a general evaluation of the program and self-reported frequency of L2 use. On the summer camp, this last item included a general question as well as three more specific questions about how often campers used English with other campers, with the counselors and about the times of day they made most frequent use of English. In the case of the intensive language courses, this item included a question about the frequency of use of English in class and during breaks with teachers and classmates, and two questions about out-of-class exposure to English. Both questionnaires included a combination of 5-point Likert scale items and semi-open questions and were written in Catalan. For a selection of the items included in the questionnaires see the Appendix.

The language tasks. The three language tasks that learners performed as part of the study were designed to gather information about their language performance in English. The oral task is a picture-based (six pictures) narrative activity, called 'The picnic story' (Heaton, 1966), in which a brother and sister discover that their puppy has eaten their food when they are about to have their picnic. The two written tasks (a dialogue and a narrative) are based on the same comic strip, 'Tony and Tina' (Viladoms, 2009). The story, which includes ten panels, shows two friends finding out how Tony's food disappears from the kitchen as he is getting ready to have his snack. In the dialogue task, the text from 8 of the 16 speech bubbles was omitted and students had to fill them in in order to complete the dialogue from the empty speech bubbles

successfully. In the narrative task, administered fifteen minutes later, the students were given a copy of the same comic strip but this time all speech bubbles were empty and students were asked to re-write the comic strip in their own words as a story starting with ‘One day Tony...’. . Both the dialogue and the narrative tasks were timed (7 and 15 minutes respectively). The illustrations used in the oral and the written tasks have been successfully used in the past with students with a similar profile (Muñoz, 2006 and Serrano, Tragant & Llanes, 2014, respectively).

4.4 Data collection

The two written tasks were administered collectively and the oral task was performed individually. Instructions were always provided in Catalan to make sure they understood what had to be done. In the oral task, the participants were shown the pictures for approximately 30 seconds before they started to tell the story. The learners typically took between one-and-a-half and two minutes to narrate the story. The authors of this study were responsible for administering all the tests as well as conducting the observations, which took place on different days.

4.5 Analysis

Learner performance on the three linguistic tasks was analyzed in terms of fluency, lexical richness, syntactic complexity and accuracy. However, we only report the results for those measures that presented a normal distribution in the pre- and post-tests of the two groups under study (see Table 5). Fluency was assessed in terms of the number of tokens in the written dialogue task and the number of syllables per minute in the oral narrative task. The latter count did not include repetitions, false starts, invented words or words in the participants’ first language(s) (Catalan and/or Spanish). Lexical richness in the dialogue task was assessed in terms of the ratio of content words, which was computed by dividing the number of content words by the total number of words and then multiplying the result by 100. For the two narratives, we analyzed lexical richness using Guiraud’s index, which was computed by dividing the word types by the square root of the word tokens (Van Hout & Vermeer, 2007; Vermeer, 2000). Syntactic complexity and accuracy were only analyzed in the written narrative task because it was considered that students would pay greater attention to accuracy in this task than they would in the oral task and that they would use more complex language in this task than in the written dialogue task. Syntactic complexity was assessed in terms of the number

of clauses per T-unit, in line with previous studies (see Bulté & Housen, 2012), and accuracy in terms of the ratio of correct verb forms, which was computed by dividing the number of correct verb forms by the total number of verbs used in the narrative and multiplying the result by 100.

Insert Table 5

The CLAN (Computerized Language Analysis) program (MacWhinney, 2000) was used both to transcribe and code the data according to the measures described above. A repeated measures analysis of variance (RM ANOVA) was performed to analyze the data. Of our two independent variables (context and time), the former is the between-subjects variable (summer camp/intensive language program) and the latter the within-subject variable (pre-test/post-test scores). Before performing the RM ANOVAs, we made sure the data met the assumptions of independence of observations, normal distribution and homogeneity of variances^{vii}. Independent t-tests were also run to ensure that the differences in the pre-test scores from the two programs were not significant.

5. Results

5.1 The participants' experiences

Learners on the summer camp seem to have had a more satisfactory overall experience, reflected by the fact that the percentage of participants who believed they would probably or certainly enroll on the program again the following summer was higher (77.6% vs. 53.2% at the language school) and the differences between the two contexts were significant ($X^2=6.96$, $N=105$, $p<.05$). However, this level of satisfaction seems to be more specifically attributable to the outdoor activities than to the English lessons themselves. Indeed, the afternoon activities at the summer camp were evaluated much more positively than the English lessons with 88% of the campers saying they had enjoyed them 'a lot' or 'very, very much'. In contrast, the evaluation of English lessons was quite similar in both contexts, the differences being non-significant ($X^2=1.71$, $N=104$, ns), and while more students in the summer camp (17.3%) claimed to have learned 'very little' or just 'a little' than did those enrolled on the language program (2.2%), overall differences in the amount of self-reported learning did not reach

significance ($X^2=7.1$, $N=104$, $p=.07$). See Table 6 for a full account of the participants' perceptions.

Insert Table 6

The learners' use of English during and outside English lessons on the two programs differed considerably (see Tables 7, 8 and 9). As expected with learners who share the same L1, there was little use of English between peers outside class in either program. Indeed, the vast majority of learners reported using English 'almost never' or only 'a few times' outside English lessons. In the case of the intensive language program, time outside the English lesson was limited to three breaks during the morning. In the case of the summer camp, however, there were many occasions during the day when campers primarily interacted with each other (free time, meals, afternoon activities, etc.). Table 9 reports the learners' use of English in various contexts within the summer camp. In Tables 7 and 8 it can be seen that the rate of L2 use among classmates was higher on the intensive language program than on the summer camp and differences between the two contexts were significant ($X^2=11.14$, $N=103$, $p<.05$). While 28.8% of the students in the intensive language program said they used English 'often' or 'almost always' and 44.5% 'sometimes', the corresponding figures for the summer camp were 10.5% and 27.6%. The lack of English language teaching expertise of the counselors together with the generally more relaxed environment on the camping site (i.e., classes did not take place in classrooms) might account for this difference between the two programs in L2 use with peers during class time.

Insert Table 7

Insert Table 8

Insert Table 9

During class time, learners mainly communicated with instructors in English in both contexts, with students in the summer camp reporting significantly higher frequencies ($X^2=17.58$, $N=104$, $p<.001$). Outside class time, all the learners in the summer camp and 45% of the learners in the language program reported using English to communicate with adult instructors and counselors. See Tables 7 and 8 for a full account of learners' use of English during and outside class time.

In general, the students' self-reports regarding their L2 use match our field observations. On both programs we observed that during non-language related periods (i.e., break time, meals) there tended to be little one-to-one interaction with instructors/counselors and, so, levels of English use during those periods were low for the majority of learners. Nevertheless, when learner-initiated interactions were observed, English was used to perform a wide range of functions, including, asking for permission ('Can we start?'), asking for help ('I don't know how to ...'), making a suggestion ('Can we play the wall?'), asking for confirmation ('And now I extend my legs?'), etc.

5.2 Language gains

Before performing the RM ANOVA analyses, the pre-test scores of the two groups were compared. Thus, we confirmed that the learners on the summer camp and language program were indeed comparable. Below we report the ANOVA results for the oral narrative, written dialogue and written narrative tasks.

Student performance on the oral narrative task was analyzed in terms of fluency (syllables per minute) and lexical richness (Guiraud's index). Table 10 shows that while the pre-test fluency score for the summer camp group was lower than that for the language school group, the post-test scores were quite similar. The RM ANOVA results for fluency indicate that while context had no effect ($p<.507$), the effect of time was significant [$F(1,102)= 87.91$; $p<.001$; partial $\eta^2= .463$]. This indicates that both groups made significant progress between the pre- and post-tests, the effect size being large. The interaction time*context was close to significant [$F(1,102)= 3.46$; $p<.066$; partial $\eta^2= .04$], with the effect size being small. This indicates a tendency for the learners on the summer camp to make more progress than those on the intensive language program.

Table 10 also shows that the pre-test lexical richness score on the oral narrative task for the summer camp group was slightly lower than that of the intensive language

group; however, the situation was reversed in the post-test scores. The RM ANOVA results indicate that while context had no effect ($p < .594$), the effect of time was significant [$F(1,102) = 9.79$; $p < .002$; partial $\eta^2 = .088$]. The interaction time*context was also significant [$F(1,102) = 8.11$; $p < .005$; partial $\eta^2 = .074$]. These results indicate that both groups made significant progress between the pre- and post-tests and that the learners in the summer camp made more progress than those on the language program. The effect size in both cases was moderate.

Insert Table 10

Student performance on the written dialogue task was analyzed in terms of fluency (tokens) and lexical richness (content words). Table 11 shows the descriptive statistics for the two measures in the pre- and post-tests. In this case we can see that both groups recorded similar scores on the two measures. The RM ANOVA results indicate that the effect of time was significant in the case of fluency [$F(1,103) = 52.02$; $p < .005$; partial $\eta^2 = .336$] but not in that of lexical richness ($p = .857$). This indicates that the fluency scores of the learners in both groups in the post-test were significantly higher than their scores in the pre-test, the effect size being quite large. There was no main effect of context for either of the two measures: fluency ($p = .929$), lexical richness ($p = .433$). Nor was there any time*context interaction for fluency ($p = .857$) or lexical richness ($p = .629$).

Insert Table 11

Finally, student performance on the written narrative task was analyzed in terms of lexical richness (Guiraud's index), grammatical complexity (clauses per T-unit) and accuracy (correct verb forms). The descriptive statistics in Table 12 show that the pre-test scores for grammatical complexity and accuracy were lower for the summer camp group but that the post-test scores for these two measures for both groups were very similar. The RM ANOVA results present a similar pattern across the three measures. There was a significant main effect of time: lexical richness [$F(1,103) = 53.25$; $p < .0005$; partial $\eta^2 = .341$], grammatical complexity [$F(1,103) = 29.08$; $p < .0005$; partial $\eta^2 =$

.220], and accuracy [$F(1,103)= 11.46$; $p<.001$; partial $\eta^2= .10$]. The effect sizes were moderate in the case of accuracy and large in the case of grammatical and lexical complexity. However, there was no interaction time*context effect for any of the three measures: lexical richness ($p=.886$), grammatical complexity ($p=.190$); accuracy ($p=.338$). No significant main effect of context was identified for any of the three measures either: lexical richness ($p=.883$), grammatical complexity ($p=.215$), accuracy ($p=.545$). These results suggest that the learners on the two programs made considerable progress and that they did so in comparable ways.

Insert Table 12

In short, in six of the seven tests performed a significant main effect of time was found between the pre- and post-test scores, with mostly large effect sizes. There was only one significant interaction time*context effect in the case of fluency, and one approaching significance for lexical richness, both recorded on the oral task and in favor of the group of learners on the summer camp.

6. Discussion

The aim of this study was to compare two programs – a summer camp and an intensive language program – that offer short-term, domestic, intensive exposure to L2 learners during the summer. The two programs have been shown to have different strengths and limitations. While the teachers on the intensive language program were qualified and experienced and the school’s facilities adequate for language teaching, learner contact with English was limited to 4 h 30 min a day and restricted to the classroom setting. In contrast, exposure to English on the summer camp was not limited solely to the context of English lessons but was present throughout the day. However, the language proficiency of the counselors was varied and those that taught the English lessons had no language teaching qualifications.

Our analysis seems to indicate that the summer camp may have a small advantage over the language school in terms of language gains in oral production given that we recorded one significant time*context interaction for lexical richness and one interaction approaching significance for fluency. The fact that these interactions were recorded in oral as opposed to written production seems logical on the grounds that the

summer camp learners were exposed primarily to oral English, unlike their counterparts on the language program who practiced all four skills. This finding is also in line with the benefits reported in oral fluency and lexis commonly reported in SA research both for children (e.g., Llanes, 2012; Llanes & Muñoz, 2013) and university students (e.g., Juan-Garau & Pérez-Vidal, 2007; Martinsen, 2010; Serrano, Tragant & Llanes, 2012). SA programs, in common with domestic summer camps, offer L2 exposure outside the formal class.

A clearer outcome to emerge from this study is that both programs were beneficial for L2 learning. The results for the effect of time (differences in learner performance before and after an intensive L2 experience) indicate that progress was comparable regardless of the level of formality of the program. Scores on the post-tests tended to be significantly higher than those on the pre-tests, both for the oral and written tasks. The bulk of past research on short, intensive language learning experiences has shown the benefits of such programs for university students both at home and abroad (for a review see Serrano, 2011) as well as the benefits of short stays abroad (for a review see Llanes, 2011). Our results confirm the benefits of short, intensive programs for younger learners at home.

The comparable progress made by learners on both programs would appear to suggest that their respective advantages and limitations tend to cancel each other out. Further evidence of this comes from self-reported data. Thus, on the intensive language program, a higher proportion of students reported some perception of learning and there was a greater use of English among peers in the classroom; in contrast, on the summer camp, the overall experience seems to have been more satisfying even if L2 use in many contexts was minimal for the majority of campers. These observations about the summer camp are similar to findings in a previous study with teenagers (Serrano, Tragant & Llanes, 2014) in which we compared a study abroad program and an intensive language program at home. In this case, students on the informal program also had a more enriching experience, although, from a language learning perspective, taking an intensive English course at home was as beneficial as going abroad. These positive feelings, however, did not seem to be related to their use of English or the amount of perceived progress, but rather to the opportunities they had for personal growth during their stay abroad. The same might be true here for the summer camp participants, who seemed to have had such an enjoyable time that the majority would not hesitate to go back again.

A further parallel can be drawn between this study and that of Serrano, Tragant and Llanes (2014) in relation to the use of English. In both informal programs (the summer camp at home and the study abroad program), there was a marked difference between the self-reported overall use of the L2 during English lessons (which is similarly high in both contexts), and their use of English in other contexts. In the study abroad program not all the teenagers took advantage of the opportunity to use the L2 in the dining-room, during their free time or at weekends. In the present study, the use of English outside the English lessons was extremely infrequent, in spite of the fact that the counselors adhered strictly to the program policy of English-only. It seems that for learners to take full advantage of these informal programs of language learning – abroad, but especially at home – the active involvement of fluent instructors, or even counselors-in-training, during non-language-related periods could maximize the opportunities that these contexts potentially offer. Otherwise, only those few students that were more predisposed to interact with counselors, because of their personality, motivation and/or level of proficiency, benefited from these opportunities. Previous research has shown that individual differences can be expected when examining an individual's overall learning ecology (Barron, 2004), but the low percentage of L2 use outside the English lessons indicates that the number of learners benefiting from interaction with counselors was remarkably low.

These reflections about L2 use show that the quality of the learning opportunities on an informal education program is as crucial as that of the learning opportunities on a formal program. In the same way that time-on-task (i.e., quality) has been shown to be a more relevant variable than the length of school days (i.e., quantity) in formal education (Stallings, 1980), the quality of informal activities would seem to be a highly relevant factor. This has been reported to be the case in a study of individual out-of-class learning (Lai *et al.*, 2015) and it would also appear to be an important issue in the summer camp context described in the present study where the policy by which counselors had to address campers in English at all times was insufficient to promote L2 language use among learners. Other elements that would probably have improved the quality of the program include modifications to specific aspects of the English lessons and to a number of structural features of the program. Thus, the lessons could probably have been more efficient if there had been a closer focus on integrating the language demands of the non-language-related periods. In this way, students might have been more aware of what they were learning. As for specific features of the program, the

availability of more appropriate facilities and the employment of individual counselors with qualifications in both ESL and outdoor activities would appear to be advisable.

7. Conclusions

The assessment reported in this paper of pre-adolescent learners' productive skills and their L2 proficiency is one of the first attempts at examining learners' experiences and L2 learning on a summer camp. The comparison undertaken here of a domestic summer camp and a domestic intensive language program shows that intensive exposure to a FL for a short period of time leads to significant L2 improvement among school-age learners, regardless of the degree of formality of the program. Moreover, our research seems to suggest that the summer camp may have certain additional benefits in the case of learners' oral skills, though this needs to be investigated further. However, the study highlights the challenges that short intensive programs, especially summer camps, face in creating productive environments of L2 interaction outside the time assigned to foreign language instruction.

All in all, and provided guarantees are in place to ensure the quality of the informal language program, this study seems to indicate that for pre-adolescent learners a summer camp can be a rich source of L2 motivation and learning outside the school setting and a good complement to their formal education. A summer camp constitutes in itself a learning ecology where, for an intensive period, learners can be exposed to multiple contexts of language use. Less structured opportunities for interaction, with a focus on meaning, can occur naturally during the course of a summer camp, something that is not easy to reproduce in formal learning contexts. In addition, the reliance on experience, discovery, entertainment and learning that typically define participation in a summer camp, combined with an influential social dimension, can make this a highly motivating learning context for the majority of learners. But, ultimately, a summer camp experience is limited in time and is just one more setting in an individual's overall learning ecology. Come September, the learners will return to school and over the following months and years other language learning opportunities will no doubt arise or be created by the learners themselves. Understanding how language learning occurs in multiple contexts – formal and informal, physical and virtual, and the possible interdependencies of these settings, is certainly one of the future challenges facing SLA research.

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ⁱ The term 'regular schools' refers to schools that follow the national curriculum. Thus, it excludes schools that offer bilingual or language immersion programs as well as international schools that follow the national curriculum of another country.

ⁱⁱ This information was gathered from major providers of summer language programs in Spain.

ⁱⁱⁱ This information is based on evidence from the program descriptions of the most popular summer language camps in Spain.

^{iv} The counselor that spoke Catalan and/or Spanish with the campers was a psychologist. Her role was to intervene in case of behavioral problems and to support children feeling homesick.

^v For more information see http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp.

^{vi} We have no information on gender for two learners in the formal setting.

^{vii} The sphericity test could not be conducted because our within-subject variable has only two levels.

TABLES

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Formal</i> | Outside-school language instruction |
| <i>education</i> | Long-term study abroad |
| <i>Informal</i> | Domestic short-term immersion |
| <i>education</i> | Short-term stays abroad |

Table 1. Common language programs outside the regular school classroom

| | 2011 | 2012 |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| Summer Camp (n=58) | 37 | 21 |
| Intensive Language Program (n=47) | 23 | 24 |

Table 2. Participants according to year of data collection

| | <i>Summer camp</i> | <i>Intensive language program</i> |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Time devoted to English lessons each day</i> | 2 h 50 min | 4 h 30 min |
| <i>Profile of language instructors /counselors</i> | Unqualified EFL teachers | Certified EFL teachers |
| <i>Methodology and materials</i> | Limited use of textbook Lots of games Film project | Flexible use of textbook complemented with other materials |
| <i>Location of English lessons</i> | Open spaces (indoors and outdoors), few resources | Well-equipped classrooms |
| <i>L2 contact outside English lessons</i> | Wide range of opportunities during supervised activities (4 h 30 min) and in spontaneous interaction with counselors throughout the day | Restricted to break times and daily homework Optional use of library materials at home |

Table 3. Comparison of the two programs

| | 11-year-olds | 12-year-olds | 13-year-olds |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Summer Camp (n=58) | 29 | 18 | 11 |
| Intensive Language Program (n=47) | 10 | 13 | 24 |

Table 4. Age distribution of learners on the two programs

| | <i>Oral narrative task</i> | <i>Written dialogue task</i> | <i>Written narrative task</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Fluency</i> | Syllables per minute | Tokens | |
| <i>Lexical richness</i> | Guiraud's index | Content word ratio | Guiraud's index |
| <i>Syntactic complexity</i> | | | Clauses per T-unit |
| <i>Accuracy</i> | | | Correct verb form ratio |

Table 5. Measures of analysis for oral and written tasks

| | <i>Very little</i> | | <i>A little</i> | | <i>Quite</i> | | <i>A lot</i> | | <i>Very, very much</i> | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
| | <i>SC</i> | <i>ILP</i> | <i>SC</i> | <i>ILP</i> | <i>SC</i> | <i>ILP</i> | <i>SC</i> | <i>ILP</i> | <i>SC</i> | <i>ILP</i> |
| <i>Amount of learning</i> | 5.2% | 0% | 12.1% | 2.2% | 31% | 41.3% | 34.5% | 43.5% | 17.2% | 13% |
| <i>English lessons</i> | 6.9% | 0% | 17.2% | 17.4% | 37.9% | 41.3% | 27.6% | 23.9% | 10.4% | 17.4% |
| <i>Afternoon activities</i> | 0% | ---- | 3.4% | ---- | 8.6% | ---- | 25.9% | ---- | 62.1% | ---- |
| <i>Willingness to return</i> | <i>No</i> | | <i>Probably not</i> | | <i>I do not know</i> | | <i>Probably</i> | | <i>Sure</i> | |
| | 0% | 2.1% | 3.4% | 6.4% | 19% | 38.3% | 41.4% | 27.7% | 36.2% | 25.5% |

Table 6. Self-reported perceptions of participants at the summer camp (SC) and on the intensive language program (ILP).

| | <i>Almost Never</i> | <i>Few times</i> | <i>Sometimes</i> | <i>Often</i> | <i>Almost always</i> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| <i>Campers during English lessons</i> | 29.3% | 32.8% | 27.6% | 10.3% | 0% |

| | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| <i>Campers in afternoon activities</i> | 70.2% | 22.8% | 5.3% | 0% | 1.7% |
| <i>Counselors teaching English lessons</i> | 0% | 0% | 0% | 15.5% | 84.5% |
| <i>Other counselors</i> | 0% | 0% | 0% | 34.5% | 65.5% |

Table 7. English use with fellow campers and counselors (summer camp)

| | <i>Almost Never</i> | <i>Few times</i> | <i>Sometimes</i> | <i>Often</i> | <i>Almost always</i> |
|--|---------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| <i>Classmates during lessons</i> | 8.9% | 17.8% | 44.5% | 24.4% | 4.4% |
| <i>Classmates in breaks</i> | 86.7% | 6.7% | 0% | 2.2% | 4.4% |
| <i>Teachers during English lessons</i> | 0% | 2.2% | 6.7% | 45.7% | 45.6% |
| <i>Teachers in breaks</i> | 25% | 11.4% | 18.2% | 20.4% | 25% |

Table 8. English use with classmates and teachers (intensive language program)

| | <i>Almost Never</i> | <i>Few times</i> | <i>Sometimes</i> | <i>Often</i> | <i>Almost always</i> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| <i>English lessons</i> | 0 | 0 | 1.7% | 55.2% | 43.1% |
| <i>Film-making project</i> | 13.8% | 17.2% | 12.1% | 41.4% | 15.5% |
| <i>Dining room</i> | 39.7% | 29.3% | 19% | 8.6% | 3.4% |
| <i>Afternoon activities</i> | 20.7% | 22.4% | 36.2% | 17.2% | 3.5% |
| <i>Free time</i> | 63.8% | 20.7% | 13.8% | 1.7% | 0% |

Table 9. English use in different contexts on the summer camp

| | Program | Pre-test Mean (SD) | Post-test Mean (SD) |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Fluency (Syllables per minute) | SC (n=58) | 61.63 (28.46) | 81.84 (30.04) |
| | ILP (n=46) | 68.54 (27.19) | 82.06 (28.15) |
| Lexical richness (Guiraud's Index) | SC (n=58) | 3.73 (0.87) | 4.07(0.82) |
| | ILP (n=46) | 3.81 (0.79) | 3.83 (0.81) |

Table 10. Descriptive statistics for oral narrative task on summer camp (SC) and intensive language program (ILP)

| | Program | Pre-test Mean (SD) | Post-test Mean (SD) |
|--|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Fluency (Tokens) | SC (n=58) | 47.74 (17.28) | 58.81 (19.09) |
| | ILP (n=47) | 47.75 (17.21) | 59.38 (19.13) |
| Lexical richness (Content word ratio) | SC (n=58) | 39.91 (6.04) | 39.86 (4.38) |
| | ILP (n=47) | 39.56 (7.12) | 38.83 (5.36) |

Table 11. Descriptive statistics for written dialogue task on summer camp (SC) and intensive language program (ILP)

| | Program | Pre-test Mean (SD) | Post-test Mean (SD) |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Lexical richness (Guiraud's Index) | SC (n=58) | 4.89 (.86) | 5.31 (.70) |
| | ILP (n=47) | 4.87 (.72) | 5.28 (.73) |
| Grammatical complexity | SC (n=58) | 1.15 (.42) | 1.39 (.40) |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| (Clauses per T-unit) | ILP (n=46) | 1.49 (.63) | 1.39(.46) |
| Accuracy | SC (n=58) | 53.41 (23.24) | 62.41 (20.29) |
| (Correct verb form ratio) | ILP (n=47) | 57.71 (21.54) | 62.71 (22.87) |

Table 12. Descriptive statistics for written narrative task on summer camp (SC) and intensive language program (ILP)