

LEARNER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT: A
CASE STUDY OF THE STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

by

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

French

December, 2012

Nashville, Tennessee

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To my parents,
Christine Florin and George Dessen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It gives me immense pleasure to acknowledge the many people who made this thesis possible.

I cannot express enough gratitude to my Ph.D. advisor Professor Virginia Scott whose enthusiasm for this project, her patience and readiness to advise guided me along the way. She taught me not only how to write but also taught me by example who I want to be after graduate school... I would have never made it without her help and friendship.

To the members of my committee: Professor Lynn Ramey, Professor Holly Tucker, Professor Todd Hughes and Professor Claire Smrekar. Thank you for your support.

I would like to thank the faculty in the Vanderbilt Department of French and Italian who helped me find my voice. For their continuous assistance in writing letters of recommendation over the past year, I would like to specifically thank Professor Virginia Scott, Professor Lynn Ramey, Professor Holly Tucker and Professor Maïté Monchal. Their support and kind words helped me open the door to exciting future possibilities.

A special thanks is extended to all the participants in the Vanderbilt-in-France program who participated in this study.

I am indebted to my many graduate student colleagues for providing such a stimulating and fun environment from which I am sad to leave. I am especially grateful to Julian Ledford and Roxane Pajoul who kept me sane during the difficult times and cheered me on all the way to the end.

To Rachel Nisselson who has been a great friend and colleague from the start. I hope we will continue to work together on many more projects to come.

To my friends at home, and especially to Alexandra Michieletto. Loin des yeux mais jamais loin du coeur.

To Naima Hachad, who showed me the way and shared so much of her expertise.

I would like to thank Maïté Monchal, without whom I would never have started this endeavor.

To the women mentors who taught me I do not need to compromise: Jan Lewis Brandes, Virginia Scott, Gay Welch, Maïté Monchal, and Natalie Debrauwere-Miller.

To the Brandes', my family in Nashville: George, Avery, Jan, and Michael, I do not know where to start. Thank you for taking me in as one of your own.

To George, mon supporter extraordinaire.

I wish to thank my two favorite polyglots for their encouragement over the years: my sister Lieza and my brother Bavo. I would have never been able to finish this project without them. We made it!

Lastly, and most importantly, I wish to thank my parents, Georges Dessen and Christine Florin who taught me the value of education and the ambition to never let go. Pa, there is a "doctor" in the family. Ma, I wish you were here. To you I dedicate this work.

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INTRODUCTION

Growing up in Europe, where mobility between the member states is encouraged and facilitated by a set of European exchange programs (ERASMUS, SOCRATES), I knew I would have the opportunity as a student to spend a year in another country. The chance came in my second year of university studies, when I spent a year abroad in England working towards a degree in English literature. In addition to my coursework, I met many people from different European countries and we formed a small community that represented the European Union and also included some American and Australian exchange students. At my return, I told people the experience had changed my life—an opinion shared by my friends who had spent the year abroad with me. However, I was unable to explain what had changed. My English had certainly improved, but without formal instruction I did not consider language learning to be the most important aspect of my study abroad experience. Rather, the people had changed me. Similarly, when I went to Brazil and later to the U.S., the experience was transforming.

Soon thereafter I had the opportunity to work for the Vanderbilt-in-France study abroad program in Aix-en-Provence. In addition to helping students with their schoolwork, I accompanied them on excursions and helped them navigate their study abroad experience. While working with these American students I was struck by the fact that within the same program, not all of the participants had a similar experience. While my time abroad had been an experience of self-discovery and freedom, I saw that some of the Vanderbilt-in-France students, by contrast, struggled and often seemed to wait for the semester to end so they could return home. Other students seemed to thrive under the same circumstances and signed up for extensions of their experience in Aix-en-Provence. It was interesting for me to try to understand which factors

accounted for successes and failures as they tried to adapt to their foreign surroundings. The same was true for language learning; while some individuals made enormous progress in learning the second language others did not achieve the same degree of success.

As a graduate student at Vanderbilt University, I began to consider these questions in an academic context. I was intrigued to find that there was a significant body of research devoted to exploring many of the questions I had previously considered. The more I read, the more evident it became that there were no clear answers regarding the outcomes of studying abroad. This conclusion seemed contradictory, especially considering that university administrators and faculty often seemed to compete with each other to set up study abroad programs at universities nationwide. The challenge to explore learning outcomes in the study abroad context appeared even more important. I determined that research on the study abroad experience could offer important information for those who seek to design programs that have a positive influence on the participants' overall experience.

To address the many questions that continue to challenge those involved with American study abroad programs, this dissertation explores learners' identity development in multilingual environments. More specifically, this dissertation describes a qualitative case study that investigates the study abroad experience of four participants. Through their language stories, we gain access to the unique dynamics these students navigate and how this process impacts the ways in which they perceive their role both in the target culture and among their peers. Using a sociocultural theoretical framework, I analyze these stories in order to engage a discussion about critical issues regarding language learning and the individual's experience abroad.

In Chapter One, I review relevant studies investigating the study abroad environment and how it affects L2 learning. After summarizing the outcome of the studies that assess the

linguistic benefits in the study abroad environment, I present a review of research that addresses the development of reading, writing, listening and speaking as well as grammar and pragmatics. I outline the methodology used for measuring the changes in proficiency in each of those areas and describe the findings. The focus of this review is on studies in which a control group of at-home learners is compared to study abroad learners. Finally, I conclude with a consideration of research on individual differences, illustrating how the current study is complementary to existing research. Eventually I explore the importance and the implications of this particular strand of research for understanding the impact of study abroad.

In introducing previous research on study abroad, I argue for the reconsideration of methodological frameworks that seek to investigate the study abroad experience. The lack of evidence for linguistic gains during study abroad calls for a reassessment of the goals set for our programs. Rather than solely aiming at improving proficiency, I argue that we should work towards the development and assessment of study abroad experiences that consider extra-linguistic gains and how these gains shape the language learner.

In Chapter Two, I show how current theoretical notions about second language learning emphasize the dynamic nature of the individual's language system(s). I review recent research on the dynamic nature of second language learning in order to show that language development involves more than simply linguistic features. Many other factors are at play in a person's second language development, including attitude, motivation and identity. The dynamic, non-linear interplay of these features are certainly operating in unique ways in the study abroad setting.

In this review of literature, I illustrate the applicability of a dynamic approach to understanding language development. I also address the unique characteristics of second

language learners. These approaches will illustrate the importance of viewing the language learner's mind as a unique dynamic system, which has implications both for research and for language pedagogy. The study abroad context is an environment that is ideally suited for studying the development of several unique characteristics of second language learners.

In Chapter Three, I review research on identity construction. First, I investigate the evolution in research on social and cultural identity and the ways in which contemporary theoretical frameworks have evolved to portray identity as a fluid concept. This dynamic view of identity construction results in a sociocultural approach to the study of identity. Furthermore, I show how language plays a central role with regard to changes in a person's perceived identity. I analyze learners as they position themselves within a specific community of speakers. This discussion includes such considerations as investment, imagination, and the power of the environment. I review the characteristics of successful language learners. The description of individual traits of those learners, such as motivation and confidence are insufficient to explain the different ways in which learners navigate an identical social environment. I also focus on the notions of language and power, and how they influence the successful integration of social networks through a variety of symbolic resources. Finally, I address how these theoretical frameworks influence my research on identity construction among study abroad participants, and how it shapes the approach to the current study as well as its analysis.

Chapter Four describes the method for the current study. I begin by stating the three research questions which are at the core of the study:

- 1) How do study abroad participants perceive and appropriate the C2 during their stay in the target country?

2) In which ways do study abroad participants negotiate their sense of Self as it relates to the Other?

3) Do study abroad participants develop an increased awareness of language and language use through interaction with their peers and native L2 speakers?

Additionally, I describe the overall methodological framework of this multiple case study: the four study participants, the setting, the materials used for the study, and the theoretical framework used to analyze data.

In the second part of the chapter, I present the data gathered from the e-journals of the four participants. Their language stories provide personal accounts of how they perceived the opportunities and challenges during their study abroad. Their narratives offer insight into the complex relations these study abroad participants have between their local network of peers and the target community as well as with C2 products and practices. The data highlights reasons for a successful study abroad experience (i.e., one that brings about important shifts in identity development and perception), as well as explanations for less pronounced shifts in identity perception and attitudes towards integration and social acceptance. Finally, the qualitative format of the study allows us to address the highly individualized nature of participants' attitudes and demonstrates how each participant's experience is unique in its nature and its outcome.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the findings of the study. I analyze selected parts of the data to highlight the applicability and relevance of the theoretical notions I investigated in the previous chapters. First, I look at the way participants perceive and appropriate the C2. In order to fully understand this subjective process, I highlight the networks participants navigate and emphasize how they deal with the specific dynamics proper to the study abroad experience. I show that the diversity of the strategies the participants adopt in dealing with the particularities of this

environment ultimately affect their investment in the language and the community. Then, I address the negotiation of each participant's sense of Self. The impact on self-perception depends largely on how participants in this study identified with the other language learners and how they interact with the target community. I show that both of these social processes result in a self-reflective stance that impacts their own cultural assumptions about products and practices. This process affects how learners in the study abroad context perceive and reevaluate their role in this new community. Finally, I address the question of language and language awareness. Ultimately, I will show that the study abroad experience affects each participant differently. The participants in this study adopt different strategies to navigate and integrate their local network. These strategies vary for each person and depend on the participants' personalities and their individual approaches to their C1. Finally, I present the limitations of the study, as well as considerations for future research.

In the conclusion, I discuss how that the study abroad experience can greatly affect individual learner identity development. While sojourning abroad, learners develop skills, and adopt strategies that help them navigate the complex C2 environment. These non-linguistic gains impact the ways in which learners ultimately view their own cultural and social network.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON STUDY ABROAD

Many teachers and students view study abroad as a necessary step to becoming fluent in the target language (Segalowitz, Freed, & Dewey, 2004). This belief is supported by a set of early studies investigating the effects of the immersion setting. Until the early 1990s, immersion research mainly compared study abroad with the at-home setting, thereby contrasting informal and naturalistic learning with formal learning in an instructional setting. Over the past decade however, the study abroad context has become more hybrid and diversified. Because study abroad has become an increasingly lucrative market, different types of programs have been developed to meet the diverse needs and goals of its potential participants. According to the Institute for International Education (IIE), 260,327 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2008/09. This number indicates that American student participation in study abroad has more than doubled over the past decade. Non-traditional destinations are increasingly popular: fourteen of the top twenty-five destinations for study abroad are now outside of Europe and nineteen out of twenty-five are destinations where English is not a primary language. This evolution illustrates the increasingly individualized dimension of the study abroad market. Due to the market's tailoring of the study abroad experience to respond to the different expectations of potential participants, it is becoming increasingly complicated to assess the general outcomes of the study abroad experience.

Even though the majority of study abroad participants partake in university-affiliated programs (260,327 per year according to IIE), the nature of these programs has changed. In

particular, there is an increasing number of programs that are not primarily aimed at developing proficiency in a second language (L2). In addition to their international education efforts, many universities offer alternative service programs or internships abroad. There is an increasingly important diversification of program goals and variables, which adds to the already vast array of learner variables such as gender, age, race and specialization. It is therefore important to define specifically which type of program is suitable to investigate for this study. In this study, I concentrate on the traditional hybrid study abroad program where language learners participate in university-affiliated, credit-bearing curricula. In this context, study abroad is seen as an integral part of the language curriculum at a particular academic institution. The hybridity of these programs lies in the fact that they also aim at involving participants in the target culture. In addition to the core instructional aspects, such programs may provide housing with native-speaker peers or families, or may include a compulsory meal plan with local native speakers. Another way to encourage participants to become involved in the local community lies in the organization of activities such as internships, excursions, partnerships with local clubs and organizations, or service learning projects.

The study abroad environment is characterized by its hybridity. It is an environment in which both naturalistic and instructional learning takes place: learners take part in traditional foreign language (FL) instruction, but also have access to the target language community in everyday situations. This combination of formal and informal L2 input is thought to be beneficial for the learners' language skills. Freed (1995, 1998, 2004) prepared a comprehensive investigation of the ways the learning context affects L2 acquisition. Starting in the early 1990s, she compiled several studies (1995, 1998, 2004) on the specificities of the study abroad learning environment and its effect on L2 development. Despite the anecdotal consensus that study

abroad may be beneficial for L2 development, there is little empirical evidence to support this belief (Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009). Current research has started to acknowledge full scope of the complexity of the study abroad experience, its outcome and the particularities of the study abroad context.

In this chapter, I will review relevant studies investigating the study abroad environment and how it affects L2 learning. After summarizing the outcome of the studies that document the linguistic benefits in the study abroad environment, I will present a review of research that addresses the development of reading, writing, listening and speaking as well as grammar and pragmatics in study abroad contexts. I will outline the methodology used for measuring the changes in proficiency in each of those areas, as well as findings. The focus for this review will be on studies in which a control group of at-home learners is compared to study abroad learners. Finally, I will conclude with a consideration of research on individual differences, illustrating how the current study is complementary to existing research. Ultimately I will explore the importance and the implications of research on individual differences for understanding the impact of study abroad.

Reading

Research on the development of reading in a study abroad context has been extensively studied, but due to different methodological approaches and diverging definitions of key concepts such as literacy (Dufon & Churchill, 2006), it is sometimes challenging to compare outcomes. Although there seems to be some variation in definition or method from one study to another, research seems to come to the same overall conclusion: “Despite the varied overall

methodologies employed, the consistent finding is that the study abroad learners develop their reading skills” (Dufon & Churchill, 2006).

Two studies offer pertinent insights into the positive impact of study abroad on participants’ reading skills. First, Fraser’s (2007) study shows a slight increase in reading skills among study abroad participants. In her 2007 quantitative study, Fraser investigated reading rate and task performance of two groups of native Mandarin speakers both studying English as a L2. One group of forty-five native Mandarin Chinese speakers participated in a study abroad program at a university in Canada. The other group was enrolled at their home institution in China. Fraser chose to investigate five tasks related directly to reading: scanning, skimming, normal reading, learning and memorizing. Her principal research question involved comparing first (L1) and second (L2) language reading rate and task performance on the five different reading skills. She wanted to assess the difference in performance for each task between the group in China and the one in Canada. Fraser’s study confirmed that reading rates in L2 are slower than in L1, for some tasks (learning and memorization), up to 50% slower in English than in Chinese. An assessment of the participants’ proficiency in English was not a predictor for the L2 reading rate. Despite the slower reading rates, the ultimate outcome of the five skills-based test had a satisfactory result, both in L1 and in L2. Fraser explains that participants may have “decreased their rate of processing in order to maintain success for the intended goals” (p. 387). English proficiency did influence the participants’ performance on the learning and memorizing tasks, as well as on the written recall activity. The investigator had anticipated at the beginning of the study that the group of students residing in Canada at the time of the study would have a better overall performance in their reading rate and success, due to their greater experience and greater range of encountered English reading materials. The results of the study did not

corroborate this anticipated hypothesis. The study abroad group outperformed the at-home group on only one task, the written recall. The intensive nature of the reading instruction at their university in China seemed to have achieved the same results as the constant L2 reading exposure for those students studying in the L2 environment. The study also showed that despite the study abroad experience students did not show a decrease in their L1 and L2 reading rate, therefore confirming previous studies investigating the L1 and L2 gap (Haynes & Carr, 1990; Segalowitz, 1986). Fraser's study does suggest an improvement, although slight, in reading skills for the study abroad group.

Fraser wonders in her conclusion whether this persistent L1/L2 gap is due to insufficient practice and experience or whether these results are linked to the type of reading. Fraser admits that in her study she did not select easy to read materials, but rather academic texts that situated the participants' reading in a "reading to learn" process (p. 388). This selection of texts would have an impact on reading rate, since the participants' slower reading could in fact be the result of a strategy to enhance the learning.

The second study conducted by Dewey (2004) is a qualitative study that explores the role of context on reading comprehension in American learners of Japanese. He followed fifteen students participating in a study abroad program in Japan and compared their progress in reading comprehension and reading processes to thirteen students studying in an at-home immersion¹ context. Students were tested before and after their respective programs on three measures of comprehension: recall, vocabulary recognition and a self-assessment of their reading comprehension. In comparing the pretest and the posttest for both groups, Dewey could not find

¹ An example of an at-home immersion program model is the widely respected Middlebury Language School. Students, faculty, and staff communicate solely in their language of choice for the duration of the program. This approach results in a complete linguistic immersion, both in the classroom and in-language extracurricular activities.

considerable differences between both groups for the first two measures. Study abroad participants did show significant difference from the immersion group in think aloud protocols. They showed a greater empathy for the texts, and reacted as much to content as to how it affected them. The students participating in the immersion program benefitted from their context in that the availability of instructors to guide them through reading assignments helped them to be more efficient and read in a more analytical way compared to their study abroad counterparts. The study abroad group was more exposed to the culture and language outside the classroom, but the immersion group consistently scored very similarly to both the free-recall and vocabulary knowledge measures. However, the outcome of the self-assessment measure shows that the study abroad group reports a greater increase in self-confidence in reading than the immersion group. This study offers evidence that study abroad fosters an increase in readers' confidence. It is worth noting, however, that this increase in confidence does not translate into a measurable increase in reading skills when compared to the less self-confident immersion group. In addition to discussing his findings, Dewey discusses the need for a variety of new measures designed to capture gains specific to different learners' context.

An interesting dimension of Dewey's study lies in the attention it draws to interpersonal factors essential to the understanding of language learning, such as self-confidence. It seems that notions such as the learners' self-perceived increase in confidence merit more thorough investigations. Quantitative studies are unable to measure such factors in all their complexity, and the article calls indirectly for more focused studies on these highly individualized, unquantifiable characteristics of the language learner, and their impact both on a linguistic and on a personal level.

Proficiency

Speaking is the skill that has received the most attention in research on linguistic gains in the study abroad environment. Researchers have relied heavily on OPI² interviews as a standardized and reliable assessment framework. It is also the skill in which the gains for the study abroad learners are considered the most important (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Two subcategories have received particular attention: studies that focused on proficiency, and a smaller set of studies investigating pronunciation. As with the reading studies, the most telling investigations in this particular field are studies in which gains in the study abroad context are compared with gains achieved in at-home programs. Indeed, it is generally accepted that participants in study abroad do progress in speaking the target language, but the interest lies in comparing those gains to at-home learners.

Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg (1993) investigated increasing proficiency skills in learners of Russian in at-home contexts and study abroad contexts. These findings are the result of a large, multi-year study of American undergraduates who spent a semester or more studying Russian in Russia, compared to an at-home control group. The study relied on a large set of measurement instruments, including multi-skill tests, questionnaires, self-assessments and diary studies. They anticipated that the students who participated in the study abroad program would be more likely to reach higher levels of proficiency than their peers who had not participated in exchange or sojourn abroad programs. In addition, they identified certain variables they thought

² The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability. OPI is a testing method, which measures how well a person speaks a language by comparing their performance of specific language tasks according to the criteria for each of the ten proficiency levels described in the ACTFL Revised Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking, revised, by ACTFL in 1999.

would likely predict success for those participating in the study-abroad experience: level of pre-program language proficiency, age, and previous in-country immersion.

A significant finding was that pre-program reading and grammar skills are important predictors of gains in all other skill areas. The study also concluded that at-home learners had greater difficulty achieving an advanced level (based on the ACTFL oral proficiency scale) as opposed to 40% of the study abroad learners. Whereas they show that the study abroad experience influences the proficiency level of their participants directly, they also underline the importance of pre-departure instruction. They find a direct correlation between students who scored well on grammar tests before departure and an increase in speaking skills after study abroad, thus underscoring the importance of how at-home curricula influences the outcomes of the study abroad experience. One could therefore conclude from this study that the study abroad experience increases students' oral proficiency, but that the outcome depends on prior instruction.

Brecht et al. also address the difficulty that lies in assessing proficiency. According to their research, current assessment instruments are unable to capture the progress made by more advanced students. Among advanced learners, progress in proficiency is much more subtle than that of participants who start with lower proficiency levels. This difference in progress explains why people often have the impression that the lower-level students made the greatest gains, at-home or abroad.

Finally, there are a number of broader studies on “fluency”—characterized in the Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985) as “ease in language production, good command of intonation, vocabulary, grammar; effectiveness in communication and its continuity.” The investigation of fluency concentrates therefore on many different issues,

such as speech production, hesitation and temporal phenomena (Dechert, 1983; Dechert & Raupauch, 1984; Deese, 1980; Ejzenberg, 2000; Goldman-Eisher, 1961, 1968; Griffiths, 1991; Grosjean, 1980; Kowal & O'Connell, 1985; Möhle, 1984; Olynac, d'Anglejean, & Sankoff, 1990; Rauchpach, 1980, 1983, 1984; Riegenbach, 1991; Temple, 1992; Towell, Hawkins & Bazergui, 1996), quantification of oral fluency (Derwing, Rossiter, Munro & Thomson, 2004; Freed, 1995b; Lennon, 1990; Olynak et al., 1990; Riegenbach, 1991; Simões, 1996), native speaker perception of fluency (White & Li, 1991), and native speaker perception of speech (Derwing et al., 2004; Freed, 1995, 2004a, 2004b). The results from these extensive studies are limited because the definition of the term "fluency" varies greatly from one study to the other.

Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey (2004) present an interesting study in which fluency is examined by a panel of native L2 speakers. The researchers investigated not only at-home and study abroad participants, but also added a group of participants in an intensive US-based summer immersion program. The twenty-eight students of French studying in three different learning contexts participated in oral interviews (similar to the OPI) at the beginning and at the end of their courses and provided information regarding language use and interactions. Analyses included comparisons of scores as a function of the learning context and as a function of the time reported using French outside of class. The conclusion is encouraging for study abroad, in that the native speaker panel perceived the study abroad group as more 'fluent' than the at-home subjects. However, the study concludes that the native speaker jury found that the at-home immersion group made the most progress in fluency. This assessment was based on the total number of words spoken, the length of the longest turn, the rate of speech, and the speech fluidity.

Pronunciation

Studies on pronunciation have been less consistent than those on speaking and reading. Indeed, individual factors seem to have a particularly important influence on the outcomes of these studies, such as the length of stay and prior formal instruction. Diaz-Campos (2004) examines whether study abroad, a context that provides opportunities for an authentic L2 context, facilitates the acquisition of Spanish phonology. He selected speech samples from forty-six American university students learning Spanish. Twenty were taking Spanish classes in the regular program at the University of Colorado, and twenty-six were part of a ten-week study abroad program in Spain. All participants completed the Language Contact Profile (Freed, Segalowitz, Dewey, & Halter, 2004) before and after the program. This instrument allowed Diaz-Campos to gather personal information such as age, L1, previous language-learning experiences as well as information regarding travel, languages spoken at home, years of formal language instruction in Spanish and other languages, time spent speaking Spanish with native speakers before and during the semester, and time spent reading books and newspapers and watching television in Spanish.

Before and after treatment, students were asked to read a paragraph with sixty target words, representing different phonological difficulties and particularities. There was a trend of improvement in the pronunciation of both groups of students at the end of the treatment. These results are slightly puzzling in that they do not reveal striking differences between study abroad and at-home students. The findings reveal that gains in Spanish phonology did not depend mainly on context, but on many instructional, pragmatic and personal factors, which were a predictor for noticeable gains. Diaz-Campos found that students with seven or more years of language instruction show a more native-like pronunciation, regardless of study abroad

experience or exclusive at-home instruction. The quantitative analysis also reveals that other important independent variables play a role in L2 pronunciation. Specifically, the following factor groups were found to be statistically significant: years of formal language instruction, reported use of Spanish before the semester, and reported use of Spanish outside the classroom during the semester and gender

Simões (1996) investigated changes in oral communication skills of five American participants in a five-week study abroad program in Spain. He evaluated their pre-departure proficiency level through the administration of OPIs. Their overall language proficiency before their departure ranged from Intermediate Low to Advanced on the ACFL Oral Proficiency scale. At the end of the study, Simões concluded only two participants improved their pronunciation. The subjective analysis of the recordings shows that most of these changes are reflected in vocabulary acquisition and an increased comfort in discourse interaction of the four participants. According to the procedures developed, two participants improved their pronunciation. Simões also notes that the results using these procedures correlate with pre-departure OPI results, suggesting that these OPI results could potentially be a predictor for phonological proficiency development.

In his 2006 quantitative study, Díaz-Campos analyzes style in L2 phonological acquisition. This study is a follow-up of the Díaz-Campos (2004) study detailed previously, in which the impact of context of learning was examined in a reading-aloud task without taking into account different speech styles. The assessment of style in the literature on second language acquisition involves assessing the subjects' speed of lexical access, and the attention paid to speech formation, i.e. phonetic accuracy. Forty-six students were interviewed for this study. Twenty-six students were studying Spanish while twenty were taking a regular Spanish language

class in the United States. First, participants took part in a read-aloud task that contained sixty target words. Two-minute extracts were taken from the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) that participants took in both the pre-test and post-test interviews. The analysis of style clearly revealed that L2 learners tend to produce more target language-like pronunciation in the conversational style as compared to the read-aloud style. It seems that the read-aloud task triggered a negative effect in the production of target language-like variants. The study also indicates that study abroad students performed better in producing target-like pronunciation than regular classroom students. The results of the interaction between style and context of learning reveal however that study abroad students tend to do better in the conversational styles than regular classroom students. The author speculates that study abroad students have more contact with native speakers in different daily life situations and, therefore, their performance is more likely to improve in informal contexts.

Grammar

Along with oral proficiency, L2 grammar development received wide attention from researchers. This area of inquiry has benefited largely from quantitative research under the form of standardized testing and questionnaires, but also the very popular OPI interviews and subsequent discourse analysis. Studies by Dekeyser (1991a, 1991b), Gunterman (1992), Ryan & Laffort (1992) and Freed (1995) indicate that the study abroad experience has a minimal effect on the acquisition of grammar. Whereas participants' fluency improves, there are no significant gains in grammatical development. Regan et al. (2009) point out that evidence for significant gains in grammatical competence among study abroad learners is weak.

The general evidence regarding the benefits of study abroad as opposed to foreign language instruction for the learner's grammar is rather limited. This appears to be true for the learner in the early stages of acquisition (...) as well as for the learner at a more advanced level... (p. 33).

Collentine (2004) provides an analysis of the effects of learning context on the grammatical and lexical abilities of two groups of students: one study abroad in Spain, and another group who takes Spanish at home at an American university. All study abroad students lived with Spanish host families in Alicante during the treatment period. For each participant, the research team sampled two segments of an OPI, conducted before the experiment; and two segments from the OPI, conducted after the experiment. Collentine focused on discrete grammatical and lexical features—specifically on prepositions, inflectional morphology; morphological markers of number and gender. Overall, the study abroad experience did not produce students who outscore those participants who had taken Spanish at their home institution. In fact, the at-home group made greater progress, outscoring the study abroad students in areas of gender, number, person, mood, and tense accuracy, which are the grammatical aspects that Collentine considers Spanish formal instruction emphasizes. The conclusion of the study indicates that the at-home context facilitated a greater development on discrete grammatical and lexical features. Collentine reveals, however, that the study abroad group achieved better narrative abilities and could produce language that was semantically much denser than the at-home group.

Longitudinal studies are available (Collentine, 2004) to support the idea that learners in an instructed environment at home may attain the same level of grammatical development as study abroad learners. Herschensohn (2003) reports on two Anglophone teenagers learning

French—one exposed to a six-month stay in France, and the other exposed to an instructional environment at home. The data collected from six tape-recorded interviews showed an increase in the production discreet lexical items and distinct verbs, as well as in the percentage of correct verb conjugations. One subject, Chloe was exposed to a six-month study abroad experience in a francophone environment as she enrolled as a high school student in a French lycée while living with a local family. The other subject, Emma, took classes in a traditional instructional environment at a community college. Herschensohn underlined at the start of the study that both girls had received the same instruction prior to Chloe’s departure for France, and that both received equally low scores on a grammar placement test. As part of this study, the investigator conducted six recorded interviews with both girls over the six-month period Chloe was in France. Analysis of the interviews showed a clear improvement in the ability of both subjects to produce correct inflectional forms of French verbs. Over the course of the study, both young women showed an increase of correctly inflected verbs as well as a number of errors that would reflect their changing interlanguage grammars. For instance, both showed an inclination, which changes over time, for regularization of irregular forms. It seems therefore that their interlanguage grammars move increasingly towards that of the native speaker. The study abroad participant showed a greater improvement of the production of verb inflections by the third interview. The instructed student showed a higher error rate than her peer, but she still showed great competency in producing correctly inflected verbs. Even if Herschensohn concludes that the study abroad participant in her study attains a higher level in grammatical development than the subject at home, she states that there is no evidence that the same development cannot occur in a at-home classroom setting.

Lennon's study (1990) may provide an answer to the seemingly increased grammatical development. Lennon followed four native speakers of German during a six-month study abroad program. The four women were all L2 learners of English and had never spent a significant amount of time in an English-speaking community. The participants underwent oral proficiency testing at the start of their stay as well as at the end. They also participated in interviews recorded to assess their oral proficiency. The results of these tests revealed significant progress in oral performance by the end of their stay in England.

For this study, Lennon was specifically interested in investigating in how students critically assessed their own progress as L2 speakers, and how that assessment influenced language learning. He concluded that study abroad participants cease to seek active feedback on their utterances, therefore increasing grammatical development through language. In ceasing to seek feedback, language use increased and this resulted in greater automation of their use of English, ultimately resulting in language development. Unfortunately, it is difficult to say whether at-home learners might have attained a lesser level in proficiency, since this study does not compare their development to at-home learners.

Interestingly, a small but rising trend is the investigation of a particular aspect of the learner's grammar. Whereas the evidence for studies investigating grammar in general shows limited evidence of benefits of study abroad on learners' grammar development, it may prove to have a more positive influence on the development of particular grammar points. Researchers may choose to concentrate future investigations in grammar on those specific, discrete grammatical aspects.

Howard (2001) investigated the effect of study abroad as it compared to at-home instruction on the acquisition of expression of past tense in French. He specifically looked at

examining the effect of study abroad on the expression of this grammatical feature. Howard set up a cross-sectional quantitative analysis of oral data from Irish learners of French. Howard chose to follow eighteen advanced learners of French who fit in three different groups. The first group was a group of learners who were taking advanced French at their home university and were about to go study abroad. Group two consisted of a group of students who had just returned from a study abroad program in France. As part of the program the study abroad students had taken classes at a university in northern France, but none had received formal L2 instruction while studying abroad. Group three was a control group of advanced learners who were taking French at their home-institution, but they had never studied abroad and had no plans to partake in a study abroad program in the foreseeable future. All participants had taken a language proficiency test as part of their foreign language curriculum after two years of instruction, and scored within the same range of proficiency. Therefore, Howard believed he could justifiably compare these three groups.

The investigator collected oral data from all participants in the study through one-hour individual interviews. After data analysis of the use of the past tenses in French, both the *imparfait* and the *passé composé*, Howard concluded that the group of study abroad participants was more successful at making correct use of both tenses. They also showed an increased use of the past tense forms, as compared to the first and second groups. Howard concludes that study abroad leads to a more successful outcome for expression of past time form functions. However, these results do not result in a structural L2 language difference between the classroom group and the group of study abroad participants: both groups of participants showed similar patterns of contextual L2 use. For example, there does not seem to be a difference of their contextual use of past time, regardless of the context in which they had studied. Howard therefore concludes that

study abroad may be an accelerator for the development of discrete grammatical features, but that the overall linguistic profiles of the learners show no real differences based on their language learning experience.

Marquès-Pasqual (2011) checked the development of subject-verb inversions and subject omissions among intermediate and advanced learners of Spanish. One group of twenty students completed a Spanish course in an at-home classroom setting, another group after a semester of study abroad in Mexico. Each group was composed of ten intermediate and ten advanced learners of Spanish. For each, Marqués-Pascual analyzed forty oral interviews for evidence of interlanguage development of null subject and subject verb inversions. The study was built around two assumptions. The first assumption was that both grammatical structures receive a different emphasis in the Spanish curriculum. The second one assumed that the native speakers' comprehension is not impeded by these mistakes so error corrective feedback would be rare in the study abroad context.

Marqués-Pascual's study shows that the learning context did not influence accuracy in use of verb agreement. Students at home used verb agreement as accurately as those who had spent time abroad. Marqués-Pascual underlined that those results were to be expected, considering the strong focus on Spanish conjugation in the at-home classroom. As far as the null subject use was concerned, the higher level of Spanish input study abroad seemed to have promoted an increased development of correct use of null subject. Overall, advanced proficiency students seemed to have benefited more of the study abroad experience than those students who were at the intermediate level. Marqués-Pascual therefore reinforces the idea put forth by Segalowitz and Freed (2004): "there is a threshold of pre-departure cognitive development necessary for significant gains in study abroad."

On the whole, the studies on grammar show little evidence that the study abroad experience makes a difference in the development of grammar during L2 acquisition. Some studies dismiss the influence of study abroad on grammatical development (Collentine & Torres, 2003, 2004); others are inconclusive (Howard, 2001). These results may guide researchers towards investigating other aspects of L2 development, such as pragmatics.

Pragmatics

Research on pragmatic gains in the study abroad settings has increased over the past decade, in part due to the fact that foreign language curricula put emphasis on the importance of culture in the foreign language curriculum, a stance largely influenced by the *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*³ (1999, 2006). The Standards specifically encourage the emphasis on culture in language learning. Wilkinson (2006) describes the field of pragmatics:

Focusing on the social context-based nature of language development, pragmatics is defined as the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. (p. 22-23).

Studies on pragmatics focus on such aspects as routines, terms of address and speech acts.

Magnan and Back (2007) stress that L2 research has mainly focused on “pragmatic use rather

³ The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*, first published in 1996, represents an unprecedented consensus among educators, business leaders, government, and the community on the definition and role of foreign language instruction in American education.

Retrieved 2011/04/25 <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3392>

than development” (p. 23). Specifically, rather than investigating L2 development, studies in pragmatic development have investigated the use of requests, and perceptions of politeness. These studies look at language register, terms of address and speech acts, following Goffman’s (1959) work on politeness.

Kinginger and Farrell (2004) assess the development of meta-pragmatic awareness in study abroad. The authors explore a methodology for assessing learners' meta-pragmatic awareness of variation in French language use. They define meta-pragmatic awareness as the knowledge of the social meaning of variable L2 forms and awareness of the ways in which these forms mark different aspects of social contexts. They state that meta-pragmatic awareness is therefore a crucial force behind the meaning-generating capacity of language in use. The authors take as a test case for the study of this phenomenon the learners' awareness and use of address forms, or the "tu" versus "vous" in French. This distinction is a key component of sociolinguistic competence, presenting a complex, dynamic, and inherently ambiguous matter. Knowledge and correct use of this specific language form necessarily intersects with broader awareness of sociocultural norms and personal identities. Eight study abroad participants were enrolled in this study, and partook in different study abroad programs in France. The researchers chose to assess the “tu”/”vous” system through the Language Awareness Interview. As part of this formal discussion, based on the sociolinguistic interview (Labov, 1989), learners were asked to respond to a range of interpersonal situations, selecting an appropriate address form for different interlocutors and reflecting aloud on the justification for this choice. Specifically, participants were presented with a series of six social situations illustrating different parameters influencing choice of address form, as revealed in the sociolinguistics literature (e.g., setting, age, and familiarity of interlocutor). The participants were asked to choose an address form for each of

these situations and to explain the rationale underlying this choice. They conclude that learning about subtle features of a key sociolinguistic feature of French does appear to take place for all eight study abroad participants involved in this research project. According to this study, study abroad is conducive to the development of meta-pragmatic awareness among its participants.

Cohen and Shively (2007) investigated the impact of study abroad on the acquisition of request and apologies. Eighty-six students from several universities in Minnesota participated in the study. All learners were going to spend a semester abroad in either a Francophone country or in a Spanish speaking country. The researchers' assumption was that the potential gain in pragmatic competence was linked to L2 learning and time spent in the target culture, but that the L2 in itself did not matter. Therefore the participants were not all learners of the same L2. The participants were divided in three different treatment groups. One participated in a brief face-to-face study abroad orientation pre-departure. This session aimed at educating the students about a variety of methods that would be useful during their experience abroad. During this orientation session, they were given a basic overview of the literature on learning speech acts. The researchers focused specifically on presenting the speech acts of apologizing and requesting. All participants were provided with a self-study guidebook on language and culture strategies. This guide⁴ included strategies for learning speech acts. One group of students was asked to participate in electronic journaling on assigned readings in the text.

The study had a pretest–posttest design whereby data was collected prior to the students' departure for study abroad and again near the end of their semester abroad. The eighty-six participants were assessed by a jury of native speakers on their improvement of their use of requests and apologies performance. For the pretest, all students completed the Speech Act

⁴ *Maximizing study abroad: A Students' Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use* (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002)

Measure of Language Gain during a four-hour in-person session that took place in Minnesota. For the posttest, all students completed once again *the Speech Act Measure of Language Gain* near the end of their semester abroad, using a Web site created for the study. Results showed a statistically significant difference in speech act performance by Spanish and French students after studying abroad for one semester. The study therefore suggests that for some of these students' awareness about mitigating requests was enhanced by studying abroad. The orientation session aimed at enhancing the students' language- and culture-learning strategies did not change the effects of study abroad on pragmatic gain, as did the journaling. Students who had undergone those treatments scored similarly on the intervention on Spanish requests and apologies.

Iwasaki Noriko (2011) investigates L2 Japanese politeness and impoliteness among four young male study abroad participants who studied abroad in Japan for an academic year. Iwasaki highlights the self-reported difficulties the subjects experienced during their interaction with native speakers. Iwasaki conducted retrospective interviews in English over the phone approximately one year and six months after their post-study abroad OPIs. The participants commented on their experiences as Americans during their social interactions in Japan. The researcher identified six categories around which he conducted his interview and organized his data: (a) contexts of language socialization, (b) male foreigner status, (c) making friends, (d) accounts of explicit socialization, (e) the *desu/masu* and politeness, (f) how they chose their speech styles. Iwasaki concludes that traditional classroom instruction fails to prepare study abroad participant to negotiate interactions with native speakers in a study abroad context. Language educators "imagined interactions with their students" differ greatly from what the participants actually encountered, and had not prepared them to negotiate their social identity as a L2 learner in the target culture. Iwasaki notes that the native speakers may have lowered their

expectations of the non-native speakers and did not conform themselves to native speaker expectations of language use and register. Instead, they chose to interact with the students informally, without expecting them to use honorifics, thus encouraging them to use lower levels of speech. This continued upon their return to America. In that respect study abroad is not a guarantee of exposure to natural language use and, may not guarantee an extensive improvement in pragmatic gains.

Nevertheless, the study abroad context appears to provide a unique environment for the study of the development of pragmatic competence, for it “offers the learners practical experience with how language works in society” (Dufon & Churchill, 2006, p.24). The research format for these studies differs greatly from studies on literacy skills, in that they mainly have a qualitative format, informed by learners’ journals, interviews and observation (Dufon, 1998, 2003; Goffman, 1974; Hassal, 2004; Siegal, 1995; Kinginger & Whitworth, 2005). Only a few studies adopt a quantitative approach to examine such pragmatic abilities especially in the field of speech acts, which can be investigated by questionnaires and OPI role-play testing (Matsumura, 2001; Churchill, 2003, Dufon, 2000).

The literature on pragmatics indicates that study abroad learners seem to have an advantage over traditional learners in the development of pragmatics. Studies on pragmatics focus on such aspects as routines, terms of address and speech acts. Dewael and Regan (2001) concluded that sustained gains in pragmatic knowledge, especially as related to colloquialisms, depends on “prolonged, authentic contact with the L2 community” (p.63). Evidence in speech acts has a similar conclusion, according to Dufon & Churchill, suggesting that study abroad students improve their pragmatic development more than at-home learners (p. 14). It should however be noted that these studies also underlined the fact that even if there was an increase in

the use of formulaic pragmatic expressions, these were never fully perceived as native-like, and largely depended on individual differences (p.14).

Learner Differences

In recent years, research has addressed an issue that seems to be largely responsible for the inconclusiveness of much of the research on study abroad, namely individual differences. Wilkinson (2002) has tackled the issue of integrative motivation, which she investigates in qualitative diary studies. She defines integrative motivation as the degree to which students report that they are willing to place themselves in the target culture impacts gains in language proficiency. Wilkinson observes that the study abroad experience is often promoted as one of the best opportunities to use foreign language skills outside the classroom. She examines how students use strategies taught in the classroom for second language exchanges in non-instructional settings. For this qualitative study, she conducts conversation analysis and ethnographic interviews to investigate both speech and speaker perceptions through tape-recorded conversations between summer study abroad students and their French hosts, as well as through interviews and observations. Her findings indicate that natives and nonnatives alike rely heavily on classroom roles and discourse structures to manage their interactions, calling into question the assumption that language use with a native-speaking host family liberates students from classroom limitations. The inappropriateness of transferring didactic discourse patterns to out-of-class interactions also raises issues for consideration about the nature of in-class instructional practices. Through such studies, researchers like Wilkinson open the door to a multitude of personal factors which can potentially impact the study abroad experience and which differ from one participant to the next. These studies may in part explain why it is so

difficult to make conclusive observations on the impact of study abroad on increased skills in the target language.

Allan and Herron's (2003) hybrid investigation, and mixed methodology study focused on the linguistic as well as the affective outcomes of study abroad. Of particular interest are the affective outcomes for this review on personal and individual factors. Allen and Herron sought to investigate changes in two affective factors, integrative motivation and language anxiety after study abroad. They also examined whether there was a difference between pre-study abroad affective differences for participants, as they compare to their at-home peers. The study participants were twenty-five university students enrolled in a 2001 summer study abroad program in Paris. A vast corpus of measuring instruments investigated participants' language anxiety, integrative motivation, and oral and listening French skills before and after study abroad: the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, the French Use Anxiety Scale, the State Anxiety Questionnaire, the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, the French Oral Proficiency Test, the French Listening Proficiency Test, the Language Contact Profile, and finally the Study Abroad Interview Protocol⁵.

Allen and Herron's study concludes that after participation in study abroad, students were much less anxious about speaking French, both in and out of the classroom, thus impacting their individual emotional attitude towards L2 use. However, despite the fact that the participants made significant improvements in both oral and listening skills, especially those learners who were advanced, their integrative motivation and attitudes toward learning French and French people were unchanged. One of the main motivators participants in this study listed for studying

⁵ "This interview, conducted with eight primary informants, consisted of open-ended questions on three topics: living in France, eating in France, and communicating with Parisians. Its purpose was to obtain firsthand information from the students' points of view." (Allen & Herron, 2003, p. 7)

abroad was “getting to know the French.” Allen and Herron concluded, however, that the data analysis showed that the participants did not spend the necessary amount of time outside the classroom to establish contact with the target culture members. This lack of interaction with the target community proved to be a great source of disappointment after their study abroad experiences. According to this study, study abroad has an only limited effect on stimulating attitudinal changes among participants, and only mildly influences participants’ integrative orientation.

Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimizu’s study (2004) investigates results and antecedents of willingness to communicate in an L2 through two separate investigations conducted with Japanese adolescent learners of English. In the first investigation, involving 160 students, a model was created based on the hypothesis that willingness to communicate results in more frequent communication in the L2, and that an attitudinal construct referred to as *international posture* leads to willingness to communicate and communication behavior. The second investigation with sixty students who participated in a study-abroad program in the United States confirmed the results of the first. Finally, frequency of communication was shown to correlate with satisfaction in interpersonal relationships during the sojourn. Whereas Allen and Herron conclude that advanced learners are more likely to be better prepared linguistically and to benefit culturally from native speaker interaction, Yashima found that integration depended largely on their self-perceived communicative competence. The better they perceived their communicative language abilities, the more easily they would engage in interpersonal communications with members of the target community.

Both studies provide very different outcomes and reasons behind individual differences. However they do provide researchers with valid data and an array of possibilities to approach

individual differences. They also illustrate the resolutely qualitative trend that takes place in research on language learner and language development. Whereas quantitative research has been able to provide general trends regarding the impact of study abroad on language development, qualitative research can account for and explain some of the variability in the many findings shown earlier in this review, and thus enhance our understanding of L2 development. This observation does not discount the validity of quantitative research in the field of study abroad research, but rather underlines the importance of the complementarity of both modes of data collection and interpretation and the ways in which they can inform each other.

Model for the Current Study

The format for the current study is largely influenced by the research design Aguilar Stewart (2010) adopted to investigate students' critical language awareness and social identity during study abroad. Her qualitative research design is particularly interesting in that it is based on a case study that analyzes individual narratives of participants in a study abroad program. These narratives appear well suited to investigate the different learning processes of L2 learners in a study abroad context. The analysis of these journal entries allows for the representation of the full scope of a learner's experience, and emphasizes the unique interrelation between context and individual factors.

According to Aguilar Stewart, the different research outcomes on study abroad result from more than individual differences. The variety in results is also in part due to the increasingly wide-ranging formats of study abroad programs offered to undergraduates. The current formats are significantly different from the more unified experience of participants from a generation ago. For those students, study abroad most often meant spending an academic year

in the target country in a homestay with non-English-speaking hosts, enrolling in an advanced study program, and relying entirely on regular mail for communication with home. Today, extensive travel over the weekends, the different options to stay in touch with family and friends over email and other means of communication (i.e. Skype, Facebook, chat), and spending extensive amounts of time with their cohort with whom they converse in their L1, necessarily affects the outcomes of second language development. Aguilar Stewart quotes Kinginger (2007, p. 3) who states “[s]tudents’ home social networks remain perfectly intact and impervious to influences from the foreign culture,” concluding that these networks affect the ways participants succeed (or not) in constructing a “functional identity within the target culture” (p. 139).

Aguilar Stewart believes that research on study abroad would benefit from implementing a variety of strategies. First, she urges educators to be more intentional in specifying the goals of study abroad programs. She reminds the reader that in 2006, the U.S. Department of Education already called for transparency in evidence-based measures of program goals for study abroad programs. Second, she proposes that research on second language development should be more socioculturally informed and should investigate the ethnographic aspects of individual characteristics that hinder or foster interactions with the target culture, linguistic awareness, and linguistic development. She argues that one of the ways to probe discrete learning gains and opportunities for interaction with the target community is to follow the participants’ language awareness and social development through e-journaling. This approach gives researchers insight into participants’ cultural perceptions and linguistic experiences that standardized testing cannot provide.

Aguilar-Stewart’s study explores two questions: (1) how certain program features (classroom instruction, living situation, and internships in the community) facilitate the students’

language awareness, and (2) what role personal identity (gender, motivation, and personality) might play in their interaction with native speakers (p. 141). She recruited eight participants from several American universities who were enrolled in advanced-level language courses at their respective universities. Some of Aguilar Stewart's participants had had previous experiences abroad. Four of the participants had declared a language major, while the others specialized in business, communication or social studies. All of the participants were enrolled in the same grammar class at a study abroad program in Mexico, and were enrolled in three to four additional courses at a Mexican institution. These courses were especially designed to welcome the study abroad participants who took courses with the 240 other international students enrolled at the university. Participants had opportunities to interact with Mexican students at the cafeteria, the gym and other restaurants near the university that catered to the students. Housing options varied from homestay, on campus student housing to individual apartments.

The participants agreed to write two to three entries per week in their electronic journal over the course of the thirteen-week program. At the beginning and end of the program, participants listed their goals for study abroad, the difficulties they encountered living in Mexico, their likes and dislikes about their experience, as well as their impressions of Mexican culture. Aguilar Stewart noted that all students reported wanting to become fluent in Spanish.

Students started journaling two weeks into the program. Aguilar Stewart guided the participants by providing them with a set of questions. These questions treated their interactions with the target community. She considered that in answering these questions, participants would reflect on their language use and discuss subjects related to language awareness. Although it was initially planned that students would answer these questions in English, students chose to produce their entries in Spanish in order to benefit linguistically from the exercise. Aguilar

Stewart analyzed the journal entries of three study abroad participants. She does not list how and why she selected these particular students, but used their journaling to “highlight how gender, personality, living situation, and social network appeared to play a role in the student’s opportunity for interaction in the target language” (p. 146).

For Molly, who was a Spanish language major, the study abroad experience was her first time abroad. She listed that her goals for study abroad were to improve her reading and writing skills. She wanted to achieve an advanced low proficiency on the ACTFL scale in order to be approved for student teaching upon her return. Her journal entries showed evidence of a limited social network and few opportunities to have extensive discourse interaction with Spanish speakers. Over the course of the semester, Molly commented on how she managed to better understand her professors and peers, but not the native speakers. She also reported that her American roommates spoke mainly in English due to the low proficiency level of one of them. Molly reported two to three hours of spoken Spanish per day, but reported an additional two hours of listening to Spanish while in the classroom. At night she spent several hours chatting in English with her boyfriend in the USA. Aguilar Stewart’s analysis of Molly’s social network showed that it was mainly limited to her roommates and one of her instructors. Molly comments on her difficulty understanding native speakers and on her frustration with her communications class where there is little interaction in Spanish due to its lecture format.

As far as the impact of Molly’s limited social network is concerned, Aguilar Stewart finds it linked to the limited practice of Spanish. Molly continues throughout the 13-week program to express frustration with the age difference between her and the Spanish speaking suitemates. Her living situation in the dorm did not help Molly to create an extensive Spanish speaking social network but rather confined her to the campus resulting in her remaining

peripheral to the target community. Her daily Skype sessions with her boyfriend were a constant reminder of home and Molly eagerly awaited her return to the US. She did however report she greatly enjoyed her time in Mexico and the discovery of its culture.

Jennifer achieved very similar results as Molly on her pre-treatment placement tests. Her personality was much more outgoing and she had a previous one-month study abroad experience Cuernavaca. In her suite that she shared with seven other girls, she was the only American. She reported early on extensive conversations between the roommates, how much she enjoyed participating and listening to the girls talk as well as how they always corrected her Spanish. Like Molly, she regretted the lecture-format of the courses she signed up for at the Mexican university. The only interactive class she took was her grammar class, which she seemed to greatly enjoy. Aguilar Stewart found evidence of increasing linguistic awareness throughout her journal, when Jennifer commented on specific grammatical forms she linked to others she had encountered in exchanges with her roommates:

Today I finally made the connection about why people say “espero que tu’
TENGAS un buen dia.” Before, I understood what they were saying but I never
understood WHY they were using the word “tengas” and not “tienes.” (September 27)
(p. 149)

Jennifer reported an extensive list of Mexican friends at the end of her stay, and Aguilar Stewart concludes Jennifer “appeared to have developed an identity as a member of the target language community” (p. 149). However, Jennifer reported some negative interactions with the target community. Aguilar Stewart attributes these delicate situations that Jennifer’s blonde hair, her attractiveness and the fact that Jennifer wore shorts. This resulted in Jennifer’s purposeful confinement to the campus. She only left the campus with Mexican friends except when she

went to her internship in an elementary school. Interestingly enough, this did not seem to impact her positive attitude to Mexican culture in general.

For Aguilar Stewart, Doug represents “the ideal study abroad success” (p. 150). With a previous eight-week study abroad experience, Doug expressed his goals as increasing fluency and fully integrating into the Mexican culture. Doug made extensive notice of language awareness in his journaling, and used every encounter as an opportunity to interact with the target community. He did report a set of cultural challenges and differences, such as the different connotations of chewing gum. When one of his peers commented on how rude it was to blow bubbles, Doug proceeded to check a few days later, in a different context if that was true.

One of the girls’ cousins came to the bar and I talked with him. He taught me “piropos” or pickup lines, and I asked him about the “chewing gum” thing; turns out it was true. (September 27) (p. 151).

In addition to an internship in a local elementary, Doug sought out opportunities to interact with locals. Instead of travelling for one of his breaks, he helped some local farmers build a house and commented on their colloquial use of Spanish in his entries as well as on their living conditions. He remarked how privileged he and his fellow Mexican roommates were, when compared to the peasants’ hardships. Aguilar Stewart notes that in comparison to the two girls, Doug seemed to have developed a social identity as a Spanish-speaking American over the course of his study abroad experience. Compared to Molly’s daily interactions with her boyfriend over Skype, Doug’s daily phone-calls to his girlfriend did not seem to hold back his involvement in the local community. Post-treatment, he listed six regular interlocutors with whom he reported having daily conversations, which ranged from commenting daily activities, to discussing customs and beliefs as well as cultural differences.

After discussing the content of the e-journals, Aguilar-Stewart proceeds to comment on the usefulness of the e-journal format. In addition to recording their grammatical correctness in the e-journals written in Spanish (which was not the initial goal of the study), she was able to gain exceptional insight in how they learned the target language. Students also recorded a large variety of details about their study abroad experience, their experience in the classroom, their living situation as well as the challenges and opportunities to engage with the target community. Aguilar Stewart notes that their personalities became more and more transparent in their writings, which explained the ways in which they navigated the construction of their social network. The author concludes that willingness to interact, and the outgoing personalities of some of the students such as Jennifer were not enough to account for the successful navigation of the Mexican community. She states her study confirms Churchill and Dufon's finding in the 2006 study: "The study abroad experience is fundamentally conditioned both by program design and by cultural norms" (p. 153).

The journal did not only benefit the researcher: the participants in the study also commented on how writing about their experience also helped them both linguistically, and to reflect on what they went through. Only two participants responded negatively about the use of the journal as a learning tool. Aguilar Stewart concludes that the e-journal is a successful tool to assess the study abroad experience in several ways. First, it develops critical thinking about the experience for participants. Aguilar Stewart also states the e-journal is a tool that gives a unique insight in the ecological nature of study abroad participants and how it influences their linguistic and cultural development.⁶ Aguilar Stewart could not determine which housing factors

⁶ She believes the benefits of e-journaling for study abroad participants are so great that she suggests study abroad programs include the practice of e-journaling as a credit-bearing module of the study abroad coursework.

influenced the positive construction of a social network and interactions with the target community. She does state, however, that because limited interaction with the local community did prove to have an adverse effect on increasing opportunities for language use, study abroad programs should provide students with opportunities to cultivate a larger social network. Finally, Aguilar Stewart proposes that students receive an extensive pre-departure orientation. This orientation should address language-learning strategies, but should also emphasize the importance of interacting with the local community⁷.

For the current study, I have adopted Aguilar's research design of the e-journal because of the convenience of the research design as well as its aim to place student narratives at the center of the data collection. This fundamentally participant-centered design moves away from the traditional assessment of the effect of study abroad on language development. Students were not asked to undergo standardized testing treatments, but rather to provide individual accounts of their learning experiences. This approach allows for unique insight into the distinctive ecological characteristics and highly individualized dimensions of the study abroad experience, and will provide original data on the ways in which participants chose to navigate their social network in the target community. These insights will ultimately permit a better understanding of which assessment approaches are most appropriate for evaluating the study abroad experience. The learner narratives and the ways in which the data relates to theoretical understandings of identity⁸

⁷ Aguilar Stewart recommends the cultural learning tool *The Experiment in International Living* developed by Gochenour in 1993. This resource uses role-play and debriefing sessions to help SA participants address and analyze which cultural shock experiences they may face when abroad. This orientation would permit them to anticipate their attitude towards the target culture, and how this may impact their experience, as well as foresee ways in which to manage those situations

⁸ The notion of identity as it relates to the current study is developed in Chapter Three. The notion should be understood according to Norton's definition. To Norton (2006), identity is "... how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is

and multiculturalism will provide a broader understanding of the impact of the study abroad experience and the ways in which it shapes unique individuals.

Conclusion

Despite the common assumption that study abroad is the ideal environment for interaction and second language use, research on study abroad offers little evidence that students improve their proficiency in reading, speaking, pronunciation, fluency, grammar and pragmatics during the overseas experience. As we have seen in this chapter, there are many contradicting studies. Whereas many may agree that study abroad promotes oral production, others underline the limited effects of study abroad on grammatical features. Studies on pragmatic gains seem more uniform, but many variations cannot be explained without taking into account students' attitudes. These variations could also in part be explained by the variety of study abroad settings, the diversity in programs, the length of sojourns, and so on. Research should therefore concentrate on assessing the impact of study abroad in such a way that these variations are limited or are not influenced by such variables. The study abroad context is clearly a privileged environment in which a unique cultural relativity can be fostered and unique individuals are shaped. The current study is designed to highlight these individual differences to provide further insight into how individuals shape their identity through different social networks and students' investment in the target culture.

constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton 2006, p. 5). Influenced by poststructuralist theories, she views the concept of identity as multiple and dynamic. Social exchanges and their underlying questions of power influence the ways in which an individual negotiates his sense of self. Language is central to understanding questions related to identity development.

In order to fully grasp the long-term effects of the study abroad experience on its participants, we will need to understand the complexity of concepts such as identity and multiculturalism. In the following chapters I will review theoretical frameworks as they apply to identity and multicultural competence to inform our understanding of learner identity development as it relates to the study abroad context and the impact of negotiating its particularly complex local social networks.

CHAPTER II

SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AS A DYNAMIC SYSTEM

Over the past decade, research in the field of Applied Linguistics has undergone important changes partially as a result of new theories that account for and explain the intricate and complex processes surrounding language learning. One of the most compelling new theories and approaches in the field of Applied Linguistics is “Chaos theory” or “Complexity Theory” (C/CT). Although these theories are not new to the natural sciences, they have only recently found a solid anchor in social science. Complex systems, such as weather systems, may at first seem random and without an organized internal order of events. However, they hold common dynamic characteristics and self-organize after external stimuli. Like other complex systems, language learning shares the unpredictability and non-linearity of its development. Language is composed of interconnected linguistic systems (phonology, grammar, vocabulary formation). It is subjected to external factors that may influence its evolution (learners’ individual differences, context, instruction). Due to the unpredictability of complex systems, it is impossible to comprehend their systemic functioning by isolating any particular aspect of the system. Disconnecting each structure within the complex system gives little insight into their collective behavior. Rather, the interest lies in better understanding their behavior when they interact. Research cannot adopt the traditional scientific approach to problem solving if complex systems are characterized by their unpredictability. This traditional approach would consist of making hypotheses that are then tested and which subsequently should result in rules and predictions. Instead, researchers adopt the stance that complex systems should be considered as the current

state of such a system, and viewed as a whole. From that state, researchers can trace those elements that interacted with the system and those agents that changed it (Larsen-Freeman, 2008, p. 200).

In this chapter, I will show how current theoretical notions relative to second language (L2) learning incorporate the dynamic nature of the individual's language system(s). For this review of literature, I will use Larsen-Freeman's and De Bot's work to show the applicability of a dynamic approach to language development. Plaza-Pust's work on grammar as a dynamic system will illustrate which methodological considerations should be applied when adopting this unique approach to language development research. Then, I will address the unique characteristics of language learners by presenting the work of Cook on multicompetence and on the unique characteristics of the L2 user. His approach will illustrate the effects of viewing the language learner's mind as a unique dynamic system, which has implications both for research and for language pedagogy. I will then show how the work of Kramsch addresses implications for cultural competence and the validity of traditional dichotomies such as the native/nonnative speaker.

After this review of literature, I will show how these theoretical frameworks relate to the current study. As we have shown in Chapter One, research on language development in the study abroad context remains inconclusive. In taking a dynamic approach to language learning, and in applying Cook's and Kramsch' theoretical frameworks to study abroad learners, we set the stage for a different assessment of the study abroad experience. Rather than focusing on linguistic gains, this approach will validate research on participants' interpersonal gains and the ways in which learners navigate the target culture and their own group of peers. Ultimately, the study abroad experience impacts the ways in which learners develop a better understanding of other

cultures and practices. I will suggest that these changes in perspective help language learners develop a unique perspective of the multilingual and multicultural space they inhabit.

A Dynamic Approach to Understanding Second Language Development

Larsen-Freeman was the first to apply chaos and complexity theory (C/CT) to the field of Applied Linguistics. She explains that C/CT is one that “embraces complexity, interconnectedness, and dynamism, and makes change central to theory and method” (Larsen-Freeman, 2008, p. 200). It has been used to study “complex dynamic, non-linear open systems, such as the weather and the rise and fall of animal populations” (p. 200). Complex systems are open to external influences, and react to those outside influences. As Larsen-Freeman points out, the objects of inquiry in the natural sciences and those in linguistics do not have much in common. However, the true relevancy to our field lies in its research methods and the means of inquiry that are used in this strand of investigation. According to her C/CT is “teasing out the relationships and describing their dynamics are key tasks of the researcher working from a complex system’s perspective” (p. 203, Larsen-Freeman, 2008). In 2002, Larsen-Freeman expands her view of the applicability of C/CT to the dynamic nature of cognitive individual dimensions of language learning. She includes considerations of the interrelatedness of the social and the individual and how those can be combined, thus making a place for discussions regarding extra-linguistic factors influencing L2 language development.

A C/CT perspective clearly supports a social participation view of SLA; however it does not do so to the exclusion of the psychological acquisitionist perspective. Thus C/CT offers the wider perspective that served SLA in the past. Importantly, in addition to affording us a wider perspective, the contribution of C/CT is that it encourages us to

think in relational terms. It is not merely a question of making room for stability and flux, pattern and dynamism, acquisition and use. Rather, I am led to conclude that members of dichotomous pairs, such as these, can only be understood in relation to each other. (Larsen-Freeman, 2008, pp. 43-44)

Since Larsen-Freeman's first publication (1997) on the applicability of C/CT to the field of applied linguistics, researchers have looked at concrete ways to apply C/CT to L2 research. One of the leading voices in the field is De Bot, who explores the ways in which Dynamic Systems Theory⁹ (DST) can inform understanding of L2 development and multilingualism. De Bot draws attention to "a need for new methodologies to study language as a dynamic system that is not based on static representation but on the notion that language is always on the move and that language use is language change on different time scales" (p. 175). De Bot seeks to study the dynamic, non-linear processes involved in L2 learning and is radically opposed to viewing the learner's language development as a linear process from zero to near-native proficiency. Rather, he seeks to represent language and language development in its full complexity, as a system in which different factors interact continuously.¹⁰ He argues that current theories in SLA should include theoretical models that account for the interrelated nature of the learning process, and the link between the cognitive and social characteristics of language learning.

⁹ Whereas Larsen-Freeman speaks about complexity theory, de Bot uses the term Dynamic Systems Theory to refer to the dynamic nature of language. Larsen Freeman uses C/CT to refer to the metaphorical value of approaching language development and language use as a complex system. De Bot uses the term Dynamic Systems Theory to refer to a methodological approach specifically reserved to studying language use.

¹⁰ The scope of the interest in DST theories for language development is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that the summer 2008 volume of *The Modern Language Journal* is exclusively dedicated to the subject. The articles in this volume illustrate what De Bot et al. called for in their 2007 article "A Dynamic Systems Theory approach to second language acquisition."

SLA is an inherently complex process and recognizes that many factors such as motivation, aptitude, degree of input, and L1 are all interrelated and have an effect on the L2 learning process. Nevertheless, many key issues in the SLA literature have been dealt with in clear cause-and effect models and imply a linear point of view. (...) We can no longer work with simple cause-and-effect models in which the outcome can be predicted, but we must use case studies to discover relevant sub-systems and simulate the processes. (De Bot, Lowie, Verspoor, 2007, p. 19)

This call has implications both on a methodological level and on a theoretical level. Researchers have answered de Bot's request for considering the language development process as a complex system.

Plaza-Pust (2008) reconsiders research methodologies for existing language systems, such as grammar, to include aspects acknowledging language development as a dynamic system. Plaza-Pust (2008) uses the example of grammar to illustrate the potential of these theories in approaching language learning. Like Larsen-Freeman and de Bot, she challenges the idea that language development is a linear and predictable process. She argues that systems that assume linear perspectives on learning¹¹ do not account for the apparent discontinuities one can observe in the development of grammar. Variability in development has historically been accepted as proper to adult L2 learners, but as Plaza-Pust observes, "variation is a well-documented phenomenon in child language acquisition" (p. 253). Variations remain, however, incompatible with a strict application of the traditional language learning models. Plaza-Pust therefore calls for an application of the DST framework to linguistics, as this should provide a much more

¹¹ Plaza-Pust cites Universal Grammar, as well as Chomsky's model of language acquisition (1981) as the most widely accepted ones (Plaza-Pust, 2008, p. 253).

comprehensive view of language development. In applying DST, researchers can account for contradictions and discontinuity in language development.

A dynamic system is characterized by “internal and external feedback processes” (Plaza-Pust, 2008, p. 254). These processes regulate how the system reacts to new units of information. Plaza-Pust draws from Cramer (1993), who states “feedback processes govern virtually every living process and can be ignored only in crude simplifications” (p. 138). These processes are responsible for the entire system’s reaction to stimuli, and whether it will result in self-organization or in chaos. Plaza-Pust reviews theories on self-organizing systems, and she underlines that those systems are most prone to rearrangement when they are the furthest removed from their state of equilibrium. The implications for grammar development are that it should be viewed as being constituted of a similar interplay of self-regulating feedback processes. Within that system, composed of lexicon, phonology, logical form, and syntax, different grammatical phenomena interact. They coexist with a whole set of linguistic structures and contexts: “the semantic, the phonological, the morphological, the syntactic and the pragmatic context” (p. 254).

In adult language learning, the native language grammar system is coupled with the L2 grammar system, which influences the L2 grammar system. According to Plaza-Pust, this “coupling,” while it illustrates the ability of the language system to maintain stability, also increases the complexity of the language system. Plaza-Pust uses the example of learners of German as a L2 and the transition they have to make from a verb-object grammar to an object-verb grammar. The subject she follows in the study continues to make both verb-object and object-verb structures in an unpredictable way. These fluctuations illustrate the way in which language functions as a coupled system (in this example the language transfer in VO/OV order)

and how as a dynamic system, language is prone to oscillations, as the learner is presented with alternative language choices. These oscillations can make the system unstable. In this case it results in the alternate uses of OV/VO orders. Another example Plaza-Pust gives of language as a dynamic system is the one of French and its evolution over the centuries from a non-subject language to become a subject language in the sixteenth century. This dramatic change was preceded by several centuries of unstable use of the grammar in that regard. Thus, Middle French grammar could be seen as a turbulent system, in which internal changes, and language user influence ultimately changed the language. The analysis of Plaza-Pust's work shows how the model of dynamic systems can be applied to existing methodological approaches investigating L2 development.

Cook (1991, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2010) corroborates these cross-linguistic approaches to language learning with his dynamic approach to understanding bilingualism. Cook coined the term "multicompetence" in 1991 to refer to the mind of a multilingual person in which the first language (L1) and L2 are interconnected. The notion of multicompetence is based on an understanding of L2 development as a complex, non-linear, dynamic process that involves a single language system in which two (or more) languages coexist and influence each other. It is also based on the idea of the L2 user, and that of the inadequate model of the native speaker. Through his theoretical framework, Cook offers new ways of thinking about language development and language use. He also encourages researchers to expand their understanding of multilingualism.

Cook coined the term L2 user within the multicompetent framework in order to refer to "any person who uses another language than his or her first language; that is to say the one learned first as a child" (2002, p. 1). The term L2 user can refer to "a person who knows and uses

a second language at any level” (Cook, 2002, p. 4). This notion marks a shift from a vertical, hierarchical way of ranking proficiency to one that is more horizontal and inclusive and that leaves space to acknowledge even minor L2 development. Cook stresses that “any use counts, however small or inefficient” (2002, p.3) because with L2 development comes a wide range of changes in perspectives and practices that are unique to the L2 user’s language system.

Multicompetent L2 users differ from monolinguals in that they have a distinct compound state of mind. In a multicompetent mind, languages overlap and function in as many ways as language registers in the monolingual person’s mind, allowing for a distinctive dynamic linguistic system. “There is no more separation between the two languages in the multicompetent mind than there is between different styles and genres in the monolingual mind” (Cook, 2002, p. 16). All dimensions of the languages in the mind of a multicompetent L2 user are affected: phonology, lexicology, pragmatics, syntax and concepts. The coexistence of these two language systems is what is unique to the multicompetent L2 user.¹²

Cook (1999, p. 185) states that the authentic L2 user is a person who belongs to a community of L2 users. They engage in particular behaviors proper to individuals who know more than one language. Within this community, L2 users engage in language play, such as code-switching and language jokes, and share a comparable cognitive flexibility. Many researchers have focused their attention on code-switching, or the alternate use of L1 and L2 when bilinguals converse (Poplack, 1980, 1988; Genesee, 1989; Myers-Scotton, 1993, Grosjean, 1980, 1997). Grosjean’s (1997/2000) research establishes that “bilingualism, rather than being viewed as a language system with two separated languages, should be regarded as operating on a

¹² Multicompetence and its definition of the L2 user is not merely a theoretical framework. Scott (2010) discusses how the model has direct implications for the classroom. She proposes that the language classroom can function as a privileged space in which learners can be empowered as L2 users prepared to engage in real-world, multilingual language use.

language continuum (...). In the monolingual language mode, one language network is strongly activated and the other is activated very weakly (...), whereas in the bilingual language mode, both language networks are activated... ” (Grosjean, 1997/2000, p. 466). Language learners can develop awareness about how their multilingual identity affects their life as a learner and as a member of one or more communities.

In *Double Talk* (2010), Scott coins the term “multicompetent L2 learners” to refer to those learners who have developed an awareness of how language learning affects the ways that language shapes them as distinctive individuals. According to her, multicompetent L2 learners have a unique perspective on language and language learning, and these perceptions should be encouraged, including in the foreign language classroom. Multicompetent L2 learners are characterized by a set of unique features that are the result of a distinct compound state of mind. The most pertinent characteristic of multicompetence involves learners’ awareness of the ways language use and culture affect their sense of self. Scott (p. 163) notes that the multicompetent L2 learner develops the ability to distinguish between L2 use and native-speaker language use, and articulates ways his or her multilingual identity is evolving. She further proposes that the multicompetent L2 learner increases his or her familiarity with the features of bilingual and multilingual language use, such as code-switching, and other cross-linguistic phenomena. In addition Scott addresses language play and how a successful multicompetent L2 learner alternates between English and the target language in appropriate ways. Above all, according to Scott, the multicompetent L2 learner “asks increasingly informed questions about the target language and culture [and] exhibits traits of a multilingual, multicultural citizen” (p. 163). In her view, these traits should be taken into account when assessing the language learning process because they affect the ways learners view language, culture, and their role in a multilingual

environment. Finally, like Cook, Scott's approach to the multicompetent language learner offers new ways of thinking about language development and language use. She encourages researchers to expand their understanding of multilingualism to include considerations of linguistic and cultural awareness when assessing second language development.

A Dynamic Approach to Cultural Competence

A person who knows and uses more than one language has a unique perspective on both the native language and the target language. This idea is expanded when viewed with Kramsch's notion of "Third Space" (1998) or "Third Culture" (2009). Her understanding of Third Culture (C3) draws on several concepts that challenge the traditional view of culture as a binary entity. The idea of a Third Culture (C3) among language learners has been conceptualized in different disciplines and across specializations in the social sciences including semiotics, philosophy and literary criticism, cultural studies, foreign language education, and literacy pedagogy.

In her article *Third Culture and Language Education* (2009), Kramsch is inspired by Barthes who, in *The Third Meaning* (1977), develops the idea that beyond the referential meaning of an image and the symbolic meaning of that same image there is a third dimension that focuses on the signifier itself. Barthes explains that in one image there are three dimensions proper to interpretation. First, there is a referential meaning: one sees objects, people and decors. This first dimension of interpretation, or "signifier", is juxtaposed with the second layer namely the symbolic meaning of those images, or "the signified." The signified is defined as "the mental representation of a thing (...) a concept" (Barthes, pp. 42-43). It incorporates such elements as practices, techniques, and ideologies. Hence, this process of making meaning is a product of social convention. The alliance of the signifier and signified is what Barthes coins

“signification.” The inseparable union of the signifier and signified is termed “signification” or “signifiante.” This third dimension influences the reader of these signs emotionally and esthetically, adds a poetic dimension and appeals for an emotional response. This third layer of meaning calls upon the relation of the viewer with the signifier. The signifier alone, whether it is images, poetry or language, cannot trigger this emotional response. The idea of significance has been applied in stylistics to investigate literary style, and also in sociolinguistics to investigate speech style. Kramsch (2009) explains how Thirdness is applicable to language as following:

If Firstness is the mode by which we apprehend reality and gain immediate consciousness of incoming bits of information, Secondness is the mode by which we react to this information, and by which we act and interact with others within a social context. Thirdness, on the other hand, is a relational process oriented-disposition, that is built in time through habit, and that allows us to perceive continuity in events, to identify patterns and make generalizations. All three modes of being coexist at any given time, but only Thirdness is able to make meaning out of the other two and to build a sense of identity and permanence.

(Kramsch, 2009, p. 234)

In the same way as images or symbols can trigger emotional responses, Kramsch underlines that language instruction can call on the same emotional triggers, such as the underlying meaning of a certain accent (upper class or working class), or the use of certain verbal tenses or structures reserved for formal writing (the use of the subjunctive for example, or the “passé simple”). In simpler terms, words or pictures are not only associated with what they represent but also evoke another sign in the mind of the receiver, a much more subjective and changing one that is linked to the receiver’s historic and past relation to the sign.

Peirce (1955) also focuses on semiotics as he develops his triadic theory of the sign. He coins the third dimension to the interpretation of signs “the interpretant.” Peirce’s notion of the interpretant is a mental process that allows signs to have meaning to an individual as they relate to one’s exposure to different cultures or agents. According to Kramsch:

... if Barthes’ semiological theory foregrounded style as the third dimension of communication, Peirce’s theory of signs underscores the relational nature of this third dimension. Meaning according to Peirce emerges:

-by relating linguistic, visual, acoustic, signs to other signs along paths of meaning that are shared or at least recognized as such by most socialized members of the community.

-by relating signs to prior signs whose meanings have accumulated through time in the imagination of the people who use them or see them used.

-by relating signs to human intentionalities. Because signs are used for a purpose (they are ‘motivated’), they are intended to evoke quite specific interpretants in the minds of their recipients. (2009, pp. 234-235)

This three dimensional approach to communication also allows for a heterogeneous approach to the interpretation of signs. The way people read or view a sign changes over time and space, influenced by their exposure to different cultures or agents, and is therefore a highly individualized process.

In her work on identity and language learning, Norton (2010, 2004, 2003, 2000,1997) draws from Bakhtin (1981), who develops a similar interlaced notion of signs and meaning in the construction of the notion Holquist (1990) will refer to as “dialogism.” According to Bakhtin, because we are all part of a group, a person’s identity is always constructed in accordance with our relation to that group. In other words, Bakhtin argues that one cannot be defined as a person

without analyzing that individual's relation to the Other. Language is constructed and influenced through the encounter with others. An utterance is always a response to a preceding utterance, regardless of whether it is an actual utterance or an imagined one. This dynamic relationship results in a triadic correlation including not only the Self and the Other, but also the relationship between Self and Other, including historical, social, emotional, notions of gender and power relations. It is a relationship that is also linked in time, bearing the weight of past and present interactions and relationships, and shaping those to come. Awareness of these factors, historical or anticipated, results in "transgression." This process of transgression acknowledges that one brings an additional set of values, emotions and experiences to the interaction with others. This process adds a third dimension to a discourse. It is in understanding this process of transgression in dialogue that one can situate a discourse in a much broader interpretive mode. This subjective process will influence the way in which both agents interpret the same dialogue. Thus, the questions central to a Bakhtinian analytical approach to language are: Who is talking? For whom? In response or reaction to whom/what? Holquist (1990) explains the implications for such an analytical approach:

The thirdness of dialogue frees my existence from the very circumscribed meaning it has in the limited configuration of self/other relations available in the immediate time and particular place of my life. For in later times, and in other places, there will always be other configurations of such relations, and in conjunction with *that* other, my self will be differently understood. This degree of thirdness outside the present event insures the possibility of whatever transgression I can achieve toward myself. (p. 38)

A Bakhtinian perspective, therefore, demands that all forms of discourse be seen as a reaction to and interpretation of the historical, sociocultural and interpersonal relations of the agents

involved in the dialogue.

Post-structural studies developed the idea of Third Space, and encouraged research that moved away from traditional dichotomies. The idea of Third Spaces of interpretation found a solid place among researchers such as Bhabha (1994) who puts culture at the center of language and discourse practices. Bhabha considers that culture is central to language as it permits not only to send and receive messages, but more importantly it permits speakers and writers to interpret them.

The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general condition of language and the specific implication of the performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious (Bhabha, 1994, p.36).

In language, we can always find a bias, a cultural difference that is influenced by our social, historical and cultural position in a specific group. These traces of belonging are present in each individual's enunciations. According to Kramsch, Bhabha's Third Space lies precisely in understanding, and underlining that unique perspective; it allows for the interpretation of the meaning of a particular message.

Third Space defines the position of the speaker of an utterance who both refers to events in the outside world and, in so doing, constitutes him/herself as a 'subject of enunciation', i.e. as a speaker/writer who is at the same time a social actor. This position is historically contingent, socially larger than the individual, and therefore beyond any single individual's consciousness. In other words, we cannot be conscious of our interpretive strategies at the same moment as we activate them. They are the unconsciously acquired

discourse practices that speak through us and that constitute our essential cultural difference. The encounter between two cultures always entails a discontinuity in the traditionally continuous time of a person's or a nation's discourse practices. For example, a non-native speaker living in a host country might not have the same discourse regarding his/her host nation's history as a native national. (Kramersch, 1998 p.237)

In applying the metaphor of Third Space, or Third Culture (C3) to language learning, Kramersch allows for language learners and educators alike to situate the language learner at the intersection of both their C1 and C2. Evolving at this intersection of two cultures gives them a unique and increased awareness of the hybridity and ambivalence of dominant cultures and societies. Language learners are also sensitive to the power of language and can apply their critical stance not only to the C2 but also their C1, ultimately resulting in a better understanding across cultures. Kramersch coins the term "intercultural speakers" (2002, p. 242) to refer to these unique multilingual and multicultural interconnections proper to the L2 learner.

When one accepts to represent culture as a complex exchange and a combination of different genres, approaches and socio-historical power-relations in specific situations and exchanges, one moves away from traditional sociocultural and intercultural approaches to research on culture. In these approaches, one views culture as a stable agent, an even challenger of one's own constant culture. This simplification certainly allows for a comparative approach to C1 and C2 development, but results in establishing stereotypical perspectives of the relation between language and culture as being non-problematic and normative. The idea of Third Space allows for the representation of an ambiguity in the encounter of two cultures, in which the speakers establish a contact and exchange, which outcome cannot be predicted nor standardized. One should also consider the idea of Thirdness, which is a unique "stance" (Ware and Kramersch,

2005, p. 201) that enables the L2 user to see the relation between language, thought and culture. Instructors should therefore foster among their students the understanding of difference, or cultural relativity (p. 350). Cross-cultural reflection then becomes an integral part of communicative competence.

Reconsidering the Native Speaker

In her article *The Privilege of the Nonnative Speaker* (2003), Kramersch addresses the problematic notion of the native speaker. She states that “the study of FLs and literatures is predicated, explicitly or implicitly, on the notion of the native speaker” (p. 251). Native speaker instructors have greater ease at being recognized in FL departments. Language learners are expected to match native speakers’ communicative skills, which exemplifies an idealization of the native speaker. This attitude is problematic because the artificial model of the monolithic native speaker does not always follow the rules of a standardized native language such as regionalities, generational differences, and class-related differences.

Cook’s multicompetent approach to language learning also addresses the problems of the native speaker standard. To Cook (2002), L2 users should at no stage in their development be compared to the native speaker. In his view, “[f]ew L2 users can pass for native speakers; their grammar, their accent, their vocabulary give away that they are non native speakers, even after many years of learning the language or many decades living in the country” (Cook, 2002, p. 5).¹³

¹³ This research is corroborated by research on brain imaging that offers evidence that second language learning is indeed more challenging after the sensitive period (Fabbro, 1999; Ullman, 2005). Because early bilinguals are better at processing grammar than late bilinguals, it is appropriate to challenge the validity of this notion of the native speaker, which is held as a model in most approaches to second language development.

Rather than studying language development using a native speaker standard, current research should seek to validate the unique nature of the language learner and the ways that language development shapes learners within the particular multilingual and multicultural space they inhabit.

From the learners' perspective, the standard of the native speaker sets them up for inevitable failure; they can never become native speakers because they were not born into the target language community. Moreover, this model does not valorize the unique multilingual perspective of the language learner. Traditionally, foreign language pedagogy has not always viewed language as a social and cultural practice, but rather as a standardized system. It would be more interesting to consider rethinking the ways in which learners “construct for themselves a linguistic and social identity that enables them to resolve the anomalies and contradictions they are likely to encounter when attempting to adopt someone else's language” (Kramsch, 2003, p. 252).

Kramsch (2003, p. 253) reviews the work by Paikeday *The Native Speaker is Dead* (1985) to illustrate that pedagogical models that set the native speaker as a standard are problematic. For this self-published, highly criticized book, Paikeday interviewed over forty linguists, including Chomsky, and scrutinized the definition of the native speaker. Paikeday concludes that the definition of the native speaker as someone who intuitively knows what is grammatical and what is ungrammatical in his or her native language lacks realism. Chomsky (1965) coined the term “ideal speaker” (p. 3) to refer to a person who has an innate sensitivity to what is grammatically acceptable in one's L1. The notion of native speaker has also been broadened to include considerations of social and cultural acceptability. The notion of native speaker is attached to the notion of nationality; a nation is not only defined by its borders, but

also by the languages and norms that its people speak and practice, and that unite them. Kramersch reminds us that traditional communicative teaching approaches situate teaching within a framework including components of those products and practices specific to the target language. The underlying philosophy is based on the national and cultural authenticity of the L2 input. But with the rise in number of multilingual and multicultural speakers of the target language, as well as the sociocultural turn in SLA research, Kramersch calls into question the validity of this authenticity. In doing so, she strengthens her arguments for questioning the model of the native speaker, and by extension the nationalist model for foreign language study.

Bourdieu (1982) stated “social acceptability cannot be reduced to grammaticality alone” (p. 43). If native speakers are those born into a language community with an intuitive understanding of what is grammatically acceptable, how should one account for a common sensitivity to values, beliefs, and myths? These are cultural aspects that are not only inherent from birth but rather the result of a particular societal education. Kramersch therefore concludes that rather than being born a native speaker, native speakers are products of the social and cultural environment in which they grew up—products and practices they learned to embrace over their lifespan. The privilege of birth then also shifts to one of education, which imposes assumptions of class.

Defining native speakership as a result of a particular education transforms it from a privilege of being not only a native speaker, but a middle class, mainstream native speakers; native speakers have internalized the values, beliefs, myths of the dominant ideologies propagated by schools and other educational institutions (Kramersch, 2003, p. 254).

Kramersch raises the question of the generations of immigrants who benefitted from the same education, but are not recognized as native speakers. She adds the dimension of social

acceptance as one that creates another distinction between native and nonnative speaker. “It is not enough to have intuitions about grammaticality and linguistic acceptability to communicate fluently and with full competence; one must also be recognized as a native speaker by the relevant speech community” (p.255). She argues persuasively that the native speaker is an imaginary construct and that “a canonically literate monolingual middle-class member of a largely fictionalized national community whose citizens share the belief in a common history and a common destiny” (p. 255) does not exist. She further argues that this fictional approach conditions learners to seek social inclusion in those fictional national communities. Rather, learners are increasingly multicultural and multilingual, and sensitive to the different benefits of language learning. Kramersch states: “Language learners (...) take intense physical pleasure in acquiring a language, thrill in trespassing someone else’s territory, becoming a foreigner on their own turf, becoming both invisible and differently visible. (Kramersch, 2003, p. 256) Kramersch coins the term “linguistic travel” to refer to this language play in which language learners engage. This attitude towards learning another language shapes new possibilities of self-expression. She also notes that recent trends in foreign language teaching seek to expose learners to the linguistic diversities of the target language communities. However, she is convinced that this approach is not sufficient because it does not address the diversity of the language learner community.

Without losing the benefits of communicative approaches in language pedagogy, teachers may want to validate once again the poetic function of language, the physical pleasure of memorizing and performing prose and verse, of playing with language and writing multilingual poetry at the beginning of language instruction. In advanced study, teachers may want to legitimize once again exercises in

translation and comparative stylistics. Those attempts would enable learners not only to express other' linguistic and cultural meanings but to find new ways of expressing their own as well. (Kramsch, 2003, pp. 259-260).

Kramsch concludes that allowing learners to construct an identity at the intersection of multiple languages further deconstructs the notion of native speakership. The real power lies in the ways multilingualism allows language learners to expand their possibility of self-expression. "In that regard, everyone is, potentially, to a greater or lesser extent, a nonnative speaker, and that position is a privilege" (p. 260).

Summary and Implications for the Study

This review of DST, multicompetence, and Third Space emphasizes the fundamentally dynamic nature of second language development. Language learning is a process that affects all components of an individual's linguistic system. Language learners develop a set of skills that allow them to critically approach their own cultural and linguistic framework as well as the target culture and its language. Traditional models for understanding language development should be reconsidered to allow for the empowerment of L2 users as members of a unique, multicompetent community of learners. A dynamic approach to language development has implications for the ways in which we assess the language learners' progress on the bilingual continuum. In addition to assessing linguistic accuracy, we need to find ways for acknowledging the changes in perspectives and practices that are unique to the L2 user's language system.

Reviewing the notion of the native speaker also reinforces the uniqueness of second language use. Second language development at any stage should not be considered an insufficient version of native speech. The native speaker model does not valorize the unique

multilingual perspective of the language learner. Rather than studying language development using a native speaker standard, current research seeks to validate the unique nature of the language learner and the ways that language development shapes learners within the particular multilingual and multicultural space they inhabit.

Ultimately, this chapter sets the stage for understanding second language learners as unique individuals with distinctive abilities and experiences. These multicompetent second language learners (Scott, 2010) have more than one language at their disposal and are beginning to explore a multilingual, multicultural third space. Rather than viewing this non-native position as impoverished, the multicompetent second language learner discovers the privilege of such a position and increasingly “exhibits traits of multilingual, multicultural citizen, such as appreciation of diversity, tolerance for ambiguity, awareness of human rights issues, and so on” (Scott, 2010, p. 163). We should consider these unique characteristics as we assess language learners, and as we set goals for foreign language education in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world. By extension, this approach has implications for the goals we set for the study abroad programs, and specifically for the assessment of the study abroad experience. It raises the question of the validity of investigating solely linguistic gains. Rather, participants’ interpersonal gains and the ways in which learners navigate the target culture and their own group of peers should become an integral part of the research on study abroad.

These considerations shape my approach to the notion of identity. Just like language, identity should be considered as a complex dynamic system, closely connected to both linguistic and social factors. The power of a dynamic systems approach lies in its potential for shaping our understanding of second language development and the ways in which it distinctively shapes the

learner. The current study seeks to incorporate ways to assess study abroad participants as individuals with a unique perspective of the multilingual and multicultural space they inhabit.

CHAPTER III

IDENTITY AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

In Chapter Two, we reviewed the ways language development should be viewed as a dynamic system. Much like language, identity, has traditionally been considered a static entity rather than a dynamic one. In the past, identity was conceived of as having two distinct dimensions. On the one hand, a person was viewed as having a social identity that was shaped through interaction with agents in a social setting (e.g., the workplace). On the other hand, people drew unique identity features from their cultural identity (e.g., ethnicity, religion). However, recent research in identity studies has evolved to consider theoretical frameworks that assume both aspects of a person's identity are intricately interwoven and dissociable. In these approaches, language is seen as playing an essential role; language is both socially and culturally constructed, and therefore acts as a medium for identity development.

The notion of identity has been investigated in a variety of fields, including but not limited to psychology, post-modern literary theories, feminism, and cultural studies. Witbourne, Sneed and Skultety's (2002) definition of identity reflects the complexity of the processes involved with identity development and the importance of the Other to account for shifts in the ways an individual perceives his/her view of Self.

Identity is conceptualized as a broad biopsychosocial self-definition that encompasses the individual's self-representation in the areas of physical functioning, cognition, personality, relationships, occupation, and social roles

broadly defined. Normal, healthy adults attempt to maintain positive views of themselves in these realms, preferring to see themselves as loving, competent, and good. This set of positive self-attributions is maintained primarily through the process of identity assimilation, which, as in Piaget's theory, is defined as the interpretation of new experiences through the existing schema of identity. When experiences become sufficiently discrepant from an existing identity, the individual may then begin to make appropriate shifts through identity accommodation. According to the theory, as in Piaget's, it is assumed that the ideal state is one of balance or dynamic equilibrium between identity assimilation and identity accommodation. (Whitbourne, Sneed and Skultety, 2002, p. 30)

Identity development has become an increasingly popular topic among applied linguists who study second language development and foreign language teaching. One of the challenges when investigating the notion of identity, and by extension its development, consists of finding a conceptual framework that incorporates a complex fluidity and dynamism of how one perceives one's identity in as far as it relates to cultural and sociological influences. In her work on immigrant women, Bonnie Norton uses a theoretical framework that draws from a large corpus of studies on identity development, and incorporates considerations on race, gender and class. The resonance of her work and its acclaim is largely a result of the fact that she addresses the full complexity of the internal and external processes her subjects negotiate, while at the same time investigating the ways they struggle to become legitimate members of a given social and cultural environment. For this reason, Norton's theoretical framework is ideally suited to research on

learner identity development in the study abroad environment –a field of research that merits our attention.

In this chapter, I will review research on identity construction and how it relates to theorists including Bourdieu and Foucault. First, I will investigate the evolution in research on social and cultural identity and the ways in which theoretical frameworks have evolved to portray identity as a fluid concept (Norton, 1997; Morgan, 1995; Schecter & Bayley, 1997). This dynamic view of identity construction results in a sociocultural approach to its study. Furthermore, I will show how language plays a central role with regard to changes in a person's perceived identity. Theories regarding the ways that language is both socially constructed and holds cultural importance (especially those of Bourdieu and Foucault) will highlight the complexity of this subject and emphasize ways in which language shapes identity. Then, I will analyze of the notion of investment to show how this concept impacts learners as they position themselves within a specific community of speakers. The language learner's position within the study abroad environment will ultimately account for the successful outcome of their experience abroad. I will show which attitudes and perceptions account for a shift in identity development. This discussion will include such considerations as imagination, and the power of the environment. Finally, I will review the characteristics of successful language learners. These characteristics account for the highly individualized outcomes among learners who sojourn abroad. The description of individual traits of those learners, such as motivation and confidence are insufficient to explain the different ways in which learners navigate an identical social environment, such as the study abroad context. This discussion includes considerations of language and power, and how they influence the successful integration of social networks through a variety of symbolic resources. Finally, I will address how these considerations will

influence my research on identity construction in study abroad, and how it will shape the approach to the current study as well as its analysis.

An Overview of Sociocultural Approaches to Understanding Identity

Traditionally, research viewed identity as a twofold notion (Norton, 2006). Researchers saw identity as comprised of a separate social and cultural identity. In this view, social identity was related to a person's place in the larger social world whereas cultural identity was associated with the shared history and customs of a person's particular ethnic group. With an increasing interest in the link between language and identity, this distinction has slowly been reviewed (Morgan, 1995; Schechter & Bayley, 1997). It is now commonly accepted to approach an individual's social identity and cultural identity as a much more complex and interwoven construct than initially assumed (Norton, 1997; Morgan, 1995; Schechter & Bayley, 1997).

An increasing interest in the link between identity and language marks a step further away from traditionally cognitive views of language learning. In these traditional frameworks, the idea of identity is not central to language learning. It is now more commonly accepted that "language (...) is not a body of knowledge, but it comprises implicit assumptions, dynamic processes and negotiated relationships" (Norton, 2006, p.7). Work on identity is informed by sociocultural theories on identity. These theories also include considerations of Vygotskian sociocultural approaches to language development. The central idea behind Vygotskian theories is to think of the learner as a member of a community. It is through interaction with other experienced members of this community that language learning happens. This interaction then creates changes in assumptions and power relationships that will in turn influence the learners' sense of Self.

In her article “Identity as a sociocultural construct in second language research” (2006), Norton reviews the evolution of research on identity from a social and cultural approach to a sociocultural one. Whereas in the 70s and 80s social identity and cultural identity were seen as very much separated, recent years have seen a progress towards viewing identity as a more fluid concept. “In this more recent L2 research, identity is seen as socioculturally constructed, and scholars draw on both institutional and community practices to understand the conditions under which language learners speak, read, and write the target language” (p. 24). It is worth noting that Norton defines identity as an evolving dynamic relation similar to the ways de Bot (2007) and Larsen-Freeman (1997, 2008) view language development¹⁴. To Norton (2006), identity is “... how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton 2006, p. 5). This definition, addresses both the ways in which one situates oneself within society, and the role one holds within a specific community. This approach also implies a triangulated rapport between self-perceived understandings of that role, the observed relations between members of that community, and the dynamics of their relation. This dynamic relationship is shaped over time and it influences how a person projects his or her future roles and responsibilities in a specific community.

¹⁴ Larsen Freeman (1997, 2008) and De Bot (2007) state that dynamic approaches to language development can inform understanding of L2 development and multilingualism. De Bot draws attention to “a need for new methodologies to study language as a dynamic system that is not based on static representation but on the notion that language is always on the move and that language use is language change on different time scales” (2007, p. 175). Larsen-Freeman and De Bot seek to study the dynamic, non-linear processes involved in L2 learning. They are opposed to viewing the learner’s language development as a linear process from zero to near-native proficiency. Rather, they seek to represent language and language development in its full complexity, as a system in which different factors interact continuously.

Within this approach, language is a central means of negotiation. Norton considers that “language is constitutive of and constituted by a learner’s identity” (p. 5). It is language that will allow a person to gain access to the social networks characteristic to the environment, and the day-to-day interactions, which situate that person in a community. These interactions, or lack thereof, shape the way in which the learner answers the question “Who am I?” or more importantly as Norton puts it, “Who am I allowed to be?” One’s identity thus depends largely on changing social and economic relations within the community in which one evolves, and the speaker’s “desire for recognition and affiliation” (p.5). Language is a central tool for this negotiation.

One should understand the notion of sociocultural theories and approaches to language learning as a hybrid approach including both cultural and social approaches to identity. Sociocultural approaches to identity accept that the boundaries between the cultural and social collapsed. Norton defines the framework as constructed around five axes.

1. A sociocultural conception of identity conceives of identity as dynamic and constantly changing across time and place.
2. Much research on identity conceives of identity as complex, contradictory, and multifaceted, and rejects any simplistic notions of identity.
3. In a sociocultural framework identity constructs and is constructed by language.
4. In a sociocultural framework identity construction must be understood with respect to social processes, marked by relations of power that can be either coercive or collaborative.
5. Sociocultural research seeks to link identity theory with classroom practice.

(Norton, 2006, p. 25)

Norton emphasizes that this broad range of theories can enhance our understanding of the relationship between identity and language learning. Sociocultural approaches to language learning and identity take into account both institutional and group practices—an argument that is supported by the work of Bakhtin (1981, 1988), Bourdieu (1977, 1984), and Weedon (1987). Bakhtin (1981, 1988) stresses the importance of language as being socially constructed. This approach allows for us to not just consider language as independent of the speaker, but that “language needs to be investigated not as a set of idealized forms independent of their speakers or their speaking, but rather as situated utterances in which speakers, in dialogue with others, struggle to create meanings” (Norton, 2006, p. 26). In this perspective, we could consider language as a specific value system, expressing a particular bias. The idea that speakers construct meaning with those with whom they interact, implies that the notion of the individual speaker is a false construct. In Bakhtin’s view, speaking is a collaborative effort in which one creates meaning with others in the language community. A community of speakers is influenced by how it is constituted through a set of historical, cultural and imagined communities of speakers which each have their own intentions (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). Within this network, words take on a symbolic importance, and are not neutral. Those who speak them use them in ways that are inevitably influenced by each interlocutor’s set of symbolic value systems.

Bourdieu (1974, 1977) adds another important dimension to considerations of language and power when he stresses that language in itself has a certain value that cannot be understood separately from the person who speaks. “Just as at the level of relations between groups, a language is worth what those who speak it are worth, so too, at the level of interactions between individuals, speech always owes a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it” (Bourdieu 1977, pg. 652). All interlocutors seek to be “believed, obeyed, respected,

distinguished" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648), but one's ability to "command a listener" (1977, p. 648) is intrinsically linked to his or her status as a legitimate or illegitimate speaker. This unequally distributed "right to speak" (1977, p. 648) fundamentally depends on symbolic power relations between those engaged in dialogue. "Therein lies the cultural capital of language: the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms" (Bourdieu, 1977). Norton synthesizes the commonality of Bakhtin and Bourdieu stating that: "[s]peakers need to struggle to appropriate the voices of others, and to 'bend' those voices to their own purposes. Further, what others say, the customary discourse of any particular community, may privilege or debase certain speakers. For this reason, finding answering words for the words of others is as much a social as linguistic struggle" (Norton, 2006, p. 27).

Norton also draws on Foucault (1980), for whom the question of power is central to social exchange. One should approach the relationship of power not only to large institutions (e.g. judicial systems, education systems, social welfare), but power is present in "every day encounters between people with different access to symbolic and material resources – encounters that are inevitably produced within language" (Norton, 2006, p. 7). A person's relationship to those encounters will shape his or her identity. The dynamic, ever-changing characteristic of one's identity and the central place language holds in the shaping of one's identity is central to Weedon's (1987) work: "Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (Weedon, 1987, p. 21). Following Weedon's approach, Norton (2006) anchors her sociocultural framework for investigating identity in a poststructural discussion, allowing her to go beyond structural dichotomies. Rather than viewing the individual as a stable core, Weedon's poststructuralist

approach “depicts the individual—the subject—as diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and space” (Norton, 2006, p. 27).

Identity, Investment, and Community

Norton drew from both Bakhtin and Bourdieu when she coined the term “investment,” a central notion in considering language and identity, which immediately drew attention in the field of SLA (Pittaway, 2004; McKay & Wong, 1996; Angelil-Carter, 1997; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002).

(...) the notion of investment, (...) signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it. If learners 'invest' in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Unlike notions of instrumental motivation, which conceive of the language learner as having a unitary fixed and ahistorical 'personality', the notion of investment conceives of the language learner as having a complex identity, changing across time and space, and reproduced in social interaction. (Norton, 2000, p. 504)

In using the term “investment” in 1995, Norton reacts to the traditional notion of “motivation” that had been considered a key factor in successful language learning. Those who failed to learn the target language were considered simply not sufficiently committed to the learning process. The notion of investment is more open to complex individual biases toward language and the unevenly distributed symbolic value it may carry. Instead of asking the question “Is a learner motivated?” or “What is the learner’s personality?” Norton considers “How is the learner’s

relationship to the language socially and historically constructed?” When studying an L2, learners invest in their social identity—a dynamic process that changes across space and time.

Norton’s approach to the power of language and the relationship of identity development and imagination is reminiscent of Kramsch’s (2002) idea of Third Space.¹⁵ Indeed, theories in SLA have addressed the environment and the power of communities, whether imaginary or real. These ideas are especially applicable to the study abroad context, even if Norton addresses them mainly in the context of ESL classroom teaching. In her chapter “Imagined communities, Identity and English Language Learning”, co-written with Pavlenko (2007), Norton addresses the link between L2 learning and identity as it relates to investment. Learners’ agency, motivation, investment, and resistance are, according to Norton and Pavlenko, influenced by the way learners situate themselves within the imagined or actual community of language speakers. They draw on Anderson (1991) and his notion of imagined communities to discuss ways in which language learning affects identity construction. The idea of imagined communities is set within Bourdieu’s approach (1991) to the way in which language is a locus of social capital, and affects social organization, power and individual awareness (p.669). Language permits the ways in which one chooses to function within a certain context, or community. The process of learning an L2 is one of “becoming, or avoiding becoming a certain person, rather than a simple accumulation of skills or knowledge” (p. 670). Language is a means for a person to socialize,

¹⁵ In applying this metaphor of Third Space, or Third Culture (C3) to language learning, Kramsch allows for language learners and educators alike to situate the language learner at an intersection of both their C1 and C2. Language learners develop an increased awareness of the hybridity and ambivalence of dominant cultures and societies. They are also sensitive to the power of language and can apply their critical stance not only to the C2 but also their C1, ultimately resulting in a better understanding across cultures. Kramsch coins the term *intercultural speakers* (2002, p. 242) to refer to these unique multilingual and multicultural interconnections proper to the L2 learner.

connect and engage within a social network. This connection can be an actual face-to-face relationship (for example in the classroom, or in particular social settings), but also has a more symbolic application that has been little explored (Norton and Pavlenko, 2007, p. 670). The connection with a language community goes well beyond one's immediate social network. Members of one language community rely heavily on an imagined sense of belonging that includes them in large communities of practice.

Anderson (1991) uses the example of the nation-state to illustrate how imagination can be a form of engagement with a particular community of practice. Anderson draws attention to the way print has rendered language more static than in any other era, which has had the effect of giving fixity to language permitting the development of certain languages as being more powerful than other vernaculars. This fixity has allowed for the creation of an imagined sense of belonging among the members of that community of practice. Language could be seen as the cement that holds together members of the community in which it takes a predominant role. This bond is one that relies heavily on the imagined sense of community of its members: "The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear from them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson, 1991, p. 6). Norton and Pavlenko (2007) draw from Wenger (1998) in defining imagination as "a distinct form of belonging to a particular community of practice and a way in which we can locate ourselves in a world and history and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives" (p. 160). The process of imagination then becomes one that is both social and individual. It includes both the ways in which an individual perceives his belonging to a community, and the way in which other members of the community respond to this desire of inclusion. Based on the role of imagination for identity construction, Norton and

Pavlenko (2007) identify five “identity clusters” (p. 671), implicated in the construction of learner identity as it applies to ESL. They note that whereas they present these as separate clusters, they should be seen as dynamic and interacting facets influencing identity construction related to L2 learning: a) postcolonial, b) global, c) ethnic, d) multilingual, e) gendered.

Anderson (1991) underlines that in the modern era, “nations are no longer created in blood but imagined in language” (671). Norton and Pavlenko (2007) use the example of English to illustrate “how newly imagined national identities and futures are often tied to language” (2007, p. 671). Due to the British colonial history, as well as the current American English cultural and linguistic imperialism, English has become a global language. Speakers within this community are often not tied in a traditional way to real English speaking nations per se, but are active members in an imagined community of English speakers in which English is the lingua franca. (2007, p. 671)

The link Norton and Pavlenko (2007) make between ethnicity and ownership of a language is also situated within the debate on the legitimacy of the native speaker. Norton and Pavlenko state that non-native speakers of a language are very much aware of their non-inclusion in certain communities based on arbitrary factors such as physical features, accents and are barriers to their inclusion into the mainstream language community. They cite one of the subjects of Norton’s study (2000), Mai, a Vietnamese immigrant to Canada:

(Mai) perceived a “perfect Canadian” as one who was both white and English-speaking. During the study, Mai described the alienation her nephews experienced as Chinese/Vietnamese people in Canada and explained how the oldest child, Trong, had chosen to change his name from a Vietnamese one to an Anglicized one. Mai had objected to this practice, and had said to her nephews that they should not reject their

heritage explaining: “With your hair, your nose, your skin, you will never be perfect Canadians” (Norton and Pavlenko, 2007, pp. 674-675).

They conclude, “as English language learners reimagine their futures in a changing world, the question “Who owns English?” will become ever more strident and contested” (p. 675).

Norton and Pavlenko take the idea of the legitimacy of the native speaker to the foreground in validating the unique characteristics of the multilingual speaker. In appropriating an L2 and claiming their legitimacy as a speaker of that language, L2 users are more likely to address the ways in which the coexistence of multiple languages and value systems shape a unique identity. Norton and Pavlenko (2007) argue that “the essential notions of Self, deconstructing various ethnic, national, colonial and gender identities (create) new discourses of hybridity and multiplicity; and (imagine) new ways of being American—and bilingual—in the postmodern world” (p. 677). This multilingual community of L2 users has the potential to challenge linguistic standardization, and has the possibility to go beyond imagining them as members of a stable community of speakers, thus finding themselves as legitimate speakers in a culturally and linguistically diverse world.

Social Identity

In her 1994 qualitative study “Language learning, Social Identity and Immigrant Women” Norton investigates the importance of the environment on how language learners position themselves as agents in a social environment. She addresses what she sees as a shortcoming on the part of SLA theories: the struggle to explore the relationship of the language learner with his or her environment. Norton reviews how theorists have drawn artificial dichotomous distinctions between language learners and the language-learning context. She

examines how Schuman (1978) and Krashen (1981) describe language learners as subjected to a set of affective individual variables. These approaches portray the learner in terms such as introverted or extroverted, exhibited or inhibited, which are used as determining attitudes to predict learners' motivation. Krashen (1981) investigates how learner anxiety influences cognitive "intake" (p. 2). When describing the social factors on which language learning depends, Norton states that researchers have often investigated group differences between the language learner group and the target language group (Schuman, 1978). Questions of social distance between these groups were considered minimal, and resulted in the facilitation of acculturation. Norton states that these artificial distinctions between the social and the individual result in "arbitrary mapping of particular factors in either the individual or the social with little rigorous justification" (p.2). As Norton clearly and justly points out, previous research has "often assumed that learners can be defined as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or exhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual" (p. 3).

To address this problem Norton (1993) analyzes the language learning experience of five immigrant women at Ontario College in Canada. Norton collected data through diaries and interviews as well as detailed questionnaires she submitted to these women before and after the study. Norton starts her study with two important assumptions. The first one is that the practice of the L2 is necessary to language learning. Her second assumption depends of her first in that she assumes that exposure to the target language is also an essential condition to move towards fluency. The women in the study were exposed to the L2 (in this case English) in a formal classroom setting, and also in its natural environment through their interactions with the

Canadian target language community. The careful analysis of this data serves to illustrate how this enhanced understanding of natural language learning and social identity can inform SLA theory.

One common feature of the five women Norton followed during her study is that all could be qualified as highly motivated language learners. Their performance and participation in a language course specifically designed for learners who correspond to their profile, as well as their eagerness to participate in Norton's study, sets them apart as individuals who have a genuine desire to learn English. Their participation shows how they accept every opportunity to practice as much English as possible, and their willingness to think critically about their language learning experience. All participants noted that they were comfortable speaking in English to their peers, friends and people they knew well. However, Norton notes that this attitude changes dramatically in their interactions with those people in whom the women "had a particular symbolic or material investment" (p.7). For one person, Mai, this person was her boss. Katarina felt uncomfortable conversing in English with professionals. In her home country she had received a Masters in Science and had a great social investment in her professional status. She described how she found it difficult to speak to people who had the same status in an L2. A Peruvian participant greatly invested in her Peruvian identity found it difficult to speak to fellow Peruvians who were proficient English speakers. Norton concludes: "A language learner's motivation to speak is mediated by investments that may conflict with their desire to speak—investments that are intimately connected to the ongoing production of the learner's social identity" (p.7).

Norton analyzes in depth one of the women's attitude towards language learning in terms of her investment. Martina, a 37-year-old mother of three, arrived in Canada with a very limited

knowledge of English. After relying on one of her children's language skills, she manages to secure a job for four dollars an hour as a "cook help" in a fast food restaurant. In addition to the language courses she took with Norton, her interactions with her colleagues and costumers at the workplace helped her improve her L2 language skills, which resulted in her taking an increasingly important role in helping her family settle in their new home country. She became the person in charge of arranging the family's living situation, her children's schooling as well as helping her non-proficient husband preparing for his certification as plumber by translating the preparation handbook from English to Czech. Her investment in English, notes Norton, was largely influenced by her identity as a mother and wife. In relying less on her children to perform public tasks in the L2, she took up the responsibility to create a healthy environment for her children, by performing her parental tasks autonomously (p.8). She also gained more knowledge of the Canadian way of life by observing practices at work and by interacting with her landlord as well as service providers.

In keeping with the poststructuralist notion that social identity and cultural identity are very much interwoven, Norton concludes that Martina's refuses to be silenced by her status as an immigrant is directly linked to the fact that Maria is a mother. Even if she was facing challenging linguistic situations that resulted in a very high affective filter, Martina's determination to defend her family from adverse social practices often resulted in her challenging the limitations of her linguistic capacities. Despite self-perceived feelings of "inferiority" or "stupidity," she is driven by her desire to take care of her family, even if that means staying on the phone with her unscrupulous landlord, pleading her case regardless of her poor command of verb tenses. Norton also points out that Martina reframes her power relations with her coworkers by drawing on her "symbolic resources as a mother" (p.8); she notes that Martina reframes her relationship to her

coworkers to a “domestic one” (p.9). Norton uses the following extract of an interview to illustrate this shift:

“In restaurant was working a lot of children, but the children always thought that I am—I don’t know, a broom or something. They always say ‘go and clean the living room.’ And I was washing the dishes and they didn’t do nothing. They talked to each other and they thought that I had to do everything. And I said ‘No.’ The girl is like 12 years old. She is younger than my son. I said ‘No,’ you are doing nothing. You can go clean the tables or something.” (Norton, 1993), p.9)

In positioning herself as a mother in the workplace, Martina finds the authority within herself to build a counter discourse and assume her legitimacy as a speaker and valid agent in the distribution of power relations at the workplace. This shift allows for her to be no longer solely viewed as a migrant woman, but rather as a “mother”—a role that gives her the right to speak.

Norton draws on Eva’s diary entries to illustrate how the language learner cannot be separated from the social world, which in turn explains individual variables and attitudes relating to progress in language learning. The analysis of this extract supports Norton’s argument that language should be seen as a social practice, which depends largely on questions related to power. One of Eva’s coworkers, Gail, initiates a conversation about Bart Simpson. Eva has never heard of the iconic cartoon character and feels humiliated by her colleague’s clear disbelief of her unfamiliarity. Gail has access to a set of cultural, socially constructed symbolic products in which Eva lacks initiation. Gail’s access to those practices set her in a (at least perceived) position of power, one in which she is “the knower” (p. 10). Norton considers that “language learning is not just an abstract skill, but a practice that is socially constructed in the hegemonic events, practices and processes that constitute daily life” (p.10). Due to her lack of access to the

full range of symbolic power associated with her L2 language and culture, Eva is in a position where she is silenced. This exchange, even if it may seem benign, confirms Eva's inferiority as a migrant passive "intruder," and an illegitimate agent in the exchange.

In her conclusion, Norton quotes Sauvignon (1990) who stated "[n]o researcher today would dispute that language learning results from participation in communicative events. Despite claims to the contrary, however, the nature of this learning remains undefined" (p.11). One should view natural language learning as separated "from the artificial distinctions between the individual language learning and the larger social context" (p.11). Norton argues that social relations of power notions such as motivation, extroversion, and confidence rule in this context. It is difficult to predict and identify which language learners will create possibilities to speak in a given context, and who will successfully negotiate social relations of power. Language learning should thus be understood as a complex social practice ruled by unequal constructions of power.

Characteristics of the Good Language Learner

According to Norton and Toohey (2001) good language learners share similar identity characteristics that allow them to successfully integrate language communities and succeed in attaining social recognition. It is important to consider the dialectic relationship between the individual and the social, that is, between the human agency of language learners and the social practices of their communities and how language shapes identity. But what are the individual characteristics of those learners that predispose them to successfully navigate this dialectic relationship within a community of practice? This uniquely privileged space allows some learners to socially and individually attain recognition in the target community. Not all language learners, even if they evolve in identical environments, achieve this social acceptance. Norton

and Toohey (2001) state that the language learning environment is a key factor in understanding successful language learning, but they underline that it does not suffice as a predictor (p.308). Rather than viewing context as a mere modifier in the negotiation of the internal dynamic of language learning, they argue it is more relevant to investigate the reception of language learners' actions in particular sociocultural communities. In underlining this dialectic relation between the speaker and the language community, Norton and Toohey add a supplementary dimension to the traditional research on good language learners that investigates personality characteristics, cognitive styles, attitudes, motivations, or past learning experiences. They draw from the 1978 article, "The Good Language Learner" by Naiman et al., for a description of the characteristics that are shared by good language learners. According to this article, good language learners have five distinct characteristics that set them apart from other language learners. First, they take an active approach to the task of language learning. First, good language learners recognize and exploit the systematic nature of language. Moreover, they use the language they are learning for communication and interaction. Next, they also manage their own affective difficulties with language learning. Finally, good language learners monitor their language learning performance. Naiman et al. conclude that "attitude and motivation were in many instances the best overall predictors of success in second language learning" (Naiman et al., 1978, p. 66).

To Norton and Toohey however, these characteristics seem insufficient, and they point out a key element for successful language learning that is missing from those featured in the list from Naiman et al.. Indeed, Naiman et al. imply that language learners have access to a wide variety of conversations with the members of the target language community (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p.310). However, Norton and Toohey believe it is essential to include the ways human

agency and the identity of language learners can predict and influence successful learning.

Norton's notion of investment implies that learners seek to acquire a wide range of symbolic and material gains through the process of learning an L2. Depending on how the learners consider these non-linguistic gains, this process of investment can change learners' outlook on their role within the target community as well as how they perceive their future and possibilities ahead. This process ultimately can result in an identity shift by an enhanced concept of themselves (p. 312).

Norton draws again from her case study on Eva, a young female Polish immigrant to Canada. Eva stood out in her study as an extremely successful language learner, scoring higher than other participants on the language assessments designed for this study. Norton believes that Eva's success can be explained by the ways she managed to negotiate entry into the social network of her Anglophone workplace. Norton and Toohey ask the following questions in regards to Eva's achievement as an L2 user: (a) How did the practices in the environments constrain or facilitate Eva's access to English, and (b) how did she gain access to the social networks of (her) communities? (p. 314)

Eva's position as a low-level employee at Munchies did not encourage her co-workers to become eagerly involved in assuring her access to English. Most of the tasks she was asked to perform did not necessitate much command of English. Also, L2 learning was not a goal set forth by the management. Even the interaction with clients was encouraged to be short for the sake of efficiency. Thus Eva's workplace community of practice was not the environment in which she engaged in English conversation. What set her apart from others in her situation was that Eva sought to renegotiate this restrictive position in the workplace by investing in overlapping communities of practice.

In the workplace, Eva's limited command of English and the firm's policy on regulated interaction between workers and clients was an obstacle to her language learning. But she gained access to outside social practices through a monthly activity organized by her employer for the employees. In this specific social context Eva took advantage of the symbolic resources that did not matter in the workplace, such as her youth and charm, and her access to a car she used to drive her co-workers to and from these events. These valued symbolic resources gave her access to a role that she was not able to play in the workplace, but which shaped the way in which she approached social contacts with her colleagues outside of work. Norton addresses the importance of investigating sociocultural strategies of language learners, and encourages interpretive ways to approach the language learning process. If researchers adopt these strategies, they go beyond cognitive, skill-based analysis. In this study, Norton looks specifically at two resources Eva drew from to gain access to her peers' network: intellectual and social resources (p. 317).

During the company's outings, Eva's knowledge of other languages, such as Italian, as well as her familiarity with popular European vacation destinations contributed to facilitating communication with her peers. For instance, one of her coworkers was interested in learning basic vocabulary to impress her Italian husband. With regard to social resources, Eva used her spouse to position herself favorably in her peers' network: he drove them to and from their outings. Moreover, her husband's presence allowed for Eva to be perceived by her colleagues as being in a desirable relationship (p. 317). These factors helped Eva to set up a counter discourse:

Our research paints a far more complex picture Rather than focusing on language structures per se, [Eva] sought to set up counter discourses in which [her identity] could be respected and [her] resources valued, thereby enhancing the possibilities for shared conversation. Eva, initially constructed as an ESL immigrant,

sought to reposition herself as a multilingual resource with a desirable partner. (Norton, 2001 p. 318)

Successful language learners could therefore be described as those who draw from a variety of symbolic resources and characteristics that help exercise their agency within different social contexts. This process allows for them to redefine their identities, and to adopt social practices that better their L2 learning through successful integration of overlapping social networks. It is therefore important, according to Norton and Toohey (2001), to examine these strategies in conjunction with cognitive styles, attitudes, motivations, or past learning experiences.

Understanding these strategies should help researchers better understand the dynamics of good language learning and its effect on identity construction.

Summary and Implications of the Research on Identity

This review of research on identity shows that identity construction is a complex, dynamic process. Investigating identity development involves adopting a hybrid approach that includes both cultural and social components. This approach considers language as a central medium of change. The dynamic relationship is shaped over time and influences how a person projects his or her future roles and responsibilities in a specific community. Language learners perceive power relations in the ways in which they interact with members of the target community. Their negotiation of these relations, or their investment in the target community, can result in an imagined sense of belonging that includes them in large communities of practice. It is important that researchers incorporate the language learner's struggle to become a legitimate member of his or her environment when investigating learner identity development. Language learning should thus be understood as a complex social practice ruled by unequal constructions

of power. These constructions have direct implications for how the language learner perceives his or her sense of Self. In learning a second language, successful learners develop the ability to draw from a wide range of symbolic and material resources, such as their entourage, gender, belongings, or physical appearance. This skill cannot be separated from the purely linguistic gains that come with language learning. Depending on how the learners consider these non-linguistic resources, the process can change the learners' outlook on their role within the target community. This practice also influences how they perceive their future and possibilities ahead. Language learning is an investment in the learner's identity—a dynamic and mutable process across time and space.

This research on the relationship between language and identity informs my study in important ways. In the methodological approach to the investigation of the effect of language learning on learner identity construction, I will address several of the characteristics of this process. This process will be highlighted in the analysis and interpretation of the students' narratives at the core of the current study. I will show how language learners in a study abroad context draw on their power of imagination to situate themselves within their group of peers, as well as within the target community. I will look at the ways learners adopt specific social practices that allow them to integrate a variety of social networks, which, in turn, will affect their L2 learning. These processes, ruled by complex, unequal constructions of power, should allow for a better understanding of the influence of language learning on identity construction and highlight the unique characteristics of the language learner. This approach will also emphasize the distinctive features of the study abroad environment and the different networks and social practices unique to this environment. Investigating these dynamics will underline the features of the unique community of language learners in which the participants in this study evolve.

Drawing from participants' narratives, this analysis will underscore the strategies, which study abroad participants adopt to redefine their identities within the study abroad context. The study will illustrate how successful study abroad participants adopt specific social practices that positively affect their L2 learning through the effective integration of these overlapping social networks.

CHAPTER IV

THE STUDY

Qualitative analysis is best suited to addressing the complexity of identity construction in a study abroad environment. Because identity is dynamic and ever-changing, quantitative analysis that measures learner variables statically is ill-equipped to capture the subtle changes in a person's identity that are the object of this study. Qualitative research allows for the description and analysis of the characteristics and dynamics of the study abroad context, and lets researchers take into account both the particularity of each individual represented in the study as well as the unique characteristics of the study abroad context.

A review of the literature demonstrates the suitability of a qualitative methodological approach. Benson et al. (2009) survey the rise in qualitative research methods on language learning and teaching that has been published in academic journals between 1997 and 2006. They conclude "methodological eclecticism, rather than adherence to established traditions, is now the dominant characteristic of published qualitative work in our field" (p. 79). In the introduction to the special 2005 issue of *The Modern Language Journal* on Methodology and Ethics, Magnan states: "The *MLJ* today reflects the discipline in accepting a variety of methodologies in both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. (...) Our discipline now embraces a variety of qualitative methods as accepted, or even preferred, methods of inquiry" (Magnan, 2005, p. 315). Benson et al. (2005) offer the following definition of qualitative research:

Qualitative research, it might be argued, is more a matter of underlying philosophy and purpose than it is a matter of methods of data collection or analysis. By this definition, a qualitative study is one that is situated within a qualitative theoretical

framework or adheres to the principles of an established qualitative approach, such as ethnography or conversation analysis. (p. 86)

In a similar vein, Holliday (2010) describes the unique possibilities that qualitative research methods offer.

The basic aim of qualitative research is to get to the bottom of what is going on in all aspects of social behaviour. It tends to do this within specific social settings such as schools, factories, hospital wards and so on, which are treated as cultures of activity, and pose basic ethnographic questions to do with power structures, tacit behavioural rules and modes of organization (p. 99).

In other words, qualitative studies are uniquely appropriate to represent the ways in which subjects engage socially within a specific context. The description of these distinctive possibilities seems especially suitable for this study.

With regard to specific work on language and identity, Norton (2011) stresses that researchers should incorporate three methodical considerations. First, she states that no research can be unbiased and objective. Researchers' perspectives are necessarily 'situated' and partial (p. 15). Second, research should not only investigate how structural conditions and society and its practices situate the learner, but also how the learner chooses to engage in those contexts (p. 16). Finally, she proposes that researchers should understand and incorporate the particularity of the persons, environment, and processes they examine (p. 16). The methodological understandings presented by Magnan (2005) and Norton (2011) are essential considerations when measuring and representing the dynamic and ever changing nature of identity development among language learners.

The current study incorporates these important methodological considerations regarding the particularity of the participants, the environment and the individual processes of mediation and negotiation. These considerations offer a better perspective on the effect of the study abroad experience on learner identity development. This qualitative study uses a case study approach. This approach is particularly well suited for contextualized interpretation of events, as it examines a participant's personal experience. Case study research allows for insight into a participant's thoughts, actions emotions and strategies within a specific context. For the current study, the participant's narrative is closely examined to investigate the processes involved in study abroad and offers a detailed contextualized analysis. More specifically, this study adopts a multiple case study approach. Casanave (2010) offers a good definition of this approach:

A multiple case study investigates several particular groups, institutions, or case studies of individuals. The purpose of most case studies is to enhance our understanding of a person, process or group, not to compare, experiment and generalize to other populations. The term 'case study' refers both to the process of doing such a study and to the final report that it generates. (p. 67)

In this approach the researcher's reflections are part of the data. In other words, rather than an objective, technical report of the data, the subjective interpretation of the researcher serves to build a theoretical framework for the study. "The case study report includes the writer's reasons for doing the study and his or her roles in the interaction with the participants, class, or programme are made clear.... Case studies may include quite a bit of narrative—what happened in the research process and what happened in the participants' lives" (Casanave, 2010, p. 71). The case study approach does not rely, therefore, on the kind of validity generally described in empirical, quantitative research. The ways data are evaluated and interpreted involve subjective

dimensions that may call into question the legitimacy of the study. In Casanave's words: "All case studies result in texts, not accurate representations of reality, and all are constructed by researchers in the act of doing research and writing, and must be judged in this light. As texts, they can always be contested and reinterpreted" (2010, p. 75).

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) How do study abroad participants perceive and appropriate the C2 during their stay in the target country?
- 2) In which ways do study abroad participants negotiate their sense of Self as it relates to the Other?
- 3) Do study abroad participants develop an increased awareness of language and language use through interaction with their peers and native L2 speakers?

Method

a. Participants

The participants in this study are all undergraduate students at Vanderbilt University, located in Nashville, Tennessee. I initially decided to open the study to all students enrolled in the Vanderbilt-in-France program during the summer 2011, fall 2011 and spring 2012 sessions. I attended the orientation meeting in Aix-en-Provence for the summer 2011 program in order to recruit participants, and contacted students in the fall and spring sessions by email at the start of both sessions. A total of fifty-four students were contacted. Twenty-four were enrolled in the summer 2011 program, twenty-one were enrolled in the fall 2011 program, and nine were

enrolled in the spring 2012 program. No compensation of any kind was offered to potential participants.

The summer 2011 recruitment initially yielded twenty responses; six students finished the complete round of questions. The fall 2011 and spring 2012 groups were contacted by email during the orientation days for the program. For the fall 2011 session, three students responded positively; two finished the complete set of questions but their answers did not meet the minimum 200-word count per question. Two students expressed their interest over the spring 2012 semester, and both finished the complete set of questions. The total number of students who completed the full set of written questionnaires was eleven.

Several criteria were considered in selecting the final participants for this study. First, only students who completed the full set of nine questions were considered eligible: this condition eliminated four candidates. Also, students who did not seem fully invested in the study were not considered for participation: participants who did not submit at least 200-word answers to the questions were not selected. Therefore, the two participants who completed the full set of questions during the fall 2011 session could not be included. This elimination left five potential candidates. In addition to the criteria indicated above, I considered the students' total number of years of formal study of French. I considered that this would make limit the variables among the subjects. Hence, those who had taken more than six college-level French courses were set aside: this criterion eliminated one potential subject. Ultimately, four students were selected to participate in the study: one male participant and three females.

Basic information was gathered via a questionnaire on the participants' history of French language study. The participants were asked to list all prior study of French. As indicated in

Table 1 below, two of the participants (Carrie and Tara¹⁶) had devoted considerable classroom seat time prior to their departure to France, one (Anne) reports no formal prior study of French and another (Will) began his French study in college. The participants in the study were also asked to list prior study of foreign languages other than French and to briefly recount their language use in extracurricular settings. Two (Carrie and Will) reported prior study of Spanish, one reported prior study of German (Tara) and one (Anne) reported no prior study of languages. All participants who had studied French reported their use of the language was limited to the classroom prior to their study abroad experience.

Table 1: Study Participants

Name	Semester	Gender	Age	Year	study abroad experience	Other languages	Word count
Anne	S11	Female	21	Junior	N/A	N/A	2,555
Carrie	S11	Female	20	Junior	N/A	Spanish	1,810
Tara	S12	Female	20	Senior	2 weeks in France	German	2,222
Will	S12	Male	20	Junior	N/A	Spanish	1,830

b. Setting

The four students in the study were enrolled in the Vanderbilt-in-France program over the course of summer 2011 (eight weeks), fall 2011 (thirteen weeks), or spring 2012 (thirteen

¹⁶ Pseudonyms are used for each participant, as well as for the members of the target community mentioned in the student narratives.

weeks). Vanderbilt-in-France is located in Aix-en-Provence (ca. 140, 000 inhabitants) in the south of France. The city is home to six major universities, and six major consortia of study abroad programs. The majority of the students enrolled in the Vanderbilt-in-France program are Vanderbilt undergraduates and are enrolled in courses designed specifically for them. Students who qualify may enroll in one course offered at the *Université de Provence* or the *Institut d'Etudes Politiques*. Students in the Vanderbilt-in-France program all live in apartments with at least one other American peer and one native French speaker.

c. Materials

After receiving IRB approval for this study, I started the process of inviting study abroad participants to enroll in the study and informing them of implications for participating in the current study (Appendix 1). After selection, volunteers were presented with an IRB approved consent form that outlined the procedure of the study and informed them of the implications for participation (Appendix 2). Participants were asked to sign the consent form prior to their participation in this study. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that withdrawal would not affect their standing with the program, the program coordinators nor the instructors at Vanderbilt-in-France. The consent form outlined measures taken to ensure the anonymity of participants. These procedures provided the best strategies to maintain participant confidentiality.

Participants answered the Language Contact Profile (Freed, Dewey and Segalowitz, 2004) before beginning the study and then again at the end of the study (Appendices 3 and 5). Freed et al. developed the Language Contact Profile in an effort to homogenize research in study abroad contexts as it relates to demographics, language-learning history, contact with native

speakers and the use of the language in the field. These questionnaires provided information necessary to supplement the data gathered in the e-journals. The participants' language profiles added insights into their investment in the local language community as well as the ways they took advantage of the opportunities provided by the Vanderbilt-in-France program.

The format of the study was informed by Stewart Aguilar's 2010 study as outlined in Chapter Two. Participants agreed to answer a total of nine questions (Appendix 4) divided in three rounds of three questions. The questions were sent to the participants in a pre-established order, and candidates had approximately three weeks between rounds to answer. Each round of questions had one question as it related to them, one question as it related to the local community and the one that focused on their interactions.

Round One

- 1) What are your first impressions about living in France? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.
- 2) When you think of your host family ("dinner family"), what comes to mind? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.
- 3) Describe one of your French friends. Why do you get along? What is interesting about him/her? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.

Round Two

- 1) Describe your impressions of being in a French classroom. How does it differ from the typical American classroom? How do French instructors differ from instructors you had in America? Describe your impressions in 200 words.

2) Describe your impressions of some French political, religious or gender differences. How have you learned about these? Describe your impressions in 200 words.

3) Describe some recent developments in France's current events. Why did you pick this particular event? Have you been confronted with some of its impacts? Please comment. Describe your impressions in 200 words.

Round Three

1) When you think of French people, what comes to your mind immediately? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.

2) Describe your impressions about living in France. Would you come back for an extended period? Why? Why not? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.

3) Describe your experience this summer (or semester). Describe some of the positive and/or negative impressions from your stay in Aix-en-Provence. Please describe your impressions in 200 words.

Students were free to choose the order in which they answered the questions as long as they respected the pre-established timeline. Some students chose to answer all three questions at once whereas others responded to one question at a time. The format of the emails was threaded so that they were able to access the questions they had previously recorded. This format allowed them to reread and consider their previous answers as they answered new rounds of questions.

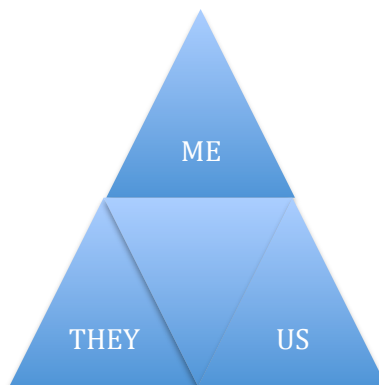
The format of threaded emails was conveniently familiar in that participants' personal emails are often organized under the study same format. Moreover, they could access their journal any time at a location of their choosing.

The journals provide personal accounts of language stories and how the participants perceived the way in which they faced new opportunities for learning and challenges during their study abroad experience. These entries also show how participants' language learning situated them in the community of French speakers. Pavlenko (2001) described how important it is for SLA researchers to consider L2 learning stories:

L2 learning stories...are unique and rich sources of information about the relationship between language and identity in second language learning and socialization. It is possible that only personal narratives provide a glimpse into areas so private, personal, and intimate that they are rarely--if ever--breached in the study of SLA, and at the study same time at the heart and soul of the second language socialization process. (p. 167)

The format of this specific e-journal is based on the Bahktinian idea of language as a social construct. Speakers in dialogue with others struggle to create meaning, and in doing so become part of a community of speakers. This relationship could be represented as a triangular model of dialogue between the Self, others and a collaborating "us." It is in navigating conversation between others that meaning is created. Through this negotiation, and through the construction of language, one creates a social identity.

Figure 1: Bahktinian triangular model of dialogue



This triangular relationship was preserved in the e-journals in order to interpret and code the data gathered within a Bahktinian framework. The rounds of questions were constructed around these three categories. Participants were asked to comment on their experience either on a purely individual level (all first questions of every round), an exterior observational level (all second questions of every round), and the last one on a collaborate level (all third questions of every round).

The advantage of outlining the study in this manner is threefold. First, the questions and rubrics are constructed around the Bahktinian model described earlier—a model that is at the core of Norton’s approach to identity construction. Participants were encouraged to “observe” themselves in a critical way. Students knew which questions they would have to answer over the a three-week period. They were encouraged to pay attention to certain situations, and to bear in mind the assignment they would have to answer that week. A final key advantage of the model of using the e-journal format was that all data collected over the course of the study was in writing. At their return home, participants completed a post-treatment language contact profile (Appendix 5). By designing this study to incorporate exclusively written data, the collection, interpretation, and processing of the data were consistent.

d. General Procedure

Participants in the summer study received the first round of questions during the second week of the program. Every round of questions was sent within a three-week interval. The last round of questions was gathered during the last week of the program. Participants in the Fall 2011 program were recruited during the orientation week by email, and the first round of

questions were sent to the three participants during the third week of the program. The last round of questions, which two participants completed, was collected during the last week of the program. Participants in the Spring 2012 program were also contacted by email during the orientation week. The first round of questions was sent on during the third week of the program and the last round of questions was answered by end of the semester abroad

e. Data Collection

The data collected was exclusively written and collected through email. Students responded to the rounds of questions by email, and submitted the pre-treatment language contact profile during the third week of the program. Students completed the post-treatment questionnaire after their return home.

Because qualitative, case study research is inherently subjective, the validity of the research depends on how the data are collected, organized and analyzed. For this study I developed a codebook¹⁷ organized according to five concepts:

- 1) Perceptions of the second culture (C2)
- 2) Perceptions of the Self
- 3) Diverging perceptions of Self and Other
- 4) Converging perceptions of Self and Other
- 5) Perceptions of language and language use

For each of these five concepts I listed key terms or codes to identify the kinds of issues and topics mentioned in the written responses as well as noteworthy quotes from the participants' written responses. The codebook also includes a column for my own comments regarding what

¹⁷ See Holliday (2010) for additional details regarding the use of coding for analyzing qualitative data.

the various quotes meant to me at the time of the data collection. It is important to mention that my comments are part of the data, which occurs often in a case study approach (Casanave, 2010) because “[t]he process of analyzing qualitative data is not always separate from collecting data” (Holliday, 2010, p. 102).

Table 2: Codebook

Notions	Codes
Perceptions of the C2	Insider v. outsider Cultural artifacts Local social networks
Perceptions of the Self	Awareness of Self Border crossing experiences Destabilized sense of identity
Diverging perceptions of Self and Other	Struggle Rejection of new knowledge
Converging perceptions of Self and Other	Acceptance of new knowledge New subject positioning Third identity negotiation Negotiation of difference
Perception of language and language use	Language experience Code switching Social contacts with L2 speakers

The language stories of participants in the Vanderbilt-in-France program show the development of a unique identity among study abroad participants. The stories also gave insight into the complex relations the study abroad participants have between their local network of peers and the target community as well as C2 products and practices. The data highlights reasons

for a successful study abroad experience (i.e., one that brings about important shifts in identity development and perception), as well as explanations for less pronounced shifts in identity perception and attitudes towards integration and social acceptance. Finally, the qualitative format of the study allows us to address the highly individualized nature of participants' attitudes and demonstrates how each participant's experience is unique in its nature and its outcome.

Findings

a. Profile Anne

Anne is a 21-year-old Human and Organizational Development major at Vanderbilt University. At the time of her participation in the program she was a rising senior. She enrolled in the elementary French language course offered during the Vanderbilt-in-France 2011 summer program.

Language contact profile:

Anne was the only participant in this study who did not live with a native French-speaker. She shared her house with a fellow elementary-level student of French, and reported only limited daily use of French. Her self-reported network of L2 speakers was limited to her French teacher, the other teachers and tutors in the program, her host family and her interactions with local shopkeepers.

Anne did not report speaking other languages except for beginner Spanish. She had never spent an extensive amount of time abroad prior to the Vanderbilt-in-France summer program. She had also never spent a long time away from her family, and reported that she called them daily. During one of our conversations she expressed how much she missed them, especially since her sister got engaged while she was studying abroad in France. Anne felt she had missed a

very important family event. Not only was she in constant contact with her family, but also Anne reported calling her boyfriend several times a day. He eventually came to visit her for two weeks during the program. In addition to Skype, she stated that she spent an extended amount of time on Facebook, and her email.

Perception of the C2:

At the beginning of the Vanderbilt-in-France program, Anne perceived her difference in a negative way. She stated: “Everything I heard about ‘the French’ ... led me to believe that ‘all French people’ were rude and they hated Americans.” She described her fears of being different, and the negative way in which she perceived her role in French society. Her preconceived ideas of the people she encountered held her back from approaching the C2 in a critical way and it seemed to influence her language use. “France is definitely more pretentious when it comes to their language and culture...”

Over the course of the program, and in answering the questions related to her perception of the C2 for the e-journals, Anne noted differences, but situated herself completely out of the C2. She hardly expressed any emotion other than frustration with certain cultural differences and her inability to understand the different practices she observed. One of those practices she repeatedly commented on is what she perceives as a lack of entrepreneurial spirit among the French.

“It boggles my mind that storeowners close their shops during high tourist season to take a month long vacation. They close early when they feel like it, and they do not open at all some days. This is something I struggle to wrap my head around because everything I have been taught living in America is to make as much money as you can in the

shortest amount of time. In America, all stores would probably extend their hours during the tourist season so they could make the most amount of money.”

In looking closely at this excerpt we notice that Anne made a clear distinction between “us” and “them,” or “me” and “them,” and described herself very much as an outsider. She also had a clear tendency toward generalization and lacked a critical approach to what she perceives as being unbelievable—“all stores,” “the French,” “America,” “their shops.” It is also interesting that she did not report inquiring about this practice within her network of locals, such as her professors and tutors. She noted the difference and complained about it but she did not seem to have the desire to go beyond the observation of difference. Anne was clearly not invested in the local community, and undoubtedly expressed a preference of the American way as being the right way. Her position shifted slightly over the course of the program, although the fact that she stated the same problem repeatedly shows clearly that she persisted in situating herself in the position of an external observer and maintained her sense of being a visitor. “I still don’t understand the work ethic here (...) I get frustrated when things are not open on Sundays or Mondays, but that’s it!”

It took Anne until the end of the summer to begin to think more critically about the French work ethic: “their work ethic is very different then [sic] ours in America where we just look at business and see \$ signs in our eyes. I think the French work for different reasons and, to be honest, I am not sure what those are.” This comment still underlines a lack of curiosity as well as a limited inquiring attitude on Anne’s part. Anne did not report discussing her observations with others, including the French people she knew.

By the end of the program, Anne expressed a shift in attitude. Her objective observation of difference at the start of the summer program shifted and she acknowledged that the

difference she observed must have some underlying explanation that could be reasonable, or at least account for the difference. Rather than seeing the situation from a right/wrong perspective, Anne, who remained an outsider, expressed for the first time another dimension in her inquiry. That dimension is the unknown, which makes her attitude towards difference more ambiguous. (“The French work for different reasons.”) She did not need to understand it, and might not have agreed with it, but she seemed to have accepted that there are more complex reasons than the mere lack of concern for profit.

This shift is more apparent in the third round of questions when Anne’s answers related to culture went from being mere observations to observations accompanied by explanations. Anne is resolutely situated in an analytical approach of the C2 and developed a much more engaged role than her earlier position of outsider/observer: “When I used to think of French people I would automatically say ‘rude, fashion forward, a little snobby and sophisticated.’ Now I would say they are not rude, just proud of their culture.” Later she notes: “The French are actually very nice, funny, enjoyable and they really appreciate your effort.” Closer analysis of this statement suggests that “your effort” could be interpreted in several ways. It could be Anne’s effort, but it could also be a statement addressed to the study abroad participant in general. Anne may feel comfortable enough take on the role of advice-giver, and she may be suggesting strategies to improve interactions with members of the C2.

While Anne’s proficiency level in French remained low, she came to adopt perspectives and practices that she observed while she evolved as a member of the L2 community.

“I realized this lifestyle is perfect. It is actually quite enjoyable to sit outside on a sunny day in between classes and take time to talk to your friends instead of scarfing down food and moving on to the next activity. I have developed such a great appreciation for

French culture since being here and it is great that now I have a positive view of France and French people.”

Although her linguistic exchanges with native L2 speakers remained limited, she had an appreciation and sensitivity to the Other that was quite different from her initial perceptions. What she perceived as being “a slow lifestyle” in her first journal entries, she came to not only appreciate but also adopt. While that adoption remained selective, and seems to have been adopted within her cohort rather than including members of the C2 community (she mentions her friends), it impacted her perception of the C2: “I have developed such a great appreciation for French culture since being here and it is great that now I have a positive view of France and French people.” It also reflected on her own culture and practices, and it indicates the critical stance that she developed when she observed practices in her own life. Her mention of the American lifestyle, which she described as “scarfing down food and moving on to the next activity,” is indicative of a shift in perspective on what she likes and dislikes about her own culture. Anne clearly developed a unique stance, in that she was able to objectively consider her own culture through the C2.

Perceptions of the Self:

In reading Anne’s early accounts, it is very clear that she had a hard time coming to terms with her difference. Her entry for the first round of questions is interspersed with very emotionally loaded adverbs and adjectives: “hesitant,” “scared,” “nervous,” “difficulty,” “I struggle.” She reported feeling “humiliated” when speaking French and her language difference seemed to reinforce her position as an outsider. Although she eventually admitted that she was feeling more and more comfortable, Anne attributes the reason for her discomfort to the attitude she perceived from French people: they “push visitors out of their comfort zone.” We can

interpret these statements as being indicative of passivity on Anne's part as far as claiming her role and worth as a member in her new community was concerned. Acceptance seemed to have to come from within the French community. In other words, Anne seems to indicate that if the French did not grant acceptance, she would not have access to it. It would seem that the way Anne thought about herself was in relation to the French. She appears to believe that her inclusion in the local community depended entirely on its members. Rather than perceiving her investment as something she should play an active role in, Anne thinks it was "them," the French, who should indicate if and when she could become a legitimate member of this new community. Considering she did not feel like this access had been granted, Anne defined her Self as different from "them."

Diverging perceptions of Self and Other:

It is very clear that Anne perceived herself as an outsider to the local L2/C2 community. It is obvious from her journal entries that she did not succeed in fully integrating a social network where both she and native speakers interacted, except for those situations the study abroad program created for her (with her professor, her host family or the staff at the center). Moreover, she reported that many of the interactions she had outside of the classroom, with the students in the program, were conducted in English. It is therefore not surprising that it was only until very late in the summer that she started to include herself in situations that were proper to the host culture. As demonstrated in the next part of this discussion, Anne did not seem to have been fully invested in seeking information about the everyday life of target community. She was not informed about the political and social issues that made headlines during her stay in Aix-en-Provence. Anne stayed focused for a long time on the things that immediately affected her life in Aix-en-Provence, rather than considering a broader picture. For example, there is no evidence in

her journal entries that she discussed, in English or in French, things that she found challenging. Rather, she observed them, and quite passively let certain customs and practices affect her negatively without actively trying to understand them.

One of the reasons we could qualify Anne as being passive is the way in which she negotiates in her social network in Aix-en-Provence. In one of her first journal entries she stated: “I haven’t really made French friends. ☹ because I don’t have a French colloc¹⁸ that I have been able to get to know!” It seemed that Anne had a hard time taking advantage of opportunities that presented themselves outside of the organized aspects of the study abroad program. She considered her lack of French friends to result from shortcomings in the program over which she had no control. Anne did not believe that there were other ways of meeting French people, not even meeting the French roommates of her cohort. Rather than actively seeking out those opportunities, she blamed her situation on her housing assignment. Anne remained insular and she was rather content with the cocoon her cohort provided her.

In her later journal entries Anne commented on gender roles in France:

“The biggest difference I have seen in French culture is gender roles. First it became very obvious to me that women played a different role in France than they do in the US. Whenever I see girls my age or a bit older, they come off very confidently. When I first got here I was shocked at how women do not smile at each other when passing one another in the street and I rarely see them talking to men. It is almost as if women run the show and men are constantly pursuing them and they get to decide whether they want to accept or not.”

¹⁸ Translation : roommate

Anne perceived a difference in the role of women from a completely external point of view. It is useful for the reader to know that Anne had access to four French tutors, all women, who spoke fluent English. At any time, she could have spoken with these women who would have been more than willing to give their opinions about what she observed. However, it seems that at this stage of her experience abroad, Anne was more comfortable in her role of observer rather than verifying whether her perception was well informed. The way Anne perceived gender roles seems to be incompatible with by how she defined her own role as a woman at home and by the codes she was used to practicing. It is difficult to assess whether or not she envied this perceived position of women in French society. However, it is clear to the reader that she did not wish to comply with these codes, which she considered shocking.

Converging perceptions of Self and Other:

Anne's early journal entries show little evidence of diverging perceptions of Self and Other. She was so detached and uninvolved in the community that except for making comparisons about cultural differences, she did not seem to perceive a relationship between herself and French people. Without this dynamic relationship, whether real or imagined, it is hardly possible to speak about divergence. Comparisons such as "The French are more pretentious about their language and culture than Americans" seem to indicate a detachment on Anne's part, rather than a convergent view. She was resolutely not in an analytical mood of cultural differences and was therefore not engaged in acceptance or rejection of cultural practices and products.

In the second round of entries this detachment is still quite obvious. A concrete example of this detachment occurred when she was asked to comment on a current event and reported that

she had not witnessed anything major, nor had engaged any discussions related to politics. She explained this in part by her answer to the previous question in the same round:

“No matter if you know anything about politics or not in America, it is very obvious that people are not content with the current system or we are constantly criticizing our government’s actions. We have t-shirts, hats, bumper stickers etc sic] that all clearly portray our stance on political issues and I have not seen that in France at all. It is maybe because I haven’t looked in the right places but it doesn’t seem like politics comes up as casually in conversation in France as it does in America, which makes me think people are either content or they do not feel the obligation to voice their opinions at all times.”

It is important to note that while Anne was in France, *l’affaire DSK*¹⁹ was present in every TV program, radio show and on the front page of most French newspapers and magazines.

Discussion of the issue was omnipresent and it is surprising that Anne did not seem to know about it. Although her lack of awareness may be explained by her low proficiency in French, it is more likely that her ignorance about this highly publicized event was related to the fact that she had created her own community of L2 speakers that did not include French people.

The community of native French speakers—the world outside Anne’s world—did not seem to have a place in that artificially constructed community. She seemed disinterested in

¹⁹ Dominique Strauss-Kahn, former head of the IMF was widely perceived to be the next Socialist candidate for the upcoming elections in France. On 14 May 2011, a 32-year-old maid, Nafissatou Diallo, alleged that Strauss-Kahn had sexually assaulted her after she entered his suite. Strauss-Kahn was formally indicted on 18 May, and placed on house arrest. Strauss-Kahn was released from house arrest on July 1st, after the prosecution filed a motion to drop all charges against Strauss-Kahn. They stated that they were not convinced of his culpability beyond a reasonable doubt due to serious issues in the complainant's credibility and inconclusive physical evidence. Retrieved 04/20/2012 <http://www.liberation.fr/affaire-dsk-arrestation-new-york-agression-sexuelle,100041>

knowing more about the host community and it is evident that the other members of her cohort may have shared the same feeling. There is no evidence that the DSK scandal was discussed among her cohort, and if it were, it did not affect the ways in which Anne navigated the target community.

In the third round of questions, although there is a shift in the acceptance of different cultural practices, it is unlikely that Anne managed to integrate the local community, nor did she develop enough cultural competency to display “converging perceptions of Self and Other.” However, she developed a critical way of thinking about how she felt early on in the study abroad experience and she developed sensitivity to the perception others had of Americans in general, and to herself in particular.

“I have witnessed first hand what it is when people say Americans can be awful. I have noticed that Americans have grown up in America thinking and being told we are the best and the world’s super power. So when we arrive in a new country, we automatically think that, yes, people in France speak French but they also speak English when that is not the right way to think. We also believe that when we talk louder and faster in English, then for some reason, a French person will better understand us-not the case. I think Americans also try to force our own customs and culture on other cultures, it is hard for us to accept that other people and customs are different.”

Anne did not explain which event triggered this realization because she interacted mostly with her small group of peers. Perhaps the visit from her boyfriend or observing tourists prompted this kind of response. Regardless, we are far removed from the Anne who felt intimidated and feared ridicule and humiliation in the very first entries of her journals. In an authoritative voice, she described how the “Others,” the French, may perceive members of her L1/C1 community.

Interestingly enough, she did not seem to include herself fully in the category of “Americans.” It seems as though she positions herself in between having access to knowledge that was unavailable to those who had not spent a substantial amount of time in abroad. Her choice of pronouns is telling: “I have witnessed first hand what it is when people say Americans can be awful.” At first glance she continues to speak about “we,” (“we are the best and the world’s super power. So when we arrive in a new country, we automatically think that, yes, people in France speak French but they also speak English when that is not the right way to think.”). However, there is an unmistakable dimension of irony in her description of “Americans”, indicating she no longer felt in that category and even that she had access to knowledge that other Americans do not have. This triangular approach (the French-me-Americans) is different in Anne’s entries, and this new dimension to her narration proves once again a shifting perspective on the C1 and C2.

Perception of Language and Language use:

At the start of the summer, Anne was very focused on her anxiety associated with evolving in a different L2 community. Her early entries on culture and language are focused on how this impacted her negatively and how difficult she found it to be different. Even after classes started, she expressed her fear of being ridiculed when trying out what she had learned in the classroom: “I was afraid to use the little French I knew for fear of being ridiculed.” The feelings of pride and humiliation are more present in Anne’s writing than in any of the other participants in this study. This presence could maybe be explained by her personality: Anne may have been sensitive to anxiety. Anne felt less anxiety when an authority figure with whom she had regular interactions, such as her professor or dinner family, mentored her language use. When she described her “dinner mom” early on in the journal, she said: “In recent dinners she has started

correcting our French, which we all find very helpful and fun.” But then she immediately followed that comment by stating: “Our conversations get awkward at times when no one has anything to say.” Anne had a hard time navigating her language use and the emotional burden associated with it. Anne was kind in describing her host family, but critical about their family dynamic and of the mother’s passivity. Her limited language use and her regular interactions with them seemed to have fostered her role of observer rather than encouraging her to play an active role as a speaker.

Her attitude of external observer seemed ever present when she answered the second round of questions. When describing the French classroom, she seemed more interested in reflecting on how it prepared her to understand the world that surrounded her, a space that fosters cross-cultural understanding rather than focusing on L2 communication: “The French classroom is a great way to place the things you are learning and seeing every day.” Anne does not seem to need to express the anxiety that surrounds language learning at this moment of her study abroad experience. The negative adjectives that characteristic of her early entries are absent in the second round of questions. She reflected on her emotional response to language learning at the end of the summer: “I feel like as long as you try to speak the language, have some humility, (...) the French are actually very nice, funny, enjoyable, and they really appreciate your effort.” Whereas she focused more on how her language use affected her in the beginning of the experience, Anne started focusing her attention to how her language use affected her interlocutors. This awareness is proof that Anne includes the Other in her experience, in that she had truly moved toward interaction rather than mere language performance. It seems obvious in her later journal entries that this interactive mode of language use had a positive impact on how she perceived her position as a language learner: “I have learned how to humiliate myself every

day while communicating and learn from it instead of getting down on myself.” Although she still spoke in terms of humiliation, Anne seemed to have accepted her position as a speaker with low proficiency. Rather than focusing on how speaking French affected her, she seemed to have found a true satisfaction in the positive responses she received from her interactions with the L2 speakers.

b. Profile Tara

Tara participated in Vanderbilt-in-France during the Spring 2012 semester. Tara is a multicultural participant – her Father is German and her mother is Chinese. She does not report speaking German or Chinese, and reports English as the language spoken at home. Tara is specializing in Molecular and Cellular Biology and French.

Language contact profile:

Tara lived with one other American woman, and a native French speaker with whom she immediately bonded. Her French roommate was originally from Caen, the city in which Tara had previously studied abroad for two weeks. She reported not only an extensive use of French in class and at the Vanderbilt-in-France center, but also at home with her French roommate. Tara and her American roommate tried to speak as much French at home as possible. Her network of French speakers included her roommates, the tutors and staff at the center as well as her host family. Tara took a class at the *Institut de Sciences Politiques*, but she reports not having met French friends there. Tara reported that she used social media on a daily basis to stay in touch with her friends in the US and she also blogged for the Vanderbilt student journal. She reported calling home once a week.

Perceptions of the C2:

One of the first things Tara noted when she arrived in France was the difference in clothing. She compared the way people dress in France by comparing it to the ways her peers dress at Vanderbilt. However, she stated that contrary to what she is used to seeing at Vanderbilt, “French people of all ages are fashion forward.” It is interesting that at this early stage of the study abroad experience, Tara’s frame of reference was directly linked to her home institution. She had yet to develop a framework of reference that exceeds the familiar, and her observations were fully detached from her sense of Self. Tara remained an external observer throughout the semester abroad. The detachment remained quite constant over the course of her stay in Aix-en-Provence. However, Tara was a keen observer. She seemed to take great pleasure in understanding certain customs and practices that differ from what she is used to and tried to understand them from the French perspective. She is very intentional in her analysis of the target community, and she is aware of her tendency to make generalizations. Tara also constantly applies a process of noticing and verification, either through reading the press or speaking to native French speakers:

“...(racism is) something that really shocked me, which I have chosen to generalize to France as a whole based on previous news articles I have read...”

“it seems less acceptable for women to play sports on the streets here. I only ever see boys playing soccer or basketball and upon asking a friend if girls ever play soccer at the parks, he replied that it is just not done.”

It is clear from the first entries onwards that her French roommate was her preferred source of verifications. She seemed to have developed her friendship with Nora by taking every

opportunity she had to inquire about the things that puzzled her. This process resulted in a very analytical approach toward French society. She paid very close attention to the cultural attitudes that differ from her familiar framework. Her entries showed a very fine understanding of how differences in approaches such as the individual vs. the collective operate in France:

“The French seem to be more proud of themselves, individually. In America, we are very patriotic and therefore, as a nation are not very modest; however, individually we are less proud of our personal successes...”

Tara’s penchant for analytical thought appears to have held her back in integrating into a local social network. It was as if by asking herself all those questions and in trying to understand them she remained at a safe distance from involving herself with her local network of peers and instructors. She approached the study abroad experience as a learning experience and this process was one in which there was a clear separation between her set of values and practices, and those of the others. Throughout the rounds of questions, her analysis remained completely external, and she showed at no point internalization or adoption of the practices of the host community.

Tara hardly ever mentioned her friends or family in her journal entries. She commented about the lack of interaction with members of the target community, and she shares her impression that the French seemed reluctant to ‘invest’ in transient friendships:

“I have met and interacted with maybe a handful of French people who could potentially become friends, ... people don’t want to become friends with someone who is definitely leaving.... it is definitely difficult”

Her attitude toward friendship did not change over the course of the semester. It is as if she decided early on that the effort was not going to bear fruit. Actively investing in the target

community did not seem to be worthwhile. She chose instead to invest in her friendships with those who were part of the network Vanderbilt-in-France provided her: peers, administrators and tutors. Although her writing implied that she was close to the Vanderbilt-in-France network, she did not describe them in detail. Tara did not mention social outings, nor did she describe the excursions or the others participants in the study abroad program. Her writing implies that she spent most of her weekends in Aix-en-Provence. In spite of seeking to spend a lot of time on her own and only fragmentary and indirect descriptions of her social interactions, it does not appear that she felt isolated. Rather, the analytical approach of viewing and describing her experience may be indicative of the ways in which she built social relationships, probably even at home. Her detachment appears to be indicative of the ways in which Tara thought of her study abroad experience, and how it affected her. Rather than reflecting on the semester abroad from a collective viewpoint, she was more interested in how it affected her personally.

The last thing that showed her perception of French society was linked to the French pace of life. Like Anne, Tara was intrigued by the slow paced daily routine of French people and by the perceived relaxed life style of southern French people.

“anytime between 10am and 5pm, the cafes are completely packed with people drinking coffees and glasses of wine while the streets are crowded with shoppers and walkers, alike. You may wonder – *Who are these people? Why aren't they at work? Do they work?* – and all I can say is that I'm really not sure.”

The statement showed again an exterior observational mood, and one she seemed to not comprehend nor seemingly willing to adopt. Tara rarely judged in her journal entries, but the curiosity surrounding why people were not working between 10am and 5pm could be perceived as a criticism. The French way of living is just not how Tara was used to living her life, or

applicable to her own routine. Interestingly enough, contrary to the majority of entries in earlier rounds, where Tara stated an observation and then proceeded to an analysis or report of verification, this statement on café-life was one she did not report verifying. This may be linked to the fact that none of the people with whom she interacted were professionals, or people that adopt this lifestyle. Tara may have concluded she did not have the appropriate person to ask these questions. Alternatively it is possible that Tara perceived this difference in pace of life to be incompatible with her own, and she therefore was not interested in verifying it.

Despite Tara's attitude as an external observer with a careful critical distance, she reported greatly enjoying her time in Aix-en-Provence. "Food here is better.", or "This culture is too rich to get enough of in one semester." There remained a strong sense of idealization and excitement that was linked to the culture she observed throughout the semester abroad. The unfamiliar continued to intrigue her, or at least the constant questioning and observation of the foreign is a process she greatly enjoyed.

Perceptions of the Self:

Tara appears to have a very strong sense of Self – of her values and her definition of who she is as an individual. In contrast to her peers, Tara seemed to be at ease navigating a foreign culture. The fact that the experience did not destabilize her as much as other participants may be accounted for by her multicultural background. This may also explain why she seemed so at ease positioning herself as an outside observer, without reporting frustration over the non-inclusion in the target culture. The only instances in which she spoke about how the experience affected her are instances in which she praised the choice she made to study abroad: "I love being able to travel and learn about different cultures. All in all, it's been great and definitely one of the best choices I've made." Tara seems constant throughout her journal entries. Contrary to the other

participants in this study, her report is quite posed throughout the semester. Tara's writing does not contain great emotional responses to her observations of the C2 and the local community. Rather she seems confident and at ease as an outside observer, a position she does not report wanting to change over the course of the semester.

Diverging perceptions of Self and Other:

Tara expressed sensitivity to the question of racism and its perception in her everyday life. At several points in her journal she reported having witnessed racist situations and how French culture is characterized by this prejudice. Tara was the only student who participated in this study who developed this acute sensitivity and her observations were consistent throughout her journaling. Tara was the only multicultural and biracial participant in the study, which may be one of the reasons for these specific observations in her writing. Another reason for her attitude may be that Tara participated in the Vanderbilt-in-France session during the French elections of 2012. As part of her coursework for her French Press class, Tara worked on the Front National, the French nationalist, extreme right movement that received a large portion of the votes during the presidential campaign. Interested in current events and specifically the ways in which issues like immigration and assimilation are approached in France and described in the press, Tara may have been more attentive to these questions than other participants, both through her coursework and her personal story. She described the following anecdote in the first round of questions:

“This leads us to something that really shocked me, which I have chosen to generalize to France as a whole based on previous news articles I have read. At one point during a conversation, the burkas of Muslim women came up and the host family started to talk about how they do not like burkas and think it is inappropriate to wear.

Perhaps this is just because I grew up in a very culturally diverse city, but this was the first time in my life that I really felt like I was experiencing racism – that is if we call Muslim people are a race.”

In the second round of questions, she again commented on racism and stated that the fact she perceived it, as a general sentiment among the French.

“From having learned about Le Pen and general sentiments in various European countries concerning immigrants, this did not surprise me *that* much, but it still made me really appreciate the melting-pot that is the United States.”

In the last round she described the French as following:

“French people are chic, relaxed, and racist.”

Tara’s observations were again characterized by a very stable, and external observation of her perceptions: she reported the same observations over the course of the semester, reported verification and confirmed that her perception did not change. Even after verification, she consciously chose to generalize her feelings to “the French”, and even to “various European countries”.

Converging perceptions of Self and Other:

Unsurprisingly from our previous observations, Tara did not seem to show a shift that proved a converging perception of Self and Other. Tara never used pronouns like “we” or “us” to refer to the French and her. She also did not report any instances in which one of her perspectives changed. Tara, from the start of her experience abroad through the end of her stay in Aix-en-Provence remained very much an outsider but she seemed to be quite comfortable in that situation. This may be in part due to the fact that Tara is, even at home, very much at ease with being different. This may be a position she may not have been conscious of, or maybe one that

she intentionally fostered. Tara was an outsider, even at home, or at Vanderbilt. She belonged to a minority, was very academically driven—excelling in two completely opposite specializations (neurosciences and language). The position she seemed to foster as an outsider seemed to be one she adopted also at home, which may explain the constancy and ease in which she stayed quite remote for the target community and C2.

Perception of language and language use:

Tara proved to be a motivated language learner and made use of many opportunities to converse in the target language. As noted in the discussion of the language contact profile, she even spoke French with her American roommate and she reported participating actively in the dinner conversations with her host family.

“As far as conversations go, most of it is centered towards what we have done during the day, what we plan to do at night or during the weekend, and our classes.

However, from time to time – as I’m sure arises in many a French family – discussions about politics and politicians come up.”

When Tara commented on her language use, she did not seem to feel the need to comment about the difficulties she encountered as an L2 speaker. Rather than describing the conversations in which she participated, or her struggles, she commented mainly on the content of those conversations. There is only one instance in her journal entries in which she commented on the difficulty she encountered with language use, but she described homesickness rather than daily difficulties in conversing:

“there’s those awful days where it’s so much more difficult to think and speak in French, it just feels like all of the learning has been a waste if you can’t use it.”

Tara was one of the more advanced students who participated in the Vanderbilt-in-France session, as she had already taken six French language courses at Vanderbilt prior to her departure. Her advanced proficiency in French made her feel at ease relative to her peers. The fact that she reported often verifying her observations of French culture with her francophone friends showed that she had no difficulty expressing herself in the L2 on a variety of subjects. It is interesting to note that this is the only situation which she describes as “frustrating” in her journal entries over the course of the semester. One of the distinctive differences between this report and the reports on frustration from other participants in this study is that Tara seems frustrated with herself. Her frustration does not stem from how the French treat her, or a sense of insecurity in interacting with the target community. Tara refers to it as “homesickness,” although one detects a reference to linguistic challenges. In implying that this frustration stems from homesickness, it is reasonable to conclude that Tara had days during the experience where she missed her familiar cultural and linguistic environment. It is particularly interesting that it is only in this situation that she hints at her sense of Self is slightly destabilized.

c. Profile Will

Will is a junior at Vanderbilt and started the Vanderbilt-in-France program with the minimum language requirement. He finished FR103 (Intermediate French) the semester prior to his departure for Aix-en-Provence. Will had difficulty speaking and writing in French. Will is majoring in Aesthetics and Art History and believed that studying in France would be an advantage for his professional development.

Language contact profile:

Will lived with one advanced level student who had spent a semester and a summer in Aix-en-Provence prior to Will's arrival. He was also living with a native-speaker French roommate. Even so, Will reported a limited use of French. He admitted to conversing mostly in English with his American roommate. Will reported that communication with his French roommate was so difficult that he avoided it. He used the fact that his linguistic competence in French is quite low to explain why he did not feel that they were very close. He felt that he was making huge efforts to converse in French while he was at the Vanderbilt-in-France center, and needed a break when he got home. His reported network of French speakers was therefore mainly limited to his professors and the tutors as well as his dinner family. Contrary to other participants in the study, Will did not report to have frequent interactions with French shopkeepers, nor that he tried to shop at the same places to establish a daily routine and interact frequently with the target community.

Will reported being very active on Facebook and called friends and family on a daily basis on Skype. His family visited for two weeks during the eighth and ninth week of the program. He reported not staying alone on the weekends. Will either travelled around Europe with English speaking friends or entertained those who came to visit them in Aix-en-Provence on a near-weekly basis.

Perception of the C2:

Will was very aware of his difference in Aix-en-Provence. He reported feeling like an outsider throughout the semester he studied in Aix-en-Provence. One of the first things he mentioned in his journal entries is how he adapted his style of clothes to fit the French fashion as

an attempt to blend in with the locals. Despite his enthusiasm at the time of his arrival he described quickly feeling quite isolated in Aix-en-Provence and how hard it was to meet French people. His American roommate Frieda, who had spent eight months in Aix-en-Provence prior to Will's arrival seemed to play a role early on in verifying C2 behaviors. One of the main difficulties Will commented on is that of not being able to meet locals:

“My American roommate (...) she really didn't have any (French Friends), even after being here almost a year. She said the French students know you are leaving after the semester, so they don't really take the time to invest in you.”

Frieda's acceptance of her role as an outsider appears to justify Will's attitude: her failure to integrate in a local network accounted for why Will did not actively seek to find his place in the local community. Frieda played the role of French 'expert', as Will turned to her when he needed to verify practices he had difficulty understanding. Although Will had access to a local native French speaker at home, he seemed to find it easier to turn to an outside observer.

Will reported that he did not feel like he had to change his interests as he moved abroad (“...to be fair as well, I rarely check the news here, nor do I really back home”). He was not interested in the French political scene, despite the fact that the country was having presidential elections during his semester abroad.

One of the very interesting traits that Will demonstrated throughout this study was an ability to describe how he perceived his inability to adapt to the cultural norms of the country where he chose to spend a semester:

“The immersion into a different culture has proven difficult but educational. I think the most difficulty arises from how similar but intrinsically different French culture is. So much is similar and comparable to American culture that it is hard to not

constantly hold the French culture up to American standards, which can prove frustrating. You feel you are in a very similar world but with a few major defining characteristics missing.”

Will found it very hard to separate those practices he considered American from those he observed in France. His experience abroad was not an immersion experience, although he may have perceived it as such. Will was abroad with a group of eight other American study abroad participants, who all attended the same university, and had little interaction with the target community. Will seemed to argue that the fact that at first sight French culture being very close to American culture made it harder to adapt. The fact that there were, according to Will, so many similarities between the two cultures made it hard not to compare both cultures. His early responses make clear that he held his own culture as a standard against which he compared the similarities and differences with the C2. Will described this process of comparison as “educational”. Will’s responses appear to confirm that he found the comparative mode to be more “frustrating” than constructive. Of real interest here is the realization that he remained anchored within his C1. Will was frustrated by his inability to move beyond this C1-based comparative mode. Whether or not this stagnation was influenced by his limited linguistic competence, it is clear that he remained non-invested in the target culture.

The animosity he perceived both on the American side and on the French side seemed to be encouraged by his cohort’s group dynamic. It is easier to be as detached as possible from the target community than to face potential failure at integrating into it. Remarks such as “(the French are) arrogant. That was my impression upon arrival, and remains my impression now” capture Will’s inability to question his own attitude. He transferred much of the responsibility of his lack of integration on a perceived refusal of the French to accept foreigners in their social

network. Also, Will's perception seemed to be influenced by what Frieda shared with him at the beginning of the semester. We are left wondering to what extent her attitude influenced Will's. Could it be her position as the "expert" influenced the lack of incentive that Will demonstrated for integration? If she had succeeded, or had said it was possible to meet French friends, might that have encouraged Will?

Perceptions of the Self:

It seems that Will's enthusiasm before his departure influenced his arrival in France negatively. In idealizing the French culture and people, Will expected to immediately integrate into a new social network. He seemed to have anticipated the adoption of practices and products proper to France as an easy process, one he was eager to initiate and embrace. He reported however:

"My first impression of France was more culture shock than I had expected (...) I have never traveled abroad before, but assumed I was confident enough to slip right into the culture. I was wrong. I quickly became a foreigner, a status no one is particularly comfortable with."

While some could have perceived their position as an outsider as a privileged and interesting one, Will could not accept non-inclusion. His descriptions of the French and how he interacted with them were self-centered, in that he seemed to perceive his difference as an outsider only as it affected him. Will did not seem to be able to fully engage in the process of bridging the linguistic and cultural difference with the Other. The lack of that interaction seemed to affect him on a very emotional level: "Suddenly I was extremely conscious of my own existence, because I suddenly felt everyone around was extremely conscious of me." Will's relation to the Other was one in which there seems to be no place for the Other: the relationship is one that is completely

reflected on himself. Statement such as “I worry they are judging me” illustrate a very self-conscious mode in which every situation of social interaction with the target community was one that highlighted Will’s position as a foreigner.

Will compared every unfamiliar situation to one he felt he had encountered before. “This sudden uprooting I realized felt very similar to my arrival at Vanderbilt.” Will’s attitude of holding on to a familiar situation could be translated to a reluctance to lose his perceived control over his study abroad experience. Rather than letting go, Will needed to understand how he should act, or how the Other perceived him. He never mentioned his peers, which seems to indicate he did not feel uncertainty about his difference among people with whom he shared a common set of cultural practices. The fact that he extensively travelled with different members of the group also seems to indicate that Will was well integrated and popular in the study abroad group. However, he was aware of everything that made him different in his interaction with “the French”: his linguistic competence, his homosexuality (“I really was uncertain about what to expect coming to France as a gay man.”) and the way he dressed (“I dress my best and hope people assume I am a local.”). Despite his efforts, he felt that he did not succeed the degree of integration achieved when he came to college: “I experienced the reality of culture shock that I hadn’t really expected. That first week put my mind in a place it had never been before, and feelings of regret quickly filled the confusion.” Will often referred to culture shock in his e-journal, though he did not elaborate on what that meant for him. “Culture-shock” to Will seems to equate to non-acceptance, or at least the struggle to feel acknowledged in the same way as he felt he was at home: “You have to remember you are no longer in the normal life.”

Will had an exceptional ability to describe his own perception of the complex emotional response he had after his arrival in France. He also describes in detail how he dealt with not

being capable of securing the same space he commanded in his college social network: “I think I very much expected my college life to continue, but just in France. I realized quickly though, that was not the case. Instead I was first and foremost in France, and my college self would have to adjust first.” He questioned that which defined him in America. The traits that allowed him to integrate a certain number of networks in America did not provide him with the same opportunities in France. Interestingly enough, Will continued over the course of the semester to focus on himself. One example is, “I have spent so much time with my family but I feel they have no idea who I actually am.” He never questioned how he was perceived by his host-family, but rather focused on how he perceived them, and how this relationship affected him. Even towards the end of his journaling there is little evidence that he had made a radical turn in the perception of the Other. To Will, his relation to the others, or the French, were about how he perceived them, how he felt they perceived him, and how those perceptions affected him.

Diverging perceptions of Self and Other:

At the start of Will’s study abroad experience he felt rejected by the target culture. Highly influenced by his initial stereotypical view of a “sophisticated” culture, he believed he would quickly become part of it by adopting a set of rules and practices. When he realized that this was not as easy as he had anticipated, his initial reaction was antagonistic. “The sophisticated air that first drew me to French culture quickly soured to snobbery in my day-to-day interactions. I felt they automatically dismissed all things not French, especially Americans.” The responsibility for his difficulty integrating was completely placed on the French. He no longer spoke of “sophistication”, but of “snobbery”. His hope for integration was reduced to dismissal, and his comparative framework included a strict separation between what was “French” and “American.” Will did however seem to analyze this difference in a more subdued way as the

semester went on. In his second round of questions he acknowledged the simplistic view of seeing the French as merely rude: “It does no good to count etiquette points, but rather accept we comport ourselves in two very separate ways. Considering that difference has been one of my most productive activities abroad.” While he continued to acknowledge a difference, which did not seem to be attenuated, the way he perceived that difference evolved. He acknowledged that viewing the French as rude was too simplistic and that their behavior was just different. It is however interesting that he described himself as completely separated from the C2 and, while he no longer seemed to judge the C2, he continued to “consider a difference.” This is clearly a process that he increasingly adopted until his departure from France: “I still cannot strongly say whether I loved it or not, whether all my discovery was for the better or worse. But I do know it was something productive, something awakening.” Will appeared to have accepted that he was different, and that the assimilation he thought would take place prior to his departure had made him more aware of himself through the consideration of his difference with the C2. This impression was confirmed when he stated: “I appreciate my solitude for the self-discovery that took place.” While Will did not seem to have been able to fulfill his initial goals for his study abroad experience (total integration), and while he felt isolated by the C2, he did acknowledge that it had had an impact on the ways he perceives himself. In considering the use of pronouns in the paragraphs that are cited (“I”, “my”), no convergence took place. Will was still exclusively centered on considering how study abroad affected him.

Converging perceptions of Self and Other:

While Will was very isolated from the C2 and had no interaction with members of the target community, he did benefit greatly from externally observing the others. While it should be noted that his observations remained stereotypical throughout the entries in his journal, Will did

adopt and accept some of the behaviors he identified in the C2. This analysis resulted in Will's acceptance of the social role he came to play in Europe. Rather than adopting the party lifestyle he enjoyed in America, he appeared to have become more comfortable in smaller groups and being alone. "I found the American's place abroad, which was often humbling. I learned about myself, and realized I didn't have to be drinking across Europe to be studying abroad. I could stay in and think." Will was very conscious of his nationality while in France. It is not just that he felt foreign, but he felt American, and very much a representative of his country. This attitude may be explained by his limited linguistic competence, or by a great sensitivity to expressions of nationality and questions of language and national identity. Will also appeared to recognize that the social networks he relied on in America could be a hindrance to self-discovery or analytical behavior. For example, rather than expressing a void as far as the non-existent gay communitarian life was concerned in Aix-en-Provence, he views it as liberating not to partake in those activities. Rather than expressing how he missed the very open and celebratory dynamic of the gay network he relied on at home, one may interpret his entry as one that merely expressed how much he misses the social aspect of his gay fraternity.

"I find France to be more respectful towards sexuality. It is definitely a matter considered private and not for the public domain of discussion. I respect this agreement, but do miss the productive experiences I had back home in a fully celebratory community. Much can be learned from seeing how others handle your similar situation."

All aspects of Will's life seemed to have been impacted by his experience abroad: the way in which he perceived his nationality, the manner in which he imposed himself through fashion and

his outgoing behavior, his relationship towards his sexuality and the dynamics of his social networks on which he was used to relying at home.

Perception of language and language use:

Will expressed feelings of suffering due to his limited capacity to function in French. Although he was prepared to struggle a little more than his peers, and despite warnings of his former professors, he did not expect such a long period of adaptation. In his journal entries he expressed especially how self-conscious he was when speaking to native L2 speakers. He especially expresses frustration about interacting with his host family. Will's L2 network was limited to his professors, tutors and dinner hosts. The reason why he may especially mention feeling frustrated by interacting with his host family was probably linked to the fact that he accepted feedback from those who were in a position of authority. He did not mention encountering difficulty interacting with the Vanderbilt-in-France staff. However, from the start of the semester he expressed his apprehension to participate in dinner conversations: "I was a bit nervous for my family dinners. I soon realized how quickly I became lost in French conversation, and had a difficult time contributing." Will felt especially vulnerable when the host family members took on a role he felt was not reserved for them, i.e. when they corrected him or made comments on his linguistic competence. "They correct our pronunciation and sentence structure. I will admit the process is frustrating." Or again: "The wife has been particularly critical of me lately, telling me she never understands me, and that I would fail a pronunciation test. I realize its [sic] mostly said in jest, but I can't help but feel a little discouraged." Again, Will used his limited competency in French as an explanation why he had such trouble establishing a network of native speaker friends: "I can chat a little with my French roommate

but it usually ends there. We have gone out together and I consider her a nice girl, but we don't really bond. We get along mostly because we live together.”

It seems interesting that although Will expressed an intense desire to meet French people at the start of his experience abroad, he did not take advantage of the network that the study abroad program had set up for him. Although his roommate would be a “safe” person to interact with, he quickly set her aside as someone he could not “really bond” with. It is difficult to assess whether this was due to the fact that they had nothing in common, or whether he was not ready to take the risk of being confronted with his limitations in French. An alternative explanation could be that she did not correspond to *his* idea of what French people are like, and that he was therefore not ready to invest in a friendship with her.

d. Profile Carrie

Carrie was part of the Summer 2012 Vanderbilt-in-France session, and took advanced level courses (Advanced Grammar and Conversation). A senior at Vanderbilt, she specializes in Human and Organizational Development at Peabody College.

Language contact profile:

Carrie reports having extensively studied Spanish in high school. She also reports starting French in advance of her coursework at Vanderbilt and taking two advanced French courses at Vanderbilt-in-France. She was one of the participants in the summer session who was much more proficient in French than the majority of participants. The housing program matched her with one French and two American suitemates. In addition to her French suitemate, Carrie reports her local L2 network was comprised of the Vanderbilt-in-France administrators, her French professors and the tutors. Considering this network of French speakers was mainly linked

to the Vanderbilt-in-France center, Carrie does not report speaking French outside the center, except when she goes out with some of the French tutors. Even then, she mainly speaks English. It is relevant to note that Carrie's group of friends in the Vanderbilt-in-France summer program was composed primarily of low-proficiency speakers. This situation did not seem to foster communication in the L2 outside of the classroom setting. Carrie reports an extensive use of social media and reports the use of Skype on a daily basis to keep in touch with her American friends. Carrie also reports calling her family several times a week.

Perceptions of the C2:

Carrie had a very interesting perception of what constitutes culture. To her, the French culture was a series of rules, which she sought to understand and apply. Not applying 'the rules' was behaving improperly, and she seemed to have access to a network of French people with whom she discussed the appropriate ways in which to behave: "The French culture is hard to understand and I am grateful to know a few French people that can tell me how to behave properly." The rule-governed nature of her approach to culture translated in an acute feeling of stress and anxiety that she described throughout her observations. It also translated through other binary oppositions: appropriate vs. inappropriate, likes vs. dislikes, realistic vs. unrealistic. Her statements were often structured around those binary observations: she would state something she perceived as interesting or positive, and then follow by systematically adding how it affected her negatively, or how it would not fit into her own culture: "I like that the pace is slow in Aix sometimes, but I also miss being busy," "I am not used to doing that and do not want to get used to that lifestyle either because I know it is not realistic," "I enjoy the beauty of France, it's history, it's emphasis on rules, it's leisurely attitude towards the day, but I am not used to it."

Carrie adopted a very external role of observer to the target culture. She seemed to only invest in relationships that made her everyday interactions easier, but she did not express an interest in initiating relationships with people with whom she was not affiliated through Vanderbilt-in-France. She admitted she was intimidated and that she preferred being around people who were part of the program because they were “kind” and “interested”. People who were beyond the Vanderbilt-in-France network were described in terms of incomprehension and occasionally hostility. It was interesting to note that the people she does not have an affiliation with are the ones that she labeled “the French” or “Frenchmen”. People who worked for the Vanderbilt-in-France center, or her tutors and roommates did not seem to be part of the target community in her conception.

She described the tutors in the following way: “The tutors are my acquaintances and they are all nice. I get along with them because we respect each other and they are patient and encouraging. They are also inclusive when going out, which is very nice. They want to help us.” Or her host family: “They are very nice and understanding (...)” It seems as if Carrie only felt close to those who considered her status as a foreigner as normal and non-problematic and who were willing to make the effort to give her special attention. She perceived as hostile those people who treated her as or made her feel like as a foreigner. One example of this was her experience with her teacher of French grammar. This particular professor was French and set standards in the same way as she would for any foreign student in a French academic setting. She did not speak English in the classroom and did not see the students beyond the classroom setting. Carrie developed an intense dislike of this particular professor because she felt that in not speaking English to her at all, and treating her as one of many students, she was not interested in Carrie as a person: “My other class is more difficult because there is a strong language and

cultural barrier. My professor does not seem interested in our culture and is someone distant of us.” Because she did not “show interest” in her status as an American, the professor was perceived as distant, and this attitude seemed to be a determining factor in the dislike Carrie developed towards her. Carrie described another professor whom she liked a lot: “One of my teachers is very enthusiastic in class and very friendly. She seems eager to get to know her students and is interested in our culture and phrases in America.” It seemed that the fact that this particular professor had a good understanding of American culture and spoke English at intervals helped Carrie to bond with her.

Another aspect of her life abroad that occupied a lot of space in her writing was her perceived relationship between men and women. Carrie was intrigued by her lack of understanding of the codes when it comes to seduction and flirtation, and meeting men of her age.

“Girls ignore boys and boys are usually overly flirtatious. Girls are more aggressive against guys. Couples are much more open and display their affection in public. Men are more aggressive at flirting with girls than girls are with guys” (...)

“I did not like how the men acted here at all. I do not like that you cannot meet French people easily and that the girls are very standoff-ish, but the men are overly forward and just plain creepy.” (...) Gender differences are very interesting when it comes to relationships. Instead of girls trying to get the attentions of the boys that do not care in America, the girls in France do not care about the boys who try so hard to get the attention of any girl.”

It would be misplaced to speculate why Carrie seemed so interested in trying to understand the codes when it came to meeting French men, but it seems safe to say that she did not understand,

or wanted to understand “the game.” Whether or not seduction was a large part of how she identified as a woman, she described with great frustration how she could not get used to the codes, and how the clubbing scene in France was too different from what she was used to in America. It is interesting to note how much space her analysis and criticism took throughout her writing, and she addressed it at every round of questions. Within this framework, Carrie did not seem to find her place as a woman. She refused to become part of the dynamic, and continued to describe gender relations in the same negative terms throughout her study abroad experience. Instead of trying to understand them, by process of verification with her French acquaintances, Carrie labeled gender relations as “creepy”, “weird” or “aggressive.”

Perceptions of the Self:

Carrie’s description of her time abroad was very self-centered. Description was either very objective and distanced or, more frequently, focused on the things that affected her daily life, most often negatively. She also described her distrust of the French and specifically of French men: “It is difficult to be a part of French culture because you must be introduced to everyone so it is very hard to make friends and I am scared to talk to guys. I feel like I can never trust any of them.” Carrie seemed very ill at ease with her status as a foreigner, which seemed to feed some insecurities and a sense of extreme consciousness of her Self. When she wrote: “I feel uncomfortable and embarrassed much of the time,” she was not developing her anxiety over L2 use, as other participants described, but rather the way she felt on a daily basis. This anxiety affected the ways she interacted with people outside of her network and seemed to feed her paranoia when it came to who had good intentions for her and her peers. Even her host family, with whom she had a quite positive relationship, cannot be fully trusted: “Sometimes I feel like we are their homework and our dinners are never long - never lasting more than 50 minutes,

which I think is not very French?” Her insecurities and general distrust resulted in a very self-contained social environment and developed in a rejection of French culture and the French in general.

Diverging perceptions of Self and Other:

Carrie did not believe that she could live in France for an extended period of time. She missed home and her busy life in Nashville. Rather than trying to adapt her pace of life, and trying to understand the different ways in which different cultures chose to live, she rejected these practices: “I am not used to doing that and do not want to get used to that lifestyle either because I know it is not realistic.”

She blamed the French for her inability to integrate into a C2 social network and did not question her own attitude in her journal entries. Rather than trying to understand the difficulties she encountered both from their perspective and her own attitude, she blamed her inability to connect only on the Others. The products and practices of the target culture seemed to be incompatible with her identity as an American.

“When I think of a French person, I think of someone who is very guarded against others and independent. I think of people that are very emotional and expressive, when they are frustrated or upset. I think of people that hold themselves to a strict set of customs and principles and thus they are unable to understand why other people do not abide by them or understand them. I think of people that do not like to work and prefer to lead leisurely lives. I think of people that like to lead private lives.”

Carrie also indirectly expresses her frustration when it comes to cultural differences: “I have not liked how there is an air with people here that is very assuming- people assume we know how to get around and what to do all the time. They have little time to explain things to us

and it never feels totally put together.” She described how frustrated she felt that French people did not explain to her how she should be behaving, or how they perceive her. Other than being a very unrealistic view of how one navigates a foreign culture, these comments also show that Carrie was not taking advantage of the network she had at her disposal. She concluded that French people are arrogant, but she does not seem to have inquired about the cultural differences. Her comments did not seem to be directed to a specific target group, nor does it seem to make reference to any particular experience. Rather, it appeared that Carrie had strengthened her perception over the course of the summer. She concluded that French people were not interested in investing time and effort in her, because of her status as a foreigner. In generalizing and strengthening this perception over the course of the summer, Carrie not only cut herself off from the target community, she also provided herself with the ideal excuse to not have to interact with a local network. The stance that Carrie developed may well have been a defense mechanism. In looking for excuses not to have to interact with the target community, she was protecting herself from the possibility of rejection.

Converging perceptions of Self and Other:

Carrie’s journal entries offer little evidence of converging perceptions of Self and Other. She did note towards the end of her experience that she found the study abroad experience to be “reflective.” “I have found it very interesting to see how people live their daily lives here and compare them to my own. It has been a very reflective experience.” It is obvious that Carrie is very detached from the “people” she observed. Her journal entry showed that she was still in a very comparative mood when thinking of other people’s cultural practices and attitudes, which may imply that she did not find this to influence her own set of cultural values. However, she did use her observations to critically look at her own identity as an American. If Carrie did not seem

to have integrated a local social network, nor invested in relationships with French people, she did admit to becoming an external observer of her own cultural products and practices. It seems appropriate that this process comforted her in the idea that she valued her own perspectives more, specifically after the study abroad experience. This quote is also quite revealing of Carrie's denial. Indeed, in labeling her attitude as "self-reflecting," she seems to indicate that she was not fully aware of the limitations of her reflections. Carrie's writing was mainly concentrated on her emotional reactions to the different cultural practices of the target community and how they affected her emotionally. She rarely engaged in critically approaching her own framework of cultural assumptions. Her attitude may be more appropriately described as 'self-centered' rather than 'self-reflecting'.

Perception of language and language use:

Carrie was part of the group of study abroad participants who had advanced French proficiency prior to spending the summer in France. While she expressed feelings of insecurity in her journal entries, as well as difficulty accepting her status as a foreigner, she never expressed insecurities over her language use. Even if she admitted to having some trouble conveying ideas in French, it seems that she was comfortable with her advanced position relative to her peers. Difficulty with communicating with French people was not described as being linked to her language proficiency but rather blamed on the people she interacted with, and their lack of understanding her own cultural assumptions.

"Because her English is not strong we have a difficult time having any dialogue in class because we have trouble ourselves communicating in French. There is a lot of misinterpretation, which I think irritates/frustrates both sides (the students and the professor)."

On a purely linguistic level, Carrie felt at ease and reported positive interactions in the L2. She reports enjoying her conversations with her host family: “Our conversations improve each time and I rarely feel uncomfortable.” She is confident in the progress she made, although she did not report on interactions outside of her Vanderbilt-in-France network. Again, it seems that she was mostly at ease interacting with people who did not give her the impression that she was a foreigner. Her affective relation to the people she interacted with within this familiar network was very much influenced by her sense of belonging to a network in which she could evolve as an American abroad. Carrie did not seem to have experimented much with trying to form a network of locals. She did not mention her interactions with local shop owners, and she commented on how she felt much more at ease in a larger urban setting, such as Paris. In larger metropolitan areas, she felt her status as a tourist was assumed and accepted. Hence, she could function in a more anonymous way. Overall her reported experience of L2 use was positive.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Although it is generally assumed that the study abroad experience leads to increased proficiency in the target language, research on students' linguistic gains during and after studying abroad is inconclusive. The current study seeks to investigate the non-linguistic effects on study abroad participants and more specifically the impact of the sojourn abroad on learner identity development. The e-journals of four participants in the Vanderbilt-in-France program provide noteworthy data about various aspects of this experience. These student narratives give us a window into the study abroad experience from the participants' perspectives. The narratives by Anne, Will, Tara, and Carrie provide answers to the three research questions at the core of this study. I focus on how study abroad participants develop ambiguity in the encounter of two cultures, and have a unique perspective on the relation between language, thought, and culture. This process leads to a reconsideration of both frameworks and positions in what Kramsch (1998, 2009) refers to as a privileged C3. I will describe how the participants show evidence of multicompetence, and become members of a community of language users (Cook, 1999). Finally, I will concentrate my analysis on how participants navigate local networks and negotiate their role within the target community. This analysis will address questions of investment (Norton, 2000), and the legitimacy of the L2 speaker (Norton & Pavlenko, 2007). In this chapter, I will address each of the research questions and show how the data informed each component of this study. Ultimately, I will show that the study abroad experience affects each participant differently. The participants in this study adopt different strategies to navigate and integrate into

their local network. These strategies vary for each person and depend on the participants' personalities and their individual approaches to their C1.

Research Question One

How do study abroad participants perceive and appropriate the C2 during their stay in the target country?

This study suggests that study abroad participants develop a perception of the C2 that lies at the intersection of their own cultural framework and that of the target culture.

Perception of the C2:

Both Will and Anne describe how apprehensive they were when they first arrived in Aix-en-Provence. At the start of her journaling, Anne expresses concern about how negatively the French viewed Americans and how she had anticipated that this attitude would affect her. Prior to departure, she had heard that the French were arrogant and disliked American tourists. Early on in her entries, she writes how pleasantly surprised she is about the attitudes from the target community and how well her efforts to communicate in French are received despite her low proficiency.

In his early journal entries, Will comments on how much he had looked forward to his stay in France and how he had thought he would fit in without having to make too much effort. At his arrival in Aix-en-Provence, he quickly noted that adapting to the new culture and its codes would not be as easy as he had initially anticipated. Will's apprehensions seem also related to the language. Will describes how painful it had been for him to disconnect from his C1 and not understanding the codes and practices of the C2. He comments on how much of these codes and practices depend on language. He feels his low proficiency in French keeps him from understanding and learning the rules that govern this foreign C2. Over the course of his semester

abroad, Will moves from the idealization of the C2 to one that is more nuanced towards the end of the semester. Will's descriptions of the C2 show an evolution from a binary system of comparisons (good vs. bad, acceptable vs. unacceptable) to a more careful and nuanced value system—one in which he is at the center. Adopting elements of both sets of practices and behaviors allows Will to realize that he is in a unique position, where he can choose between elements of both cultural frameworks (Kramsch, 1999, 2009).

Tara, who has a higher proficiency in French, did not describe the same painful realization of loss or separation from her own culture as Will did. Rather, she eased more effortlessly into observing the target culture by keeping a distance and intellectualizing the products and practices she noticed. She finds great pleasure in observing differences and proceeding to a systematic process of verification of her interpretation by talking to her French friends. Although she does not achieve integration into the local network, nor great ease at adopting certain practices, Tara's attitude to difference is much more lenient.

From the beginning of the semester abroad, Tara seemed to present a more nuanced vision of the C2 than the other participants. It was suggested in the previous chapter that Tara's difference in perception might be linked to her multicultural background. What is most striking about her narrative is that she immediately considers large cultural concepts in her inquiry of the C2. For instance, her first journal entry deals with racism and religious freedom. Will, Anne and Carrie's early entries focus on small practices, and later move on to more complex cultural differences.

Overall, Tara, Will and Anne do not perceive difference as a threat to their own assumptions and practices. Although it is an emotional process for the latter two participants in the study, they seem to find the process of comparatively approaching the C1 and C2 as an

integral part of the study abroad experience. These social processes result for these participants in a self-reflective stance that impacts their own cultural assumptions about C1 products and practices (Cook, 2002; Kramsch, 1999, 2009). Carrie's attempts at considering the validity of certain social practices from the C2 are more problematic than for the other participants. As shown in the analysis of her narrative, Carrie has a rigid and codified approach towards the C2. She considers culture as a set of behaviors that help a person to behave "properly" in a certain environment. Carrie does not seem to acknowledge, nor is she sensitive to the more complex and dynamic nature of a cultural framework. This framework, although not explicitly acknowledged in the other participants' writing, seemed to be understood. She categorizes social practices as either acceptable or more often unacceptable or unrealistic. This thinking shows how solidly anchored Carrie is within her C1. Her attitude results in an appreciation of the objective facets of her observations and experience (the beauty of the region, the good food), but also highlights her difficulty to critically approach the more subjective and fluid dynamics of the local culture (attitudes from the locals, lifestyles, cultural practices).

Changing perspectives on the C1:

In addition to changing the ways they view the C2, Will and Anne's narratives show evidence that they change their perception of their C1. Anne comments often and at length about how the French that she observes prioritize their personal lives over their professional lives. At the beginning of her sojourn, Anne is appalled that many of the French businesses such as supermarkets, banks and gift stores are closed several times a week, or for vacation during the busy tourist season. Anne cannot understand why a merchant would choose to not be open for business to tourists during the financially profitable summer influx. Both Anne and Tara comment on how surprised they are that there seem to be people sitting outside on the café

terraces downtown at all hours of the day. Both wonder when the French work, and how they can have so much time to relax and meet with family and friends. Whereas Tara stays solidly anchored in a position of observer, Anne's progressive attempts at understanding these different practices result in reconsidering American priorities. Initially, she comments that the way the Americans she knows are brought up, the potential for profit would prohibit them from passing up the opportunity to cash in on the presence of a large tourist population. At the start of the summer program, she cannot comprehend what she considers a lack of entrepreneurial spirit. Over the course of the summer, however, she consciously starts adopting some of the lifestyle behaviors she observes, encouraged by the program administrators, her professors and a group of girls with whom she is close. Anne starts to deliberately adopt a routine, following her professor's advice, hoping to create a network of local contacts. Every day she has breakfast at the same café, shops daily for groceries at the local supermarket, and frequents the same vendors at the market. She does not comment on the effectiveness of her strategy with regard to meeting French people, but comments on other benefits of her strategy. In frequenting the same places on a daily basis, she is in a privileged observer position. Anne analyses how the observation of certain cultural practices leads to her reconsidering her own attitudes at home. For example, she describes on how her busy life at Vanderbilt means that she runs from class to study groups to sorority meetings and clubs. She writes that this fast-paced lifestyle prohibits her from having time for more "meaningful" things, such as enjoying an extended lunch with friends or wandering around without a specific agenda to observe how others live. Anne does admit that she would not be able to "slow down" at home because it would be incompatible with the university dynamic. However, she expresses an informed and self-reflective observation about her own cultural practices after considering the difference in pace of life. Her seemingly minor

considerations on the different lifestyle results in questioning what she perceives as the American superiority complex when it comes to judging other nations' cultural behaviors. Anne expresses the need for Americans to accept the difference in customs in order to develop a better appreciation for diversity. According to her this process should lead to a more informed view of cultural practices at home (Kramsch 1999, 2009).

While Will is quite extroverted and plays an active role in student organizations at Vanderbilt, he expresses how difficult it was for him to find similar kinds of community involvement. At Vanderbilt, Will is involved in the gay community and was hoping to be able to continue to participate in organizations similar to Delta Lambda Phi²⁰ while in France. At first, he explains that he is reluctant to seek out opportunities to become involved in comparable organizations due to his self-perceived limited language proficiency.

A few months into his sojourn in Aix-en-Provence he realized that there were no organizations in Aix similar to his fraternity. This insight progressively leads to an awareness of how his experience abroad provides an opportunity for reinventing his place, not only within the target community but also among his peers. Interestingly, for Will the difficulty becoming a member of a solid social network within the target community leads to a reevaluation of his C1 social network as well as the dynamics of social practices at home. Will comments that the communitarian model of his involvement at home within the gay community is one that would be impossible to transfer to France, where individual initiatives are more common. Will adopts a self-reflective stance to evaluate his position within his new environment and concludes that he values individual initiatives more since he moved to France. He feels there is more space for self-expression and freedom in his new environment.

²⁰ Delta Lambda Phi is a fraternity for gay, bisexual and progressive men. They have had a chapter on Vanderbilt's campus since 2010.

Will notes that he finds it thought provoking to be able to reconsider the cultural value system he had taken for granted prior to his departure from the US. His inquiries are increasingly complex and range from considering issues of cultural differences, to gender and nationality. Will states that this process is so destabilizing that it is hard for him to decide whether or not he enjoyed it. He seems acutely aware by the end of the program how language use and culture affected his sense of Self (Cook, 2002; Scott, 2010). The questioning process is so important to him that for his coursework he chooses to investigate subjects about the C2 that concern him, such as attitudes towards racism, sexual orientation and environmental issues. Beyond the requirements for his coursework, these papers shape his journaling and he continues to address the different ways he perceives these issues throughout the semester.

Carrie seems to assume throughout her summer abroad that as long as she applies certain codes that modify her behavior to meet that of the French, she should be able to become part of the local network. When she fails, she positions herself completely against “the French” criticizing and negatively analyzing their attitudes. This process seems to confirm the validity of her own cultural set of assumptions rather than to enrich her sense of her C1 by bringing in some subtle changes to her own practices. Carrie fails to consider adopting non-linguistic strategies, and her role in the target community is stably anchored as that of an outsider.

Perception of the participants’ C1 by the target community:

Will and Anne are both sensitive to how their C1 is perceived by members of the C2. Anne’s writings are especially interesting as she analyses the ways in which her peers and American tourists she observes interact with the target community. Anne distances herself from those other Americans who behave in ways that encourage negative perceptions of her C1. According to her, their attitude continues to perpetuate negative stereotypes of her compatriots

abroad. She obviously detaches herself from this group and she does not view herself as a “regular” American. She seems to perceive her status as an insider, or at least someone who knows enough about the codes and practices of the C2 to be able to navigate it without causing negativity. In her words, the study abroad experience was humbling. She perceived the process as positive in that it helped her learn more about her own culture and the target culture. These reflections show the effect of the study abroad experience on Anne’s self-perception, and how she identified the target community. Anne reconsiders her C1 framework through the C2 (Kramersch, 1999, 2009) and situated herself in a privileged position where she has knowledge of two sets of cultural practices (Kramersch, 1999, 2009).

According to Anne, this destabilizing process resulted in a realization of how she had grown up under the assumption that her C1 was superior to other cultures. Towards the end of her writing, Anne says that this superiority complex was the reason why Americans are perceived negatively in other nations. She questions the validity of trying to compare practices and products from one culture to her own, but says it is more constructive to accept difference. This process allows for Anne to redefine her identity. In accepting the difference, and not opposing her own framework of social practices to the C2, she adopts social practices that ultimately helps her improve her L2 learning by successfully navigating between local networks (Kramersch, 1999, 2009).

Research Question Two:

In which ways do study abroad participants negotiate their sense of Self as it relates to the Other?

This study suggests that the study abroad environment's unique networks allow for participants to develop a different outlook on the way they perceive their own identity.

Local networks:

Through the analysis of the student journals it became clear that, for Vanderbilt-in-France participants, the degree of involvement with the target community is selective. Students do not have to interact with the target community to complete the requirements for the program, nor to carry out everyday activities. The participants have a comprehensive social, pedagogical and intellectual network to support them while they study abroad. There is no obligation for participants to engage in social interactions with the target community. However, some of the participants in this study went beyond the prearranged measures provided by the program.

Anne, Will, Tara, and Carrie show individual differences in their processes of investment in the target community. All comment on the difficulty to integrate and approach members of the local L2 community. However, it seems that the ways in which they negotiate their difficulty in integrating into the local community determines the outcome of their investment at the end of the study abroad experience. While Anne and Will adopt a self-reflective voice in their writing about the difficulties they encounter, Tara and Carrie adopt a different stance. Tara's position of outside observer, allows for enhancing her understanding of the practices of those whom she observes. Although she does not appear to appropriate many of the target community's practices, she feels comfortable with stating their difference.

On the other hand, Carrie's defensiveness, and the discomfort she experiences due to her status as a foreigner, sets her in a position that is confrontational with the target community. This attitude results in the rejection of most C2 products and practices. Her insistence on what makes her different from the Other, as well as her constant challenging of the target community's practices ultimately does not allow her to position herself in a reflective mode. She only presents a limited comparative initiative and adopts a hierarchical codification of difference. She is concerned with stating which practices she finds acceptable, how things are done differently, and how things are usually better in the US. She feels alienated in a society that does not seem to have a place for her codes and practices. This attitude does not give her access to local C2 networks, and Carrie does not indicate in her writing that she feels that she has become a part of the local community.

Anne and Will, maybe in part due to their pronounced apprehension prior to departure, are much more careful in considering the local community. It is interesting to note that these are the two students who expressed the most unease about their experience early on in their sojourn abroad. Towards the end of the study abroad experience, both seem to approach the C2 more analytically. Will and Anne both went through a process of noticing their difference, accepting it and, through self-reflection, appropriating their unique position as a strength rather than a handicap. Will's entries show an intense self-reflective mood. Even if it seems to keep him from fully integrating into the target culture, it results in constantly questioning of what he assumed was normal prior to his experience abroad.

Anne relativizes her apprehensions. She seems to go through a process of realization that her own attitude is the main obstacle in gaining acceptance in the target community. Though she comments on the difficulties she encounters in becoming involved in the local networks, she

finds that through the process of habitual visits to the same shops and cafés, she attains a status of a regular customer. Anne appears to find a balance in adopting a set of habitual rituals and behaviors, i.e., having daily coffee at the same place, slowing down her pace of life, accepting the experience abroad as a legitimate parenthesis in her life. It is interesting that Will and Anne also adopt these behaviors within their group of peers. Contrary to Carrie, they seem to find an intense satisfaction in changing their behavior to one that is inclusive of the practices they observe among the French. This behavior, which is influenced by an imagined sense of integration (Norton & Pavlenko, 2007), seems in accord with evolving at an intersection of two cultures. It is in adopting both sets of practices and behaviors, and in realizing their unique position to be able to choose the practices and products they adopt that they develop an increased awareness of the hybridity and ambivalence of their own set of cultural and national assumptions (Kramsch, 1999, 2009). Both Will and Anne establish a contact and exchange with the target culture and among their peers, thus literally evolving on the borders of both cultural models.

The participants in this study struggle to become legitimate members of their environment. For Will, Anne and Tara, these struggles ultimately lead to a shift in how they perceive power relations with members of the target community. Their negotiation of these relations, or their investment in the target community, can result in an imagined sense of belonging.

Symbolic and intellectual resources:

Navigating local networks is intrinsically linked to the language learning process. Previously, we saw how the different participants had diverse levels of L2 proficiency. Will's limited proficiency in French contrasts with Tara, who had studied French extensively prior to her sojourn in Aix-en-Provence. Some of the participants rely more on the language than others

to integrate a variety of communities of practices. Others adopt symbolic practices that go beyond L2 use to integrate different networks. The participants in this study rely on intellectual and/or social resources to become members of the networks specific to this particular context.

Tara resolutely relies on intellectual resources to become part of both her group of peers, but also her roommate Annaëlle's social circle. We noted in her narrative how she situates herself fully as an outside observer of complex issues such as gender, racism, and religious issues. In her writing, Tara does not seem to reflect on day-to-day difficulties, nor does she develop in her narrative how she got along with her American peers. However, it is clear from her writings that her main strategy of integration and attaining the status of legitimate speaker (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Kramsch, 2003) among Francophone peers is through questioning. Her reported conversations seem to revolve around the noticing of different practices and her in-depth analysis of these practices. Tara consistently seeks to verify how her French peers view these interpretations. It seems that she is at ease when discussing her perceptions, and compares practices from the C2 and her C1.

In part due to his limited level of proficiency, Will relies more on symbolic resources (Norton, 1993), and does not adopt a process of verification. At the start of the semester, it seems that his main preoccupation is wanting to become a member of the Vanderbilt-in-France group. Conscious of his status as a foreigner to the target community, he needs to feel at ease with his fellow participants, and seeks integration within this specific network. As a low proficient speaker among more proficient L2 speakers, Will is in an unequal position of power compared to his peers. However, Will finds strategies to become a legitimate member of his peers' community (Norton & Toohey, 2001). He organizes the travel, and weekend excursions. Also, his talent for photography quickly results in his unofficial appointment as the person in charge of

documenting their travels online. Will is included in the core social activities among his peers, and quickly legitimizes his position in the group.

As far as the adoption of symbolic resources is concerned to become a member of the target culture, Will is certainly the best example. From the start of the program, Will reports that he spends a lot of time and energy “dressing as a French person.” He believes that integration in the target community will be easier if he appears French. Throughout the semester, he realizes that this approach may not be enough—that as soon as he is forced to use the L2, his stratagem fails. However, he does not give up this practice. It seems that he is less anxious in his daily routine if he does not physically stand out as an American. In adopting a style he deems French, Will does not only invest in a symbolic behavior that, in a self-perceived way, makes him move away from being recognized as a foreigner. This strategy also allows him to lower his apprehensions as far as navigating the target culture is concerned. By adopting a dress code he appears to feel a sense of control. He does not seem to be able to achieve this feeling for more subjective and complex behaviors.

Anne invests in symbolic resources as well and concentrates on her appreciation for cooking and eating out as ways to both join a circuit of the target community, and in bonding with peers who share the same interest. Quickly after her arrival in Aix she signs up for a series of cooking classes and wine tastings. Although these classes are specifically designed for Vanderbilt-in-France participants, she sees it as a means to becoming an expert in a particular aspect of French culture. It could be considered both an investment in the target community and an investment in an aspect that will help her attain recognition in her own culture. In taking French cooking classes, Anne compensates, to some degree, for her low proficiency in French. In addition, these new skills will likely put her in a position of power at her return in the U.S. In

economic terms, all participants in the study acknowledge a plus-value of their study abroad experience. Anne's French cooking skills would be an added value for her in that cooking French recipes would allow her to share part of her experience abroad with French speakers and non-French speakers alike.

Through a simple extra-linguistic strategy, Will and Anne adopt social practices that have a positive effect on how they, as language learners, perceive their sense of Self. In learning a second language, successful learners develop the ability to draw from a wide range of symbolic and material resources, such as their entourage, gender, belongings, or physical appearance (Norton, 1993, 2001, 2006). This skill cannot be separated from the purely linguistic gains that come with language learning. Depending on how the learners consider these non-linguistic resources, the process can change the learners' outlook on their position within the target community. As we saw with Will, the connection with a language community goes well beyond one's immediate social network. Members of one language community rely heavily on an imagined sense of belonging that includes them in large communities of practice (Anderson, 1991; Norton & Pavlenko, 2007). Will's and Anne's strategies achieve this self-perceived sense of belonging to the target community. Tara also claims her position as a legitimate speaker through her strategy of observations and verification. This development ultimately affects the ways in which they project themselves in larger global communities.

Research Question Three:

Do study abroad participants develop an increased awareness of language and language use through interaction with their peers and native L2 speakers?

This study suggests that study abroad participants develop an increased awareness of the power of language as they struggle to interact with the L2 community.

Social recognition:

Language is an essential means to attain social recognition in a given community (Norton, 1994). From the narratives it seems that the social recognition the participants achieve through language is limited but has a critical effect on Will, Anne and Tara, in as far as their perceived sense of legitimation as speakers of the L2 is concerned. Will describes his efforts to become an active and recognized participant during the daily dinners with the dinner family. Anne comments on the efforts she made to interact in French with the shopkeepers she consciously visited daily in an attempt to achieve recognition with the people of the target community. She is encouraged in this behavior because she perceives her efforts as well received. Tara builds a solid relationship with her French roommate and expresses little frustration with interacting in the L2 in the target community. Carrie expresses more frustration about the reception of her efforts, but she acknowledges that the longer she spent in France, the better her dinner family as well as the Vanderbilt-in-France-staff perceive her interactions. She expresses a greater ease of interaction with members of the target community towards the end of the study. Even if she does not mention feeling integrated, the frustration about interaction in the L2 is attenuated.

Community of language users:

Members of a community of language users engage in language play, such as code-switching and language jokes (Cook, 1999). The participants in this study seem to enjoy the process of playing with language. Although language play is often an oral phenomenon, we find evidence of code-switching in both Will's and Anne's writing. This process of inclusion of French words in their narrative shows that they are sensitive to the fact that they share a common feature with the reader—also an L2 user who understands these subtleties. This process shows that they acknowledge their inclusion within this community of L2 users.

Perceptions of L1:

It is clear from the narratives that the participants are extremely aware of their identity as Americans. They are confronted with this realization by the fact that they evolve in a group of Americans abroad, and are easily identified as Americans by members of the target community. Moreover, they are reminded of their American identity by their more or less pronounced struggle with the L2. This common realization seems to be one that, in the study abroad context, solidifies and encourages cohesion within the group of study abroad participants. All participants in this study comment on the close relationships they formed with some of their classmates, their roommates and other members of the cohort. In a community where their native language is the exception, the L1 can be seen as the cement that holds together members of the community in which it takes a predominant role. The participants in this study engage in specific behaviors that are common to the L2 user community (Cook, 1999). Will, Anne, and Tara show evidence of multicompetent behavior which includes adopting specific social practices as part of their strategy to improve their L2 use. This behavior ultimately improves participants' L2 learning

through a successful integration of overlapping social networks and adopting its products and practices.

Limitations of the Study

The qualitative research design of this study was well suited to investigate individual reactions to the study abroad experience. Although this study offers insight into the participants' language stories and emergent changes in their identity perception, there are two principal limitations. First, the subjects were from three different semesters. It should be noted that the summer and fall/spring programs are quite different. Due to its shorter format, students participating in the summer session have a more limited time to access the C2 local networks. Anne, who is a summer participant, does show evidence of becoming a member of some local networks. As noted previously, she develops interesting strategies to achieve an imagined sense of integration. However, in future research projects, it would be important to study participants with more uniform lengths of stay in order to control for this variable. This change in strategy would allow for a more comparable pool of data, and may reduce some of the disparities in the findings.

The second limitation involves the questions used as prompts for the participants' e-journaling. The format of the e-journal proved to be an ideal interface for students to participate in this study and describe their experiences abroad. The questions that guided them in their reflections yielded a large amount of data. While most of these questions stimulated extensive answers, Round 2 Question 1 (Appendix 4) did not generate the kinds of answers I had anticipated. I had hoped students would interpret certain aspects of the French classroom dynamic within a French cultural framework, or that they would comment on the professor/student dynamic. Only Tara, who took classes at a French university, commented on

these aspects. Others stated their courses were similar to the ones at Vanderbilt. I would therefore revise Round 2's Question 1 to elicit culturally comparative reflections.

In addition, I would schedule Round 1's Question 3, and Round 2's Question 3 at a later point in the study abroad experience. This change would give students more time to become integrated into the local C2 network when they answer these questions. Hence, they would be more prepared to reflect critically on these aspects of the study. During the first weeks of their experience abroad, they had not sufficiently become acquainted with their French roommates to answer the third question of Round One. In addition, not every participant had knowledge of current political events. It seemed clear that participants who produced the more interesting answers to the third question of Round Two were those students who were taking a class about current events and the French media. They had been reading French newspapers as part of the course requirement. Other participants were not as informed about current events at the time I submitted the question.

Suggestions for Future Research

The current study is characterized by its dimension of immediacy, as the data were gathered during the study abroad experience. It is therefore not possible to consider the long-term effect of study abroad on questions related to learner identity. The conclusions of the study apply to the participants' state of mind at the end of their sojourn abroad but the data do not give insight into the long-term effects of this experience. In order to investigate the long-term effect on identity construction among study abroad participants, it would be useful to consider the same research questions after participants return to their home institution. This approach would allow for researchers to investigate how the study abroad experience affects issues such as course selection, additional study abroad experiences, or career choices. Also, the research

design of the current study does not allow for investigating this unique community of language learners upon their return to their home institution, nor how this experience is transferred into the foreign language classroom. A longitudinal study following subjects during and after their study abroad experience could yield the necessary data to investigate these long-term effects.

During the data collection stage, it was difficult to motivate participants to complete the entire study. There were a substantial number of potential subjects who started the study but gave up participating at different stages. For replications of this study, external incitements such as financial compensation might increase participant retention and allow for a larger subject pool.

Replicating the study in other types of study abroad settings would be valuable. It would be interesting to see whether different settings could yield more pronounced outcomes in as far as integration and investment in local networks is concerned. As explained previously, the Vanderbilt-in-France study abroad program provides a solid support network for its participants, which results in limited integration into the target community for some participants. Investigating different participants in a variety of study abroad programs could offers insight into the different strategies adopted by participants in immersion settings as it compared to other settings, such as at-home immersion settings or programs with a similar model to Vanderbilt-in-France. Aspects such as acculturation and the development of hybrid cultural references could also be more pronounced depending on the location of the study abroad program. It is very likely that participants in a European country, such as France, would undergo different processes of integration with regard to cultural products and practices than participants in study abroad programs in the Middle East, Africa or Asia. Drawing from a more diversified pool of candidates could provide the necessary data to investigate this issue comparatively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that the study abroad experience greatly affects learner identity development. While sojourning abroad, learners develop skills and adopt strategies that help them navigate the complex environment in which they find themselves. These non-linguistic gains impact the ways in which learners ultimately view their own cultural and social networks. Moreover, while struggling with alternative cultural frameworks, study abroad participants develop a unique sensitivity to hybridity and a tolerance for difference. They also show an increased understanding of the subjective power of language in their efforts to become legitimate speakers of the L2.

In addition, this study provides a solid research framework that should encourage researchers to replicate similar studies investigating non-linguistic gains during the study abroad experience. It is important to understand the full scope of the effects of the study abroad semester. This study shows that the study abroad experience is a unique opportunity to impact the ways in which individual learners perceive our multilingual and multicultural society.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study show that the study abroad experience has important effects on learner identity construction for some participants and impacts how they perceive their role in an increasingly globalized world. This research also highlights the individualized nature of the effects of study abroad. Chapters One, Two, and Three set the stage for understanding the full complexity of the study abroad experience and the intricate nature of the notion of identity. The review of the research on study abroad in Chapter One shows that there is limited evidence that the study abroad experience promotes second language development. I survey studies that considered questions related to reading, writing, listening and speaking as well as grammar and pragmatics. The inconclusive findings of this body of research support my argument that the goals of the study abroad experience should not be solely aimed at improving proficiency. Rather, I propose that researchers should reconsider the objectives of study abroad and incorporate extra-linguistic gains, also taking into consideration how these gains shape the language learner when assessing the study abroad experience. This review of literature also highlights the importance of considering individual differences in learning outcomes of the sojourn abroad.

Chapter Two demonstrates the importance of considering the dynamic nature of the language learning process. Drawing on several theoretical frameworks, I show that language development is a highly complex phenomenon and that second language learning has a unique impact on the dynamic nature of an individual's language system(s). Moreover, language development is influenced by variables proper to each individual language learner, such as

attitude, motivation, and identity. These factors have implications for how language learners develop the unique skills that come with language learning. Furthermore, second language learners develop distinctive characteristics that allow them to explore questions of culture and language on a more hybrid level, by incorporating elements of the C2 into their own cultural and linguistic frameworks. Ultimately, I argue that the study abroad environment is ideally suited to foster these cross-cultural and cross-linguistic understandings.

In Chapter Three, I investigate the notion of identity and present the ways in which sociocultural theoretical frameworks have evolved to portray identity as a fluid concept. This research shows how language, and by extension language learning, plays a central role in how people negotiate changes in their perceived identity. To compensate for insufficient proficiency in the L2, language learners develop specific strategies that incorporate non-linguistic symbolic resources. These tactics influence their successful integration into specific social networks, which in turn affect learner identity perception. Language learners are in a unique position to perceive and adopt these changes within a specific community of speakers. Again, I underline the importance of the individual characteristics that account for a successful navigation of a variety of social environments.

These first three chapters provide a clear rationale for designing a research study that accounts for the complex dynamics inherent in the study abroad experience. The multiple case study described in Chapter Four highlights the complex relation between the study abroad participants' local network of peers and the target community. The data also reveal the comparative processes at play when the participants approached C2 products and practices. I show how uniquely suited the qualitative research format is for this study, in that it allows for the

highly individualized nature of participants' attitudes. Ultimately, I demonstrate how each participant's experience is distinctive in its nature and its outcome.

The discussion of findings in Chapter Five highlights the ways that the participants in this study shifted their self-perception. They developed and adopted a set of intellectual and symbolic strategies to achieve recognition, both in the target community and among their peers. Some developed a more hybrid sense of Self, in that they were more aware of certain elements that inherently define them, such as sex, gender, and nationality and how these elements define members of the C2. In general, the participants' feeling of belonging to both their C1 community and the target community became gradually more complex and nuanced through the consideration of the members of the target community. As a contrast, one participant found herself more anchored in the C1 through her experience abroad. Rather than undergoing a change in identity by adopting certain C2 perspectives and practices, she underwent the process of finding her voice as an American. Whereas this process may seem less interesting at first compared to those who develop a more hybrid perception of Self, her change in self-perception is inherently the same, albeit with a different outcome.

Finally, the four participants in this study developed an awareness of the subjective power of language, in that they were confronted by the limitations that occur when one navigates a community as a non-native speaker. The participants in this study showed evidence of having developed a unique sensitivity to their current and future place and role in the world through self-perception and how they felt perceived by others. Among their group of peers this common awareness seemed to encourage the development of a stronger sense of belonging to a particular community of language learners. I concluded that this unique community of language learners

holds a privileged position that allows them to better understand the complexity of concepts such as language, identity, and nationality in an increasingly globalized and multicultural world.

Implications of the Research

The outcomes of this project set the stage for researchers to continue to investigate the link between language learning and its impact on learner identity construction, in particular in the study abroad context. This strand of research needs more comprehensive inquiry and is likely to lead to a better understanding of the complexities of this particular learning environment. This study provides an effective methodological framework that is uniquely suited for the consideration of individual differences among study abroad participants. These differences are linked to the development of extra-linguistic strategies that help participants navigate the complex networks that characterize the study abroad environment. The findings of the current study clearly suggest the importance of designing research that investigates these complex phenomena in different kinds of study abroad settings.

Additionally, this study has implications for researchers and faculty administering study abroad programs. The current study calls for a reconsideration of how the study abroad experience is assessed and should encourage administrators and faculty to set goals for study abroad that incorporate its effect on identity development. Rather than promoting the study abroad experience largely as one that is beneficial for language learning, prospective participants should also be made aware of the benefits of study abroad on interpersonal and intercultural awareness.

In addition, research should focus on the ways non-linguistic gains are addressed and assessed before, during, and after study abroad. Pre-departure orientations as well as the

implementation of opportunities for navigating different local social and cultural networks could enhance the long-term impact of study abroad on identity development. Additionally, addressing questions related to cultural exchange and the dynamic nature of navigating local social networks while abroad can be invaluable to study abroad participants. These kinds of questions should become an ongoing part of the study abroad experience, through discussion and specific student projects. For example, being engaged in the e-journaling project gave the participants of this study a forum for reflecting critically on the interpersonal and intra-personal effects of study abroad.

Although the study abroad experience clearly yields powerful learning outcomes, administrators and educators should actively consider how to make these effects sustainable. This study confirms my commitment as an advocate for the sojourn abroad, whether through a study abroad program that is an integral part of the foreign language curriculum, or in other settings, such as service abroad experiences, sojourns in countries where the L1 is spoken, and international internships. However, my work on study abroad has also persuaded me that it is of utmost importance that universities focus on how to incorporate the study abroad experience in a larger educational framework. The implementation of pre-and post-departure modules could encourage participants to continue to cultivate the cross-cultural analytical skills they developed while abroad. This strategy would allow for educators to work with individual participants and better address their needs as they prepare to sojourn abroad. This approach would also put the study abroad experience in a more meaningful context and possibly yield increased productive long-term effects on the participants.

After completing this study, I firmly believe that the study abroad experience is one that shapes unique individuals. By spending time in an environment that encourages critical

consideration of their own cultural and national assumptions, participants are in an ideal setting to become “interculturally” fluent. Byram (2008) defines this unique ability as follows:

Being ‘*intercultural*’ involves analysis and reflection about intercultural experience and acting on that reflection.... The individual becomes an ‘intercultural person’ only when intercultural experience becomes the focus of his/her attention, analysis and reflection (p. 186).

This critical perspective involves questioning assumptions, as well as products and practices previously taken for granted. In addition, it involves becoming aware of one’s social identities (regional, national). There is no question that the study abroad environment is the ideal setting for intentionally developing the analytical skills necessary to becoming intercultural individuals. By encouraging our students to participate in long-term initiatives that will help them develop a greater critical awareness of themselves and others, we provide an ideal environment to foster the emergence of a privileged community of interculturally fluent learners.

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Appendix 1: Recruitment Prompt

Dear Students,

Over the course of this summer program, I will be studying the experience of students in a Study Abroad context.. As participants in this Study Abroad program you are all eligible to participate in this project. If you are under the age of 18, please do not participate in this study. Participation is voluntary and risk-free and neither participation nor non-participation will have any academic or personal consequences. Your responses are anonymous. They will neither affect your grade nor standing in this program nor any other aspect of your studies at VU.

For this study I need volunteers who are willing to answer 9 questions in writing (in English) over the course of the semester. Your written responses will serve as data for my research, but it will be treated anonymously. Other participants will share nothing that you write, answers will not be shared with other participants or with the Vanderbilt in France staff.

If you have any additional questions about this study, you may contact the researcher at ...

If interested in participating in this study you may reply to this email. Thank you for your attention.

Appendix 2: IRB approved informed consent form

This informed consent document applies to all eligible volunteers agreeing to participate in the Fall 2011 VIF Study Abroad study under Eva Dessen's supervision.

Name of participant: _____
Age: _____

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time.

1. Purpose of the study:

The purpose of the study is to analyze the experience of students in a Study Abroad context. We seek to investigate the long-term effects of Study Abroad and to better understand its outcomes.

You are asked to participate in this research study because you are participating in the 2011 Vanderbilt-in-France Fall program.

2. Procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

You will be asked to take the Vanderbilt in France placement exam, as well as a Language Contact Profile at the beginning and at the end of your stay at Vanderbilt-in-France. In addition, you will be asked to answer three (3) sets of three (3) questions regarding your experience in the Vanderbilt-in-France Program. The investigator (Eva Dessen) will provide you with these questions over the course of the summer program according to the following timeline.

Calendar of Procedures :

Tuesday Sept. 9th: Recruitment (Prompt Appendix 2)
Tuesday Sept. 13th: Vanderbilt in France Placement exam (Appendix 1)
Monday Sept. 14th: Preliminary language contact profile (Appendix 4a)
Monday Sept. 26th: Submission of Round 1 of Questions (Appendix 3)
Monday Oct. 17th: Submission of round 2 of Questions (Appendix 3)
Monday Nov. 10th: Submission of round 3 of Questions (Appendix 3)
Nov. 28th: Vanderbilt in France Placement exam (Appendix 1)
Dec. 9th: Concluding language contact profile. (Appendix 4b)

3. Expected costs:

There is no cost to you for taking part in this study

4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study: Although the risks associated with this study are minimized, they could be expected. The main risk would consist in a breach of confidentiality, despite the investigators' precaution. There is also an inconvenience associated with amount of time and effort required to participate.

5. Unforeseeable risks: There are no unforeseeable risk associated to this study

6. Compensation in case of study-related injury:

There is no risk of injury related to this study. Therefore this item is not applicable.

7. Good effects that might result from this study:

a) The benefits to science and humankind that might result from this study. A better understanding the effects of study abroad on its participants, would allow for a better understanding of the long-term effects of study abroad. The insights gathered through this study would also help to find better ways to assess its effectiveness. In general, research on Study Abroad helps university administrators to promote international initiatives more widely, both among universities as well as with potential participants.

b) The benefits you might get from being in this study:

There is not other benefit from being in this study except the fulfillment of your involvement in a project aiming at better understanding the study abroad experience. The answers you are providing may be a way of chronicling your experiences and may become an interesting souvenir to take away from your experience.

8. Alternative treatments available:

This study does not involve medical treatment. Therefore this item is not applicable to this study.

9. Compensation for participation:

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

10. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation:

Failure to complete the assignments for this study may result in your withdrawal from the study participation by the investigator.

11. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:

Participation is voluntary and risk-free and neither participation nor non-participation will have any academic or personal consequences. Your responses are anonymous. They will neither affect your grade nor standing in this program nor any other aspect of your studies at VU. You are also free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Should you choose to withdraw from this study, please address a written notice to Eva Dessen, to inform her of your decision. Collected data will be saved. You have the right to request withdrawal and/or destruction of all data collected over the course of your involvement in the study. In that case, please mention this in your written notice.

12. Contact Information. If you have any questions about this research study or possibly injury, please feel free to contact **Eva Dessen: eva.dessen@vanderbilt.edu** to arrange a telephone meeting.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, to discuss problems, concerns, and questions, or to offer input, please feel free to contact the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board Office at (615) 322-2918 or toll free at (866) 224-8273.

13. Confidentiality:

All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The data will be treated anonymously according to a method chosen by the investigator, and none of this information will be shared with other participants. Only the researcher will have access to said records. All data will be password protected and stored electronically in the researcher's protected e-

files. Should you have questions about the confidentiality of this study feel free to contact Eva Dessein: eva.dessein@vanderbilt.edu to arrange a telephone meeting.

14. Privacy:

Privacy Information:

Your information may be shared with Vanderbilt or the government, such as the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, Department of Education etc. if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. Vanderbilt may give or sell your data without identifiers for other research projects not listed in this form. There are no plans to pay you for the use or transfer of this de-identified information.

15. STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. All my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate.

Date

Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by:

Date

Signature

Printed Name and Title

Appendix 3: Pre- treatment Language Contact Profile

Part 1: Background Information

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age: ____

3. Country of birth:

4. What is your native language?

1 English

2 French

3 Other _____

5. What languages do you speak at home?

1. English

2. French

3. Other

5a. If more than one, with whom do you speak each of these languages?

6. In what languages did you receive the majority of your *precollege* education?

1. English

2. Other

6b. If more than one, please give the approximate number of years for each language. ____

7. Have you ever been to a French-speaking region *for the purpose of studying French*?

Circle one: Yes No

7a. If yes, when?

7b. Where?

7c. For how long?

1 semester or less

2 semesters

more than 2 semesters

8. Other than the experience mentioned in Question 7, have you ever lived in a situation where you were exposed to a language other than your native language e.g., by living in a multilingual

community; visiting a community for purposes of study abroad or work; exposure through family members, etc.?

Circle one: Yes No

If Yes, please give details below. If more than three, list others on back of this page.

	Experience 1	Experience 2	Experience3
Country			
Language			
Purpose			
From when to when			

9. In the boxes below, rate your language ability in each of the languages that you know. Use the following ratings:

Poor Good Very good Native/ natiuelike.

How many years, if any, have you *studied* this language in a *formal school* setting?

Language	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Nbr of years of study
English					
French					
Other					

10 . Have you studied French in school in the past at each of the levels listed below? If yes, for how long?

- a . Elementary school: _No _Yes: _less than 1 year _1–2 years _more than 2 years
- b. Junior high middle . school: _No _Yes: _less than 1 year _1–2 years _more than 2 years
- c . Senior high school: _No _Yes: _less than 1 year _1–2 years _more than 2 years
- d . University0college: _No _Yes: _less than 1 year _1–2 years _more than 2 years
- e . Other Please specify . _____: _No _Yes: _less than 1 year _1–2 years _more than 2 years

11 . What year are you in school? circle one .: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

12 . What is your major? _____

Appendix 4: E-journal questions

Round 1

- 1) What are your first impressions about living in France? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.
- 2) When you think of your host family (« dinner family »), what comes to mind? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.
- 3) Describe one of your French friends. Why do you get along? What is interesting about him/her? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.

Round 2

- 1) Describe your impressions of being in a French classroom. How does it differ from the typical American classroom? How do French instructors differ from instructors you had in America? Describe your impressions in 200 words.
- 2) Describe your impressions of some French political, religious or gender differences. How have you learned about these? Describe your impressions in 200 words.
- 3) Describe some recent developments in France's current events. Why did you pick this particular event? Have you been confronted to some of its impacts? Please comment. Describe your impressions in 200 words.

Round 3

- 1) When you think of French people, what comes to your mind immediately? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.
- 2) Describe your impressions about living in France. Would you come back for an extended period? Why? Why not? Please describe your impressions in 200 words.
- 3) Describe your experience this summer (or semester). Describe some of the positive and/or negative impressions from your stay in Aix en Provence. Please describe your impressions in 200 words.

Appendix 5: Post – treatment Language Contact Profile

The responses that you give in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. This cover sheet is to allow the researcher to associate your responses with your name if needed. However, only the people entering your responses into the computer will see this name. An identification number will be used in place of your name when referring to your responses in publications. Every effort will be made to keep your responses confidential. The information that you provide will help us to better understand the learning experiences of students of French. Your honest and detailed responses will be greatly appreciated.

Name:

Please indicate the French language courses you are taking this fall semester:

Course name	Course number	Course description

1. Which situation best describes your living arrangements in France during the past semester?
 - a. I lived in a room or an apartment with native or fluent French speakers
 - ii. Did they speak English? Circle one: Yes 0 No
 - iii. Were there other nonnative speakers of French living with your host family?
Circle one: Yes No
 - iv. I lived with others who are NOT native or fluent French speakers.
 - b. I lived in a room or an apartment with others who are NOT native or fluent French speakers.
 - c. Other. Please specify:

For the following items, please specify:

- i. How many *days per week* you typically used French in the situation indicated, and
- ii. on average how many *hours per day* you did so.

For the following items, please specify:

- ~i! How many *days per week* you typically used French in the situation indicated, and
 ~ii! on average how many *hours per day* you did so..

2. On average, how much time did you spend speaking, *in French*, outside of class with native or fluent French speakers during this semester?

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

3. This semester, outside of class, I tried to speak *French* to:

3a. my instructor

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

3b. friends who are native or fluent French speakers

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

3c. classmates

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

3d. strangers whom I thought could speak French

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

3e. a host family, French roommate, or other French speakers in the house

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

3f. service personnel

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

3g. other; specify:

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

4. How often did you use French outside the classroom for each of the following purposes?

4a. to clarify classroom-related work

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

4b. to obtain directions or information ~e.g., “Where is the post office?”, “What time is the train to . . . ?”, “How much are stamps?”!

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

4c. for superficial or brief exchanges ~e.g., greetings, “Please pass the salt,” “I’m leaving,” ordering in a restaurant! with my host family, French roommate, or acquaintances

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

4d. extended conversations with my host family, French roommate, friends, or acquaintances in a French-speaking house, native speakers of English with whom I speak French

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

5a. How often did you try deliberately to use things you were taught in the classroom grammar, vocabulary, expressions! with native or fluent speakers outside the classroom?

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

5b. How often did you take things you learned outside of the classroom (grammar, vocabulary, expressions) back to class for question or discussion?

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

6. How much time did you spend doing the following *each week*?

6a. speaking a language other than English or French to speakers of that language ~e.g. Chinese with a Chinese-speaking friend!

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

6b. speaking *French* to native or fluent speakers of *French*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

6c. speaking *English* to native or fluent speakers of *French*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

6d. speaking *French* to nonnative speakers of *French* ~i.e., classmates!

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

6e. speaking *English* to nonnative speakers of *French* ~i.e., classmates!

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7. How much time did you spend doing each of the following activities *outside of class*?

7a. overall, in reading in French *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7b. reading French newspapers *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7c. reading novels in French *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7d. reading French language magazines *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7e. reading schedules, announcements, menus, and the like in French *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7f. reading e-mail or Internet web pages in French *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7g. overall, in listening to French *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than

7h. listening to French television and radio *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7i. listening to French movies or videos *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7j. listening to French songs *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

7k. trying to catch other people's conversations in French *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

- 7l. overall, in writing in French *outside of class*
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
- 7m. writing homework assignments in French *outside of class*
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
- 7n. writing personal notes or letters in French *outside of class*
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
- 7o. writing e-mail in French *outside of class*
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
- 7p. filling in forms or questionnaires in French *outside of class*
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
8. On average, how much time did you spend speaking in *English* outside of class during this semester?
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
9. How often did you do the following activities in *English* during this semester in Spain?
- 9a. reading newspapers, magazines, or novels or watching movies, television, or videos
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
- 9b. reading e-mail or Internet web pages in English
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
- 9c. writing e-mail in English
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5
- 9d. writing personal notes and letters in English
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0–1 1–2 2–3 3–4 4–5 more than 5

Appendix 6: Blank codebook

Round 1	Key words	Quotes	Comments
Perceptions of the C2	Insider v. outsider Cultural artifacts Local social networks		
Perceptions of the Self	Awareness of Self Border crossing experiences Destabilized sense of identity Struggle		
Diverging perceptions of Self and Other	Rejection of new knowledge Struggle		
Converging perceptions of Self and Other	Acceptance of new knowledge New subject positioning Third identity negotiation Negotiation of difference		
Perception of language and language use	Language experience Struggle Code switching Social contacts with L2 speakers		