

1 | *Language learning in study abroad: An activist stance*

This *Guidebook* explains why language educators and study abroad professionals should develop an activist stance in promoting language learning in study abroad programs, and provides tools to help promote meaningful sojourns abroad for their language students. These tools include knowledge about what aspects of language are best learned in host communities and about how successful students take advantage of study abroad to enhance their language ability. They also include stories about the kinds of conflicts students may encounter in interaction with their hosts, with guidance about how to turn these conflicts into opportunities for learning. Finally, this *Guidebook* offers specific suggestions for ways to prepare students for their stay abroad, to enhance their chances at success while abroad, and to nurture the abilities they have developed outside the classroom. Suggested tasks and discussion topics are proposed throughout the *Guidebook*. Some of these tasks are intended for teachers who are working together, raising topics for reflection or offering opportunities to analyze the achievements of students abroad. Others are intended to be used in working with students to upgrade their awareness of the challenges and opportunities made available through study abroad.

The material presented here will be useful to all professional educators with an interest in language development, helping to clarify the contribution of a sojourn abroad to the development of students' language proficiency. However, the relevance of the materials will be most obvious to: 1) language teachers directly involved in the organization of study abroad, or its integration into the curriculum and 2) study abroad professionals interested in explaining or enhancing the language learning opportunities made available through their programs.

Whether you are a language teacher, a study abroad professional, or both, chances are good that you do not need much convincing about the potential value of study abroad for language learning. You may have participated in a study abroad program yourself, as a student, and this experience may have been one of the major

transformative events in your life. Or, at the very least, it may have enhanced your own language abilities, or confirmed your commitment to language education. You may

have given advice about study abroad to parents, students, or administrators. You may have seen the effects of study abroad on the language abilities of students in your program. You may have been called upon to defend and promote study abroad for language learning, explaining why it is important if students are to attain high levels of language ability. The discussion topic list below (Figure 1) is intended to guide recollection and reflection on these personal experiences, and how they shape our contemporary views of study abroad.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION: Recalling our own study abroad experiences
For language educators and study abroad professionals

If you have experience as a high school or college-age participant in study abroad, during your first significant study abroad experience:

- Where did you go and for how long? What were your living arrangements? Were you enrolled in a formal program of study?
- What were your personal goals for the sojourn? What did you hope to learn? If you chose a study abroad program for the purpose of language learning, did you believe at the time that you were successful? Looking back, how would you assess your learning experience now?
- Which contexts were the most important for your learning (e.g., school, home, internship, clubs, social or religious organizations, informal contacts with other students)?
- How would you describe your social network(s) during your study abroad experience?
- Were there any particular individuals who influenced you / helped to shape the quality of your experience?
- How much contact did you maintain with your friends and family at home?
- If you were part of a larger group or cohort, what do you remember about the assistance you received from the program? What do you recall about the other members of the group? Did they share your goals?

If you have participated in the design or administration of study abroad programs, in your most recent or memorable experience:

- What were the objectives of the program? To what extent did the program emphasize language learning?
- Overall, how well do you feel the program objectives were met?
- If the program emphasized language learning, how were students advised, prepared, or guided in this pursuit? How was student achievement evaluated? To what extent was there an attempt at integrating the goals of the study abroad program with those of larger, home-based curricula?
- Which aspects of the program facilitated students' success as language learners?
- How would you describe the main challenges for language learning in study abroad programs?

Figure 1: Recalling study abroad experiences

If you are at all like I was, when embarking on an investigation of study abroad and language learning, part of your appreciation of study abroad is based on experience, and part on faith. As a typical experienced language teacher, I held several untested assumptions about study abroad. I believed, for example, that its general value was without serious challenge by educators outside my department, and that everyone could see the enrichment brought to students' worldliness, appreciation of others, self-expression, and intercultural awareness by a sojourn abroad. I also assumed that, even if they are now typically shorter, my students' stays abroad would generally be a lot like mine, or at least the way I remembered it then. That is, there would be a little bit of confusion or malaise mixed with strong desire for language learning and a lot of opportunities to learn in interaction with homestay families, peers, and teachers who would welcome my students and treat them as persons of consequence. I believed then, as I do now, that study abroad is a key context for language learning. However, I did not necessarily think that my responsibilities as a teacher included understanding how language learning works in study abroad or doing anything in particular to help my students learn while they were away from my classroom. The exercise below (Figure 2) proposes twelve statements about study abroad and its relationship to language learning, and may be used to explore your own or your colleagues' current knowledge and beliefs about this topic.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION: Opinions about study abroad and language learning

For language educators and study abroad professionals

Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. Compare your answers to these questions with others, and discuss similarities and differences. If you disagree with your colleagues, discuss the statement until you can reach mutual agreement about your rating. For more information about these statements, consult Appendix A.

1. Study abroad is one of the most important contexts in which American students can develop foreign language competence.

Agree 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 Disagree

2. The number of American students going abroad is increasing each year.

Agree 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 Disagree

3. The proportion of American students going abroad is rising each year.

Agree 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 Disagree

4. When studying abroad in non-Anglophone countries, students experience foreign language immersion.

Agree 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 Disagree

5. There are equal numbers of male and female participants in study abroad programs.

Agree 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 Disagree

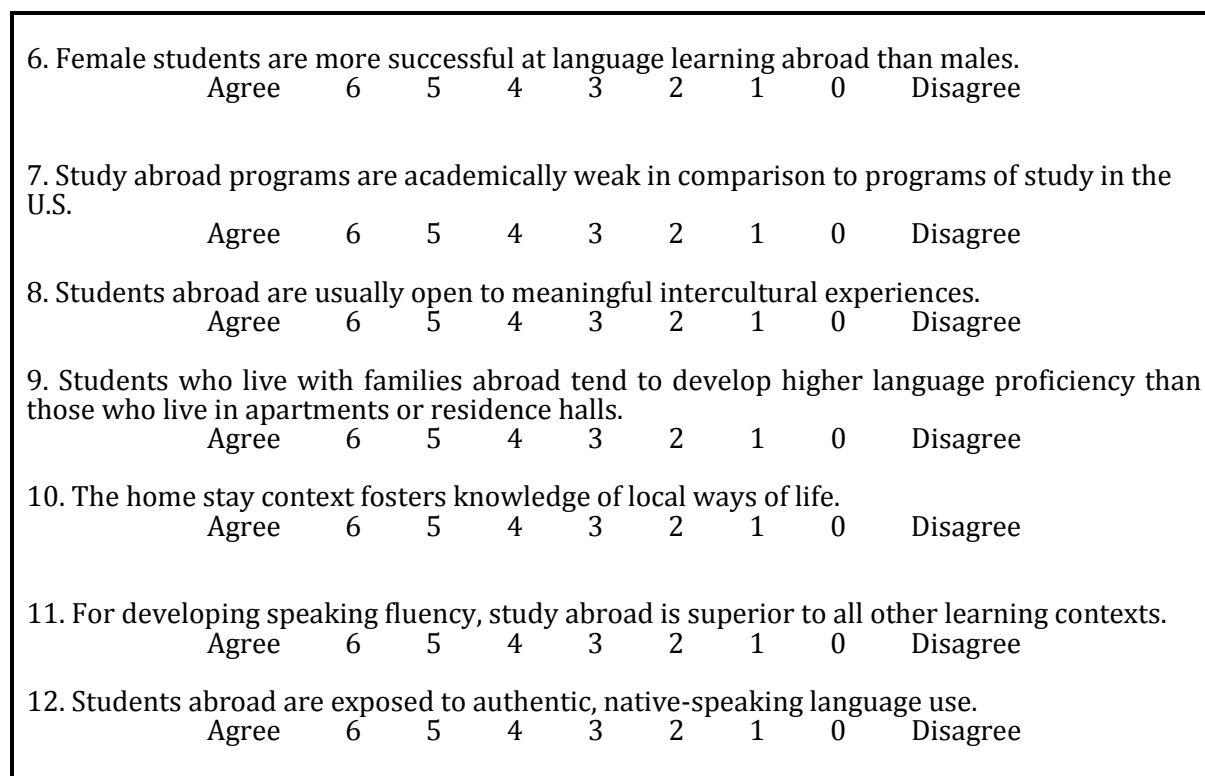


Figure 2: Opinions about study abroad and language learning

Working on research about language learning abroad has been an eye-opening experience. Having paid close attention to the portrayal of study abroad in policy documents, language acquisition research, and stories from students, and having performed some research of my own, I now see that the contemporary study abroad experience does not necessarily match what I recall. Today, there is a new configuration of forces at work to constrain and downplay the importance of language learning in study abroad for American students. Furthermore, in my enthusiastic celebration of study abroad, I am apparently in a minority among American education professionals. I have come to believe that the language learning aspects of study abroad are at risk, and that language educators need a better understanding of the benefits accruing to students who go abroad so that we can work to promote and improve the educational meaning of our students' in-country sojourns. By "constraining forces" I mean the following:

- 1) At the national level, an emphasis on quantity over quality of study abroad participation
- 2) At the level of general educational trends, a deep-seated mistrust of study abroad among educators and the public
- 3) At the level of program design, the closure and cohesiveness of American groups abroad

- 4) At the level of individual experience, the influence of globalization on communicative practices, social networks, and habits of thought.

1.1. The national level

The current decade has seen strong apparent support for study abroad among American policy makers, including the United States Senate, which declared 2006 the national “Year of Study Abroad.” The Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Commission published its recommendations in 2005, calling for the United States to send one million students abroad each year because “the engagement of American undergraduates with the world around them is vital to the nation’s well-being” (p. 5). This Report interprets study abroad as the next major step in the evolution of America higher education, analogous in scope and impact to the G.I. Bill or the establishment of land-grant universities.

If we consider the demographics of American participation in study abroad, we quickly see that this increase is occurring even without Lincoln fellowships (Institute for International Education, Open Doors Report). Each year, about 8% more American students go abroad in comparison with the previous year. However, if we look closely at this information from the perspective of language learning, we begin to see that a mere increase in participation does not necessarily correspond to more engagement with foreign languages. Students are opting for shorter stays and different academic foci, with a significant proportion studying in Anglophone countries. The Junior Year abroad involving foreign language majors now verges on the anachronistic, as the typical participant is a business or social science major going abroad for a semester or less. The report does not include data on language of instruction, but it is worth considering the fact that even when students select an “integrated” course of study in a country relevant to their language learning, universities in Europe and elsewhere are increasingly offering instruction in English for their own and foreign students. Taken together these facts suggest that the new typical study abroad participant is less likely than in the past to be well prepared for language learning, to be received in contexts where language learning is prioritized, and to exhibit a durable commitment to that endeavor. While language educators and study abroad professionals may not be empowered to reverse these trends, we should at the very least be informed about the erosion of emphasis on language learning in study abroad for American students, and be prepared to argue against it.

1.2. General educational trends

One of my most instructive readings has been the case presented by Joan Elias Gore (2005), a specialist in international education with an interest in the history of American study abroad. Gore points out that even if the raw figures show more participation in study abroad every year, these numbers need to be placed in the context of overall increases in the student population. In fact, the *proportion* of full-time students who go abroad each year remains at less than 3%, and study abroad is a feminized activity, with women in a significant majority throughout its history. Gore examined a broad range of policy documents and arguments to figure out why study abroad has remained a relatively marginal academic pursuit for American students, despite decades of efforts to promote it. Her analysis of these documents revealed that there are in essence two ways in which American educators interpret study abroad. The dominant way, according to Gore, is rooted in the view that education of true quality for economic success can only be obtained in the United States. Study abroad is viewed *by the majority* as a leisure activity, akin to the Grand Tour by which the British gentry upgraded the cosmopolitanism of its youth beginning around the 17th century. A second notion is that study abroad does not involve work; it is a frivolous, decorative pursuit for the privileged few, appropriate mainly as a finishing touch on the education of elite women. Alternative voices do exist, however, particularly in the post-9/11 era, and belong to students willing to undergo hardships and face challenges in the interest of enhancing their education via the liberal arts curriculum, thereby contributing to global peace and understanding. Here once more, even if we cannot change the minds of colleagues who do not believe that international education is a valuable pursuit, we can provide counter arguments about the exact benefits of study abroad and work to support students with an “alternative” frame of mind.

1.3. Program design

In 1997, James A. Coleman, a British specialist in international education, published an article in which the practices of study abroad in the United States are compared with those of the United Kingdom and Europe more generally. In Europe, students have traditionally undertaken a full year of residence abroad during which they are expected to act as independent, responsible adults, navigating the foreign university and other settings on their own. For language students in the UK, residence abroad has traditionally been a mandatory part of the curriculum. For Coleman, therefore, what is remarkable about American study abroad is the closure and cohesiveness of study abroad groups. American programs “generally envisage the short-term transfer of cohesive groups of American students to a different geographical base, where they may

benefit from formal (classroom) and informal (naturalistic) language learning but without necessarily abandoning an American educational framework and academic support" (1997, p. 1).

One possible effect of this kind of program design is that students interact for the most part only among themselves, and do not become actively engaged in extensive interactions with local people. This phenomenon is illustrated in accounts such as Feinberg's (2000) description of short term study abroad experienced by American students as opportunities for togetherness in recreational activities, such as bungee jumping and excess drinking on an exotic backdrop (in Zimbabwe). The students whose stories are recounted in Feinberg's articles made no reference to their host communities and did not appear to have noticed that Zimbabwe is an impoverished dictatorship where a large proportion of the population is HIV-positive. Another study by Levin (1999) showed that language learning was explicitly downplayed in a program for Americans in France, favoring instead a view of study abroad as a process of gaining greater personal maturity. The students Levin followed were shown to systematically remove themselves from any linguistically challenging activity, opting for example to avoid the university cafeteria by instead shopping for peanut butter and salsa at anonymous box stores.

It is no wonder, when we read these reports, that American educators do not universally value study abroad. This kind of program design is of course linked to an American view of what a university is supposed to provide for its students, including relatively close supervision and a strong sense of affiliation, and this we cannot easily change or may not want to change. But even a brief review of these concerns suggests that we should give careful consideration to the language learning opportunities presented to students in specific programs, and counsel them to choose wisely. We can also support and help to design programs that explicitly include language learning among their goals and offer significant help to students who want to learn the language.

Students might have as their long-term goal to 'become fluent,' and it would serve no purpose to discourage this goal, even if it is rarely met in the course of a typical contemporary sojourn abroad. However, we can help students fill in the contours of their expectations about what it takes to 'become fluent,' and advise them about setting shorter term goals for the success of their stay. It will help many students to sort out the competing goals they may have for their time abroad, and make an honest assessment of the role they believe language learning should play. The following activity can be used to help students reflect upon and prioritize their goals for study abroad.

<p>Setting Goals for Study Abroad To be used with students</p> <p>Rate the following goals from 1-11 according to their importance to you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ___ becoming more cosmopolitan ___ developing an international perspective ___ gaining in personal maturity ___ having fun ___ learning the language ___ getting to know students from around the world ___ experiencing everyday local culture first-hand ___ getting to know local people where I will study ___ understanding the world from another point of view ___ seeing the sights (museums and monuments) ___ preparing for an international career ___ other? <p>How will you use the study abroad experience to help you meet your most important goals?</p>

Figure 3: Setting goals for study abroad

1.4. Individual experiences

Globalization is the “intensification of worldwide social relations” as “the constraints of geography” are decreasingly relevant (Block & Cameron, 2002, p.1). Globalization has changed the conditions for language learning in several ways. First, participation in social networks is no longer as strongly influenced by geographical distance as it used to be. The development of worldwide communications technology and the ease of travel mean that a sojourn abroad no longer necessarily distances students from their circle of friends and family. One of the most surprising aspects of the student experiences I observed in 2003 (Kinger, 2008) was the extent to which these students retained personal control of their communicative environment. For example, many students used their iPods to block out the sounds of their new locale, and some remained virtually ‘at home’ in daily, sometimes hourly interaction with their parents or boyfriends via email or Instant Messaging. I was also astonished to find that the students quite routinely entertained visits from members of their families or home social circles, often for weeks at a time, and to discover that others travelled extensively themselves, usually in the company of other Americans. In the context of a semester-long stay abroad, the amount of time during which students’ attention was diverted from their local circumstances was significant.

The second way in which globalization has altered the conditions for language learning is through the widespread use of English as the acknowledged *lingua mundi*. This development means both that it has become more difficult to find situations in which American students can become engaged in foreign language learning and that it

is easier for Americans to dismiss foreign language competence as irrelevant. Students abroad often find that their competence in English is in demand, or that communication in international groups of students is carried out in English, and this means that they must struggle to foreground their need for extensive interaction in the language they are trying to learn.

Finally, in some parts of the world globalization is viewed as an American bid for worldwide economic and cultural domination, and therefore contributes to the negative image of their country that American students are likely to encounter when they go abroad (Falk & Kanach, 2000). According to these authors, the United States may be viewed with admiration or mistrust, but is rarely viewed with indifference, and these perceptions place American students in a unique position both to suffer indignities and to learn language. The way in which students react to criticism of the United States can vary considerably, of course, and may depend to some extent upon whether or not they carry with them some version of the “alternative” frame of mind described by Gore (2005). My research suggests, however, that many American students arrive in their study abroad destinations without having given much consideration to the image of their country, or its foreign policy, in the places they visit. These students may find it shocking to be confronted on these issues by host family members or peers. Some react defensively and recoil into national superiority, cutting themselves off from the very people who are most likely to nurture their language learning. For others, study abroad involves dialogue with others; it serves to enhance their understanding of others’ viewpoints on the United States and ultimately to upgrade their general global awareness.

American students abroad have, for a long time, encountered the use of their own language, made decisions about how to allocate their time and how much to attend to local reality, and been faced with critical comments or strong curiosity about their country. These concerns are not new, but are intensified by the process of globalization in which language educators must ask themselves what benefits accrue to students who change places, how to advise students about their uses of time, how to ensure that students find occasions for personal engagement in local activities, and what would help them to develop an analytic rather than a judgmental stance.

This *Guidebook* is presented at a time when it is very important both to defend and to illustrate the value of study abroad and also to work toward enhancing this value. To present convincing arguments for study abroad, educators need to be able to talk about its potential as an environment for language learning, to say precisely what aspects of language are furthered in a study abroad environment, and what learning processes can unfold during an in-country stay. Chapters Two, Three, and Four each present information useful for this purpose. Chapter Two offers some findings from language learning research that show how study abroad can enhance students’ communicative repertoires in particular areas, some of which are difficult to teach in classroom settings. This chapter highlights, to the extent possible, the unique

opportunities for language learning that study abroad can present to learners. Chapter Three considers the process of learning languages abroad through observation, participation, and introspection, once again showing that study abroad can expand both the amount and the quality of learning opportunities. In Chapter Four, we explore the concept of the “rich point” introduced by the ethnographer Michael Agar to convey the extent to which intercultural misunderstandings can yield insights about the connections between communicative practices and cultures, and we examine some stories from real study abroad experiences that illustrate the kinds of conflicts that can arise.

Chapter Five once again examines stories told by or about students abroad in order to show the ways in which the concerns outlined in the present chapter can play out in real life contexts. In this chapter, teachers may consider what it means for language learning when American students decide, or are enjoined, to stick together, excluding their hosts. The chapter also presents stories about students’ encounters with English and with multilingualism abroad, and stories about particular students who opted to use global communication networks or travel as a way of distancing themselves from local learning opportunities. In this chapter, we also review cases where students miss opportunities to learn by relying exclusively on what they already know about the language or about how to interpret intercultural conflicts. Chapter Six concludes the volume with several suggestions for ways in which study abroad participants can be welcomed home to campus with a commitment to further nurturing and refinement of their language ability.

Activities, tasks, and topics for reflection are presented throughout this *Guidebook*, offering suggestions for work to promote active engagement in language learning abroad. In the pre-departure phase, for example, teachers can help their students form realistic goals, and consider with them how to make the most of the communicative settings they will encounter, including classrooms, homestays, service-related interactions and conversations with peers. This *Guidebook* also proposes recommendations and projects for the study abroad period, meant to encourage students to make meaningful contact with local people and explore their views in dispassionate ways.

2 *What students can learn abroad*

It is logical to presume, as many teachers do, that language students who go abroad are offered many advantages in comparison with those whose learning is confined to classrooms. Most obviously, study abroad can dramatically increase the amount of **time** that students spend in activities related to language learning. More importantly, however, study abroad can also change the **nature** of students' engagement in these activities. Except in rare cases, classroom learning is a formal, academic pursuit, involving general precepts, abstract rules, and theatrical display of language ability. While living in a host community, students can be exposed to a broad array of formal and informal language use, and their own language use becomes consequential for success in academic, social or service encounters. Learners abroad can expand their communicative repertoires to match a variety of contexts, and they can develop greater autonomy and confidence as second language users.

Teachers often perceive that students returning from a sojourn abroad exhibit greater ease in their second language use, that they are more 'fluent' speakers and sound more 'natural.' Teachers also commonly notice that veterans of study abroad programs have special insight into the cultural dimensions of language use: they might know, for example, that choosing 'usted' rather than 'tu' to address a Spanish-speaking elder is a form of respect tied to an age-related social hierarchy. But what are the elements that contribute to this impression of 'fluency,' 'naturalness' or cultural knowledge? How can we move beyond vague appreciations and use what we know about language development to craft specific arguments in favor of study abroad? The task below (Figure 4) offers an opportunity to analyze raw data illustrating the changes in speaking ability experienced by one participant in a semester-long study abroad program.

Learning to speak French: Analysis of spoken data

For language educators and study abroad professionals

Data analysis: Development of Bill's speaking proficiency (Frog Story Data)

The data below show Bill's performance on a picture story narration task (based on Mercer Meyer's *Frog Goes to Dinner*) before and after his semester-long sojourn in France. Bill began his study in France with Elementary proficiency as measured by the *Test de Français International*.

Note: Switches to English are in **bold**.

Colloquial forms are in *italics*. These include:

- deletion of the negative particle 'ne' (*ce n'est pas juste* → *c'est pas juste*)
- topic fronting (*ma tête elle marche pas*)
- lexis (*mec* = *guy*)
- a colloquial phrase (*j'en ai marre*)

Pauses lengths in seconds are noted in parentheses.

1. Examine the pre-test data and describe Bill's performance in terms of a) fluency, b) control of grammatical and lexical features of French, c) story telling ability.

Pre-test

un soir um (5.0) une famille, aller à (.) um au restaurant, um (6.0) pour [incomprehensible] um (12.8) le père et la me-la mère uh (3.0) **were** très heureux um pour l'expérience, uh, pour la famille. um (3.0) parce que, (11.0) **>it would be nice to sit and talk>** (2.2) uh (.) malheureusement uh (16.0) uh (.) le garçon um (.) **>had other things planned>** uh (2.0) **by by bringing the frog** (1.8) **the-the to have fun with** uh (9.0) l::a (6.2) les problèmes **began** uh (4.2) **>after they were sitting down>** (3.8) **and they began ordering their meal** (9.0) **I guess the-the frog began to have his fun** uh (1.0) party (11.2) **in--interrupting the music** (.) la musique et (20.2) **scare-scared an old lady** (.) um (14.2) **ruining** uh rendez-vous pour uh uh (5.5) gentil peuple peuple gentil um (.) finalement (3.2) uh (3.0) **the owner** (5.2) **uh** **°caught the frog°** (2.2) **and** (8.0) **ohhho** (4.2) **that wasn't happy** la la famille (9.8) **was extremely embarrassed** (2.0) as (.) **the owner** (3.2) **removed the frog** ((giggles)) (.) um (.) dans la (5.2) la automobile um (4.4.) à la-dans la automobile, l'automobile uh à la maison (.) uh (1.0) la mère et le père (4.0) **were ridiculously upset** (2.1) **at the** (1.4) à la g-g-à la garçon (4.0) uh (3.2) **in fact** (2.8) i::l (4.2) soeur **°was angry too°** (4.4) dans la maison, (3.2) le père **ordered** (1.8) uh son bon à la (7.8) **to his room. There,** (4.2) **the boy quickly forgot about his problems** (.) **and** **^played with his** chien **°avec his-avec sa chien°** (2.0) that was miserable

[one night um (5.0) a family, to go to (.) um to the restaurant, um (6.0) for [incomprehensible] um (12.8) the father and the moth-the mother uh (3.0) **were** very happy um for the experience, uh, for the family. um (3.0) because, (11.0) **>it would be nice to sit and talk>** (2.2) uh (.) unfortunately uh (16.0) uh (.) the boy um (.) **>had other things planned>** uh (2.0) **by by bringing the frog** (1.8) **the-the to have fun with** uh (9.0) l::a (6.2) the problem **began** uh (4.2) **>after they were sitting down>** (3.8) **and they began ordering their meal** (9.0) **I**

guess the-the frog began to have his fun uh (1.0) party (11.2) in--interrupting the music (.) the music and (20.2) **scare-scare an old lady** (.) um (14.2) **ruining** uh rendez-vous for uh uh (5.5) nice people people nice um (.) finally (3.2) uh (3.0) **the owner (5.2) uh ^ocaught the frog^o (2.2) and (8.0) ohhho (4.2) that wasn't happy** the the family (9.8) **was extremely embarrassed** (2.0) as (.) **the owner (3.2) removed the frog** ((giggles)) (.) um (.) in the (5.2) the automobile um (4.4.) at the -in the l automobile, the automobile uh at home (.) uh (1.0) the mother and the father (4.0) **were ridiculously upset** (2.1) **at the** (1.4) at the b-b-at the boy (4.0) uh (3.2) **in fact** (2.8) h::e (4.2) sister **^owas angry too^o** (4.4) in the house, (3.2) the father **ordered** (1.8) uh his good to (7.8) **to his room. There, (4.2) the boy quickly forgot about his problems** (.) and **[^]played with his dog ^owith his-with his dog ^o** (2.0) that was miserable]

2. Examine the post-test data and describe Bill's performance in terms of a) fluency, b) control of grammatical and lexical features of French, c) story telling ability, d) appropriation of colloquial forms.

Post-test

uh, l'autre nuit-soir-l'autre soir uh, il y avait une famille, qui, ^o*c'est pas juste ma tête elle marche pas.*^o l'autre soir-autre soir il y avait une fille qui (.)uh(4.0) qui alla::it uh au restaurant-un bon restaurant. um (3.0) uh (3.0) uh et (2.0) uh (4.0) le père ne s-sait-savait pas que uh s::a fille, uh ((laughter)) a eu une grenouille, dans, dans le-dans sa poche. Mais (2.8) uh tout le-tout la famille avait-était [^]prête p-pour un bon repas sans interruption sans-sans u::h l'iteration un repas (.) très bon. donc uh- u::h le (.) **^ocan i ask questions? no. Ok maybe^o the waiter person** ((laughter)) (takes on a squeaky voice) >après tout mon temps ici> *je sais pas le nom.* (laughs) um uh uh (2.0) après le- le décision de le choix de la famille .hh et pendant ce temps .hh uh la grenouille (1.4) a tombé de la poche de-de=uh de la fille-de fils-LE GARÇON. oh là là [^]garçon. de-de le garçon et **[^]jumped et jump** uh (2.8) sur le saxophone et-et-et et beaucoup de (.) riant a commencé, um (2.0) et puis uh, la grenouille, (5.0) est (1.6) était-était une grande disturbance uh, et u::h détruit le repas de- une-une femme qui ét-était- qui est très très riche, uh et-et puis, elle a (.) elle était u::h une interruption pour un *mec*, qu:i a -était uh reconnaître u-u-une femme uh e:t va vers sa table pour ça et (2.8) uh sa femme uh avait beaucoup de p-peur et et la grenouille- a détruit l-la nuit pour le *mec* et *c'est pas possible - c'était pas possible* pour uh le-le couple (5.0) ^o*j'en ai marre^o* que le couple a un-un bon soir. et finalement le-le (1.6) le prop- (.) le-le chef de le? le restaurant, uh était très très très en colère. um et (4.4) u::h et prend et et pris uh la grenouille, qui uh (.) et a [^]jeté, jeté la grenouille uh, de le restaurant, et uh uh sur la rue, dans la rue? et après uh [^]évidemment (.) la famille uh a fait-était punie avec leur repas malheureusement et toute la famille était-était très en colère et (.) uh avec le garçon, et la grenouille *bien sûr*.

[uh, the other night-evening-the other evening uh, there was a family, that, ^othat's not right my head isn't working. ^o the other night- other night there was a girl who uh was going uh to a restaurant- a good restaurant. um uh uh and uh the father doesn't know- didn't know that uh his daughter, uh had a frog, in, in the-his her pocket. but uh the whole - the whole family had- was ready for a good meal without interruption- without (irritation?) a very good meal. so uh uh **can I ask questions? No. Ok maybe the waiter person** after all my time here I don't know the name. Um uh uh after the -the decision of the choice of the family. and during that time uh the frog fell out of the pocket of the daughter- the son THE BOY. oh la la boy. of the -of the boy and **jumped and jump** un on the saxophone and-and-and- and a lot of laughing started, um and then the frog, is was-was a great disturbance uh and un destroys the meal of a a women quo wa-was who is very very rich, un and- and then, she (the frog) was uh an interruption for a guy, who- was to recognize a-a-a woman uh and goes toward her table for that and un his wife uh was very scared and and the frog destroyed the night for the guy and

it's impossible- it was impossible for uh the couple ° I'm really fed up° that the couple has a good evening. And finally the prop- the the head of the the restaurant, uh was very very very angry. um and uh takes and and took uh the frog, who uh and threw-threw the frog from the restaurant, and uh uh on the street? in the street? and afterwards obviously the family was- was punished with their meal unfortunately and the whole family was-was very angry and uh with the boy, and the frog of course.]

3) *Based on these data, what observations can be made about changes in Bill's speaking proficiency after a four-month sojourn in France? To what extent can we say that he has developed fluency? What does Bill still need to learn?*

4) *For assessing development of foreign language proficiency in study abroad contexts, what are the advantages and drawbacks of this method of data collection?*

5) *What kinds of additional information about Bill's experience would be helpful in interpreting these data?*

Figure 4: Learning to speak French: Analysis of spoken data

This chapter is intended to promote teachers' advocacy efforts by pinpointing some of the achievements of language learners abroad, as documented in empirical research (for an in-depth critical overview, see Kinginger, 2009). Because the intent is to help teachers present well-founded and precise reasons to promote study abroad for language learners, in this chapter I deliberately adopt a positive outlook on the findings of study abroad research. I focus on what students *can* learn, given well-designed programs, true desire for language ability, and a measure of good fortune in their planned and chance encounters.

For all of the reasons outlined in Chapter One, in reality the outcomes of study abroad are quite variable. Researchers are quick to point out that study abroad is not a magic formula for language learning; it is their responsibility to highlight both the advantages and the shortcomings of the settings they examine. Some researchers (e.g., Huebner, 1995) even claim that individual differences in achievement seem to be amplified by an experience abroad. That is, students with similar profiles of language ability and motivation at the beginning of a period abroad can return home with vastly different profiles at the end. In my own research (Kinger, 2008), there were some students who made impressive gains in language ability, and others who seemed to have forgotten some of what they knew of French before they went to France! Readers of the American study abroad research find that the in-country sojourn is implicitly understood as a capstone experience at the end of academic language learning. There is a sense that the abilities that students display upon completion of their program represent, in a final way, the height of their achievement. If we choose instead to interpret study abroad as part of a longer-term process, then it is easier and more legitimate to see its contributions in a positive light, as part of that process.

In general, the findings of research follow the logic outlined above: study abroad can have a beneficial effect on **every** aspect of language learning, but it is especially

useful for the development of **social interactive** abilities that are difficult to cultivate in classrooms. The research includes projects defining language learning in many different ways, and has generally followed broader trends in second language studies. Some researchers try to measure outcomes in terms of holistic definitions like ‘proficiency’ or ‘fluency,’ and others focus on components of communicative ability such as grammatical competence, vocabulary, speech acts, sociolinguistic appropriateness, or strategies. In the following sections, I offer selected findings from research pinpointing the specific potential advantages of a sojourn abroad for language learning. I begin with the research on components of communicative competence and move on to the research addressing each modality of language use (speaking, reading, listening, and writing). In the following sections I substantiate the claims that study abroad can

- boost students communicative ambition
- enhance students’ use of key grammatical features
- improve students’ readiness for further language instruction
- expand and refine students’ vocabularies
- improve students’ pronunciation
- improve students’ performance and interpretation of speech acts
- further students’ conversational competence
- improve students’ understanding of register and style
- expand students’ sociolinguistic repertoires
- promote the development of speaking proficiency
- enhance fluency
- enhance student’s listening comprehension
- enhance students’ reading comprehension and motivation to develop foreign language literacy
- enhance students’ writing ability and motivation to write well

2.1. Components of communicative competence

Since the latter decades of the 20th century, ‘communicative competence’ has become the default definition of language ability in the United States. As many of us remember, this definition came into favor at a time when there was great emphasis on the functional aspects of language ability. Rather than focusing on knowledge *about* language, teachers were encouraged to develop approaches leading to expert language *use*. In order to move in this direction, the profession borrowed expertise from anthropology, specifically from Dell Hymes (e.g., 1984) and the ethnography of communication. Hymes had argued that language use in context involves more than

command of language forms; one also needs to know what is appropriate, feasible, and actually done in particular settings. Hymes proposed ‘communicative competence’ in part as a challenge to researchers who would work to describe the social and cultural meaning of language use in actual interactions. In language teaching, meanwhile, ‘communicative competence’ was defined as the ability to express, interpret, and negotiate meaning (Savignon, 1983) and was broken down into several interrelated components. Minimally, communicative competence was seen as consisting of:

grammatical competence, or the ability to manipulate the formal features of the language (grammar, words, phonology or writing systems)

discourse competence, or the ability to create and understand texts that are internally cohesive and coherent in their context

sociolinguistic competence, or the ability to use language appropriately in a given setting

strategic competence, or the ability to compensate for difficulties in any of the other areas

Communicative competence was widely promoted as the desired outcome of language learning, and became a popular ‘buzz word’ in educational circles. This was true even though the research that Hymes had encouraged had yet to influence language teaching in any significant way. The profession did not in fact have adequate pedagogical descriptions of discourse or sociolinguistic norms for many languages, particularly those less commonly taught. For the more commonly taught ‘world’ languages, choosing norms to prioritize from among a wide variety of possibilities also produced an irresolvable quandary. Should we teach the discourse practices of Spain or of Costa Rica, the sociolinguistics of France or of Quebec, what is appropriate among working class or bourgeois speakers, for youth or for older generations? As a result, and even though many teachers understood communicative approaches primarily as a reason to sideline grammar, most programs retain a strong emphasis on grammatical competence at the expense of the other components of communicative ability. Study abroad, therefore, has always been and continues to be perceived as a key source of students’ knowledge about second language discourse and sociolinguistic features.

<i>Study abroad can boost students’ communicative ambition.</i>
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This is not to say that study abroad cannot also have an important impact on the grammatical competence of our students. To recall, grammatical competence includes the ability to use the formal features of a language, including morphology and syntax as

well as vocabulary and pronunciation. In the area of morphology and syntax, a number of researchers have tried, and failed, to show that the overall grammatical accuracy of student language use increases with experience abroad (Walsh 1994) or in comparison to students at home (Collentine, 2004). However, even though students continue to make many errors in their manipulation of linguistic forms, the study abroad experience appears to change the nature of their ambition as language users. In comparison with their peers at home, they try to do more, and a greater of variety of things with the language they know. Freed (1995), for example, observed that study abroad participants attempted to communicate more complicated ideas in French than their classroom counterparts. Freed, So, and Lazar (2003) noted that study abroad participants wrote at greater length in French and attempted to recount more interesting stories of personal experience than their classroom peers.

Study abroad can enhance students' use of key grammatical features.

While some researchers find little improvement in students' display of overall grammatical accuracy, a closer, more precise look at changes in students' use of grammatical features presents a different picture. In Howard's (2005) research, for example, students of French did not completely master past tense and aspect after a year abroad, but they made notable gains in comparison to their peers at home. They used more past tense forms and matched them more successfully to their context. They relied less on temporal expressions (like 'yesterday,' or 'in the past') to mark past time, making autonomous use of the verb forms instead.

Study abroad can improve students' readiness for further language instruction.

In a study by Isabelli and Nishida (2005), after nine months abroad learners of Spanish produced more complex syntax and more subjunctive forms than their counterparts at home, but the rate at which they used the subjunctive in required contexts was only 33 per cent. A follow up study by Isabelli (2007) demonstrated that study abroad enhances students' 'linguistic maturity' (p. 336) and readiness to profit from grammar instruction. The students who had experience in Spanish-speaking countries were better prepared for explicit instruction on the use of the subjunctive. In short, students who go abroad still routinely make grammatical errors in their language use, but they can make significant progress and they can become more sophisticated learners.

Study abroad can expand and refine students' vocabularies.

For vocabulary development, two studies show that a sojourn abroad can help students to develop expansive lexical repertoires. Milton and Meara (1994) used the *Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test* to measure the number of words known by 53 European exchange students living in the United Kingdom. As a group, the students displayed dramatic gain scores at the end of their sojourn, with some increasing their vocabularies by more than 100%. The average vocabulary growth rate was approximately *four times as fast* as the rate for students at home. Later, Ife, Vives Bois and Meara (2000) measured the extent to which students' vocabularies become more native-like, using a test in which students are presented with three words where two are identified by native speakers as closely associated with each other. Their task is to choose the misfit word. Regardless of their initial proficiency level, the students' knowledge of vocabulary was deepened and made more native-like by the study abroad experience. The more time the students had spent abroad, the more lexical expertise they were able to display.

Study abroad can improve students' pronunciation.

Pronunciation is a notoriously difficult aspect of second language development for late adolescent and adult learners, and several studies show that study abroad confers no particular benefit in this area (e.g., Díaz-Campos, 2004; Mora, 2008). Yet, there is at least one project in which students abroad are shown to significantly improve both their perception and their production of second language phonology. Using acoustic analysis, O'Brien (2003) found that American student in Germany learned to perceive and to pronounce German vowels in native-like ways. Even more impressive is the finding that native speaker judges, when listening to speech samples from the study abroad participants, were unable to distinguish them from natives.

Grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are routine preoccupations of classroom language teachers, but what of the other components of communicative competence? In turning to the discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic aspects of language use, we begin to fully appreciate the value of study abroad in expanding students' communicative repertoires.

Study abroad can improve students' performance and interpretation of speech acts.

A number of projects focus on speech acts, or the ways in which language learners 'do things with words' (Austin, 1975), such as apologizing, requesting or giving advice. The ability to perform and interpret speech acts requires knowledge of formulas (such as *I'm sorry*, *Could you please X*, or *If I were in your shoes, I would Y*) and the ability to match these formulas to situations in appropriate ways. Study abroad offers students many occasions to observe how speech acts are performed in everyday language use and to do consequential things with their own words. Researchers interested in speech acts typically test students' abilities using various forms of role-play, and compare the ways learners carry out the tasks with similar performances by native speakers. Findings of these studies indicate that students rarely perform speech acts in entirely native-like ways (e.g., Barron, 2003), and that they may transfer preferences for certain strategies from their primary language, correctly performing the 'wrong' speech act for the context (e.g. Kondo, 1997). However, overall the research shows that students return from study abroad with greater ability both to generate speech acts appropriate for their contexts (e.g., Cohen & Shively, 2007; Magnan & Back, 2007) and to judge the appropriateness of speech acts performed by others (Matsumura, 2001; Schauer, 2006).

Moreover, Shardakova's (2005) research suggests that experience abroad alone can lead to a native-like appreciation of speech acts in context. Shardakova looked at the ways in which native speakers and American learners of Russian performed apologies and interpreted the gravity of offenses involving different interlocutors (friends, strangers, or authority figures). Two groups of students with high proficiency were among the participants in the study: a group whose ability had been developed in a domestic immersion program, and a group who had extensive experience in Russia. While both groups could apologize in Russian, only the study abroad participants understood situations calling for an apology in the way that Russians do, and crafted their apologies in light of this awareness.

Study abroad can further students' conversational competence.

In addition to examining speech acts as independent features of language use, researchers have examined the ways in which study abroad influences students' abilities to participate in conversations. To interact successfully in informal conversation, students need to take responsibility for their own utterances (and not rely on a teacher to do this for them). They also need to know how to open and close a

conversation politely, and they need to have a repertoire of ‘gambits’ for holding the floor and showing involvement, solidarity, or respect for their interlocutors.

Three studies show that a sojourn abroad can enhance students’ autonomy as conversationalists. Smartt and Scudder (2004) compared the ways in which intermediate-level students of Spanish at home and in Mexico chose to ‘repair’ their utterances. The study abroad group showed significantly less reliance on English and worked harder to control their own performance. Lafford (1995 & 2004) showed that students of Spanish at home displayed classroom-oriented strategies such as appealing for assistance and switching to English, whereas veterans of study abroad had begun to focus more on their message than on monitoring their own performance.

The study abroad participants in Lafford’s (1995) study also showed expertise in opening and closing a conversation in Spanish using formulaic routines (e.g., *con permiso* or *vale, muy bien, muchas gracias*). Following a year in Japan, the Australian secondary students in Marriott’s (1995) study used polite routines to begin and end their conversations in Japanese. The process by which students appropriate conversational ability is illustrated in Hassall’s (2006) diary study of learning to take leave in Indonesian. Hassall could not find any pedagogical materials describing this topic, so he documented his personal ethnographic quest to figure out how to say *good-bye*. At the beginning of his sojourn, he knew just one way to say *good-bye* (*permisi*) and only learned a second one (the *dulu* statement) after a painful incident in which he did not understand that someone was trying to leave an interaction with him. Learning to take leave turned out to be a ‘major task’ (p. 53) requiring a continuous cycle of hypothesis formulation, checking, and re-formulation. Hassall concluded that informal interaction in study abroad is a ‘powerful stimulus for the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge’ (p. 52).

In my own research (Kinger, 2008), I tried to find out if students’ developed greater awareness of leave-taking formulas in French. I asked the participants to match a series of formal and informal ways to say *good-bye* (e.g., *adieu, au revoir, ciao, à plus*) with a series of imagined contexts. Before their sojourn in France, many of the participants seemed to lack the ability to judge the appropriateness of leave-taking formulas. They matched *adieu*, which is usually reserved for permanent separations or very formal situations with a teenager leaving a disco or with the end of a job interview, when the speaker would logically hope to see his or her interlocutor again in the not-too-distant future. When asked what a host mother would say to her student guest as they retire for the night, they chose *à tout à l’heure* (see you shortly)! By the end of their semester in France, most of the students had gained a much stronger command of leave taking formulas in general, and also understood more about how these formulas help to create formality and informality in different kinds of interactions.

Before continuing to review the literature and basic claims about the outcomes of study abroad, I include an activity to illustrate these claims. The exercise below

(Figure 5) is intended to raise consciousness about the variety of speech acts for leave-taking that exist in English. This exercise is appropriate for use either in teachers' or study abroad professionals' discussion groups, or with students who are preparing for a sojourn abroad.

In addition to learning how to structure the beginnings and ends of conversations, students abroad can develop larger repertoires of conversational gambits. Grieve (2007) for example, studied the ways in which speakers use vagueness to further their conversational goals, that is, to hold the floor while thinking of something to say next, or to encourage an informal, chatty ambiance. Speakers of English, for example, use hedges (e.g., *kind of*), extenders (e.g., *and stuff like that*) and shields (e.g., *I suppose*). When these markers of vagueness are totally absent, a conversationalist can come across as cold, awkward, or unnatural. In Grieve's research, German adolescent learners of English developed a wider repertoire of vagueness markers than their peers at home, thus making their conversation seem more fluent and natural.

Situations for Leave-Taking

To be used with students or by language educators

Choose all of the expressions that are appropriate for each situation.

A. Diner to companions after being called away urgently

Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day	

B. Boss saying good-bye to employees

Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day	

C. Ending a message on a close friend's telephone answering machine

Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day	

D. Job applicant at the end of an interview

Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day	

E. Old lady taking leave of teatime hosts

Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day	

F. One colleague to another on the way out to lunch

Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day	

G. Orator to deceased at funeral							
Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles	
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day		
H. Shopkeeper to a departing customer							
Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles	
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day		
I. Teenager to friends online							
Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles	
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day		
J. Host mother to exchange student about to retire for the evening							
Goodbye	Bye-bye	L8R	Adieu	Farewell	Cheers	Tootles	
Peace out	So long	Ta ta	See ya	Good night	Have a nice day		
How do you know and how did you learn to match these expressions to their context?							
What is the range of leave-taking expressions in the language you teach/ are learning?							
What features of interactions need to be taken into account when choosing them?							

Figure 5: Situations for leave-taking

Study abroad can improve students' understanding of register and style.

One of the most challenging aspects of classroom language teaching is register, or the ways in which the forms of language characterize and help to create different kinds of social situations. Everyone knows that we speak differently, for example, when we are chatting with friends versus interviewing a job candidate. We choose different formulas when we are ordering a hot dog from street vendor versus consulting the menu in a three-star restaurant. If we are sane, we usually address our dog in one way, our spouse in another way and our boss in an entirely different way. According to Lippi-Green, 'the inability to use or recognize the social markings of linguistic variants is one of the most significant problems of second language learners, and one that is rarely dealt with in the classroom, where the myth of standard language has a stronghold' (1997, p. 30). Classroom language use is, in general, formal, decorous, and sanitized, as well it should be. But unless we make a special effort to expand the use of language in our classrooms to include a variety of formal and informal uses and different situations calling for a range of styles, many students do not become aware

that there are varieties of their foreign language suitable for different uses, or even that the choice of variety really matters in shaping the interpretation of their utterances by others. Study abroad provides an invaluable opportunity for students to perceive that there are often various ways to say the ‘same’ thing and that the choice of variant makes a difference.

The exercise below is adapted from Leo van Lier’s (1995) *Introducing Language Awareness*. This text includes numerous pedagogical activities designed for use with students to promote reflection on issues such as ‘correctness’ in language use or the role of register in shaping interactive contexts. One such exercise presents a sliding scale of verbal etiquette illustrating how register can be ‘lowered’ or ‘raised’ by one’s choice of words.

Exploring Register Variation		
To be used with students		
Many names or actions can be expressed in neutral terms, euphemistically or dysphemistically, along a continuum that ranges from “nice” to “normal” to “rude.” Thus, “rest room” is nice, “bathroom” or “powder room” are normal, and “loo” or “john” are mildly rude. Fill in the missing expressions in the table below:		
Nice	Normal	Rude
	I have no money.	
This soup is interesting.		
		That’s bullshit.
	Fritz has died.	
		Bug off!
Adapted from van Lier, L. (1995). <i>Introducing Language Awareness</i> . London: Penguin.		
Consider some situations calling for ‘nice,’ ‘normal,’ or ‘rude’ talk in the language you are studying. How do you know, and how did you learn to evaluate these situations and choose language appropriate for them?		

Figure 6: Exploring register variation

To take another example, Anglophone classroom learners do not usually develop an appreciation of address forms in languages that have different ways to say ‘you’ until they are exposed to situations where the choice can impact the qualities of their relationships. Learners of French start out believing that choosing between *tu*

(informal) and *vous* (formal) is easy (Dewaele & Planchenault, 2006): *tu* is for children and people you know well, and *vous* is for everyone else. Beginners also unwittingly confuse their interlocutors by switching back and forth between the two forms within the same conversation, sometimes within the same utterance. If they continue to learn, they gradually begin to understand that the choice of address form is complex, and depends not only upon the nature of situations and relationships, but also upon how speakers want to portray themselves (as progressive versus conservative in political outlook, as friendly or respectful, etc.). Even native speakers of French face occasional dilemmas on the 'sociolinguistic tightrope' stretched between *tu* and *vous* (Dewaele, 2004) and this phenomenon is a cultural 'rich point' providing access to knowledge about societal values (Agar, 1994).

One of the most obvious needs of American language students abroad is for greater awareness of language itself. In analyzing the journals of study abroad participants in Russia, Miller and Ginsburg (1995) found that many of them relied upon 'folklinguistic theories,' grounded in common sense, to understand their task as language learners. These theories might, for example, reduce language to the 'building blocks' of words and the 'mortar' of grammar, or fluency to a matter of personal skill. For Miller and Ginsburg, what was most remarkable about the students' accounts was the absence of any appreciation for the social interactive aspects of language, even though study abroad offers rich opportunities for development in these domains. In the normal course of affairs, students form their views on foreign language learning through their access to textbooks and classroom interaction (as Wilkinson's 2002 study has demonstrated). They do not necessarily have opportunities to consider what it means to develop 'communicative competence,' including the pragmatic, discourse-level or sociolinguistic dimensions of this competence.

One way to address this issue would be simply to provide students with a list of their potential accomplishments in study abroad, such as the one provided here, and to discuss each of these in turn, pointing out that study abroad can enhance not only command of grammar and vocabulary, but also the ability to interpret and manipulate speech acts, or to tailor language use to its social interactive context.

Another approach is to present students with examples and thought-provoking activities illustrating the significance of linguistic resources beyond grammar and vocabulary. One example of this approach is to be found in 'Dancing with Words: Strategies for Learning Pragmatics in Spanish,' a website developed by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA):

http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/sp_pragmatics/home.html

and a parallel project for learners of Japanese:

<http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/japanese/introtospeechacts/index.htm>

These resources provide students with opportunities to observe and analyze a variety of speech acts in a broad range of settings.

Perhaps the most compelling and valuable approach, however, is to offer students occasions to practice their engagement in socially consequential language use, before they go abroad. In telecollaborative exchanges, for example, students interact directly with their peers at institutions abroad. In performing research on telecollaborative language learning (e.g., Kinginger and Belz, 2005), I have realized that these arrangements give students a taste, in a sheltered manner, of the 'real-life' experiences typical of language use abroad. Since they are interacting with peers, they tend to care much more than usual about how they are presenting themselves and to work harder at crafting an appropriate identity through their foreign language. In this context, they often discover for the first time that their use of register has genuine consequences for the nature of the talk. Sometimes, it turns out that the students' inexpert use of a sociolinguistic variant is more salient to their peers than any other aspect of their language, and becomes the focus of the talk.

Promoting Language Awareness in the Classroom

For teachers and study abroad professionals

The example below is from an interaction taking place via NetMeeting, between Roger and Liz in the US and their peer, André, in France. Roger and Liz have not yet understood that their choice of *tu* versus *vous* has an impact on André's feelings, so André undertakes to explain:

andré:12:45:22 -- que vous a-t-on dit à propos de l'utilisation de "tu" ou de "vous"?
[what did they tell you about the use of "tu" or of "vous"?]

Roger Liz:12:45:41 -- je pense que si nous parlons tous le temps, je voudrais utiliser "tu"
[I think that if we talk all the time, I would like to use "tu"]

andré:12:45:50 -- alors vas-y
[so go ahead]

andré:12:46:11 -- même des gens que tu ne connais pas, s'ils ont ton âge tutoiyez les
[even people you don't know, if they are your age call them "tu"]

Roger Liz:12:46:12 -- comme tu veux;)
[as you(T) wish;)]

andré:12:46:18 -- cool! Merci
[cool! Thanks]

andré:12:46:30 -- c'est d'abord une question d'âge
[first of all it's a question of age]

Roger Liz:12:46:40 -- les gens qui ont le meme age, en general je utilise "tu"
[people who are the same age in general I use "tu"]

Roger Liz:12:46:43 -- a mon avis, oui
[in my opinion, yes]

andré:12:46:58 -- entre jeunes, personne ne se vouvoie même si on a 5 ans de différence
[between young people nobody uses "vous" even if there are 5 years of difference]

Roger Liz:12:47:16 -- aux états-unis, on doit utiliser "vous" si quelqu'un est plus vieux, c'est un chose de respect, je crois (mais je pense que non)
[in the united states, we have to use "vous" if someone is older, it's a thing about respect, I think (but I think not)]

Roger Liz:12:47:24 -- oui? 5 ans?
[yes? 5 years?]

Roger Liz:12:47:30 -- c'est un règle utile?
[is it a useful rule?]

Roger Liz:12:47:31 -- haha
[haha]

andré:12:47:35 -- oui
[yes]

andré:12:47:38 -- entre jeunes
[between young people]

andré:12:47:43 -- après ça marche plus
[afterwards it works better]

Questions:

What 'theories' of *tu* and *vous* were Roger and Liz using to guide their choice in this interaction?

What lesson is André attempting to teach?

What evidence can you find to show that Roger and Liz are learning, in this interaction, to understand and use the *tu* and *vous* forms in French?

How might interactions of this kind serve to prepare students for their language-related experiences abroad?

As this task illustrates, student participation in direct interactions with native or otherwise expert users of the language under study can be an important source of insight about the social interactive domains of language use in general. Teachers who include such activities in their classrooms, and who help students to analyze their own participation in them, are also smoothing their students' transition to language use in study abroad settings.

Figure 7: Promoting language awareness in the classroom

Barron's (2006) research showed that Irish learners of German developed greater ability to choose the address forms *du* versus *Sie* in native-like ways after a year in Germany, especially in informal contexts. These students also became more consistent in their use of address forms, and performed less unmotivated switching of the kind that would be confusing in interactions. My own research on this topic (Kinging, 2008) showed that students of French were better able to choose and to use appropriate address forms in formal and informal situations. These students also lost some of their confidence in their own mastery French address forms, thus indicating a move toward the native speaker norm. Moreover, the more advanced speakers in the group indicated that they were aware of the fact that address forms have multiple layers of meaning related to their context of use but also to identity. Benjamin, for example, insisted on the use of *vous* in some situations normally calling for *tu* because he claimed the right to display a polite demeanor, and also no doubt because he lived in the home of a Baron and Baroness who had modeled their own display of upper-class identity during nightly dinnertime conversations.

Study abroad can expand students' sociolinguistic repertoires.

Learning to vary the register or style of one's foreign language discourse also requires knowledge of a range of other linguistic resources, including formal and colloquial words, syntax, and phonology. Most of the studies in this domain have been carried out with learners of French. For example, Dewaele and Regan (2001) found that advanced learners with experience abroad used very few colloquial words when speaking French. In my study (Kinging, 2008), therefore, I decided to see whether or not students gained in awareness of colloquial vocabulary, and the participants did in fact display significantly greater knowledge of colloquial words and phrases after a semester in France than before. In the area of syntax, Regan's work (1995, 1997) showed that study abroad promotes the ability to manipulate different ways to negate verbs (with or without the pre-verbal '*ne*') in native-like ways. Howard, Lemée, and Regan (2006) examined a phonological feature of spoken French: the deletion of /l/ in the subject pronouns *il* or *elle* (equivalent to the difference between *movin'* and *moving* in English) and showed that students with experience abroad had begun to approximate native norms in this area as well.

These studies all indicate that time spent abroad is crucial for the development of sociolinguistic repertoires extending beyond the formal register of classroom language use. They pinpoint the specific nature of the linguistic cues leading to an impression of increased naturalness in the speech of students who have studied abroad.

2.2. Modalities of language use: speaking, listening, reading, and writing

Research based on modalities of language use focuses mainly on social interactive abilities of speaking and listening. Along with a small number of studies examining reading and writing, this research generally points to the beneficial effects of a sojourn abroad.

Study abroad can promote the development of speaking proficiency.

Most of the efforts to document the effect of study abroad on language learning have investigated speaking ability. Researchers have examined the development of oral proficiency, as measured by the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview or variants on the OPI, and they have scrutinized the development of fluency as a component of proficiency. In the case of research based on the OPI, some studies have failed to produce dramatic evidence of a relationship between study abroad and proficiency development (e.g., Magnan, 1986. Freed, 1990), even when these changes were noticed in an informal way (Milleret, 1991). These disappointing results can be explained in part, however, by the nature of the OPI itself. The OPI demands a much broader range of abilities at the upper levels than in the performance of novices: the higher the level, in principle, the more one needs to do to achieve a recordable gain score. The OPI has also been criticized for lack of ecological validity; in essence, it can test students on tasks that they may not have had opportunities to perform in the past (Polanyi, 1995). However, in the case of a very large scale project, such as Brecht, Davidson and Ginsburg's (1995) study enrolling 658 participants, proficiency gains were in fact documented, highlighting the role of study abroad in promoting general speaking ability.

Study abroad can enhance fluency.

Studies of speaking ability have also focused on the development of fluency. Some researchers define fluency as a quality of individual, monologic performance. To determine how fluent a speaker has become, they measure features of speech such as rate, hesitation, pauses, or length of turns at talk. For example, using this approach, Freed, Segalowitz and Dewey (2004) compared the results of classroom learning, study abroad, and a domestic immersion program for learning French. They also asked students to account for the ways they spent their time outside of classes. The domestic immersion students reported spending more time in French-mediated activities than

the study abroad participants, and they also displayed the most fluency in the post-test. The study abroad participants made more gain than the classroom learners overall, but they reported relatively little use of French as compared with the immersion students, perhaps for the reasons outlined in Chapter One.

Fluency is of course a matter of speech rate and skillful performance, but it is also a matter of appropriating the forms of language that are typically used in speaking. These forms might include structural variants or formulaic sequences ‘mentally stored and retrieved as single words’ (Wood, 2007, p. 209). As part of their work on the development of fluency in advanced learners of French, Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui (1996) looked for the ways in which their participants had learned to use these forms in order to extend the length of their utterances and to sound ‘more French’ (p. 112). One of the students involved, for example, spoke mainly in Subject-Verb-Object sequences before her sojourn in France (e.g., *Ils ont commencé. Il était différent.*) Upon her return, however, she had developed the ability to use utterance structures characteristic of spoken French such as fronting of the topic (*l’histoire, ça commence*) or presentatives (*il arrive un jour qu’il y a un petit rond*). As this study demonstrates, the ‘natural’ sound of students’ speech after a sojourn abroad can be traced to specific features of the language they encounter and appropriate in everyday experiences.

Study abroad can enhance students’ listening comprehension.

Listening comprehension presents many challenges to instructed learners, particularly when they first arrive at the locale of their sojourn abroad. For example, one participant in my 2008 study, Beatrice, was thoroughly dismayed to find at the beginning of her stay in Paris that she had great difficulty in understanding everyday spoken French even though she had been studying that language for nearly a decade. Students who go abroad must abruptly grow accustomed to non-pedagogical language use, that is, language that has not been tailored to ease their comprehension. After study abroad, however, students often claim that they have made important strides in their ability to understand spoken language (e.g., Meara, 1994). With the exception of one project focusing on the learning of Spanish in a short sojourn (Cubillos, Chieffo and Fan, 2007), every study that has assessed the listening abilities of study abroad participants has produced evidence for the positive influence of time abroad on students’ ability to understand spoken language (e.g., Huebner, 1995; Allen and Herron, 2003; Tanaka and Ellis, 2003; Beattie, 2008; Kinginger, 2008).

Study abroad can enhance students' reading comprehension and motivation to develop foreign language literacy.

In comparison with the other modalities of language use, reading and writing have attracted little attention from study abroad researchers. Nevertheless, four studies involving formal assessment of reading ability have shown that study abroad has a positive impact in this domain (Brecht, Davidson and Ginsburg, 1995; Lapkin, Hart and Swain, 1995; Kinginger, 2008; and Hayden, 1998). In Huebner's comparison of study abroad versus domestic immersion for the learning of elementary Japanese, the findings show that the study abroad participants developed a different orientation toward reading in contrast to the classroom learners. Specifically, the students abroad enthusiastically welcomed the introduction of the Katakana, Hiragana, and Kanji writing systems early in the program. These students had experienced the shock of sudden illiteracy and inability to read even the most basic messages in the linguistic landscape. The classroom learners preferred the Romanized pedagogical system in their textbook, even though it is not in use in Japan, and accused their teachers of unrealistic expectations when the authentic systems were presented to them

Study abroad can enhance students' writing ability and motivation to write well.

Learning to write in a foreign language is no doubt a very long-term affair, one that requires acquaintance with the academic or literary genres at play in the relevant communities. When students go abroad, they may be confronted with unfamiliar study genres or locally preferred styles, and they rarely have the time or proficiency it would take to adapt to these conventions. Although few study abroad researchers have tackled this issue, two studies by Sazaki (2004 and 2007) show that Japanese students in the US became more motivated to write well in English, and to express their ideas directly, without translation from Japanese, than their peers at home. In the 2007 study, only the group abroad improved their overall writing ability.

Bearing in mind the positive slant to this summary of research results, the criticism that has been leveled at the design of many studies (Rees and Klapper, 2008), and the fact that there are many obstacles to language development in study abroad, it is still worthwhile to consider the potential of this environment in promoting language ability. A broad overview indicates that, no matter how we decide to approach the definition of language ability, there is evidence pointing to the beneficial effects of study abroad for language learners. This has been the case since the 1960s, when Carroll (1967) published the results of his national proficiency survey, claiming that 'time spent abroad is one of the most potent variables' (p. 137) for predicting language

proficiency. It is still the case today, as researchers pose questions about study abroad of increasing refinement and precision.

The findings of study abroad research suggest that students abroad can be presented with opportunities to increase their command of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. They can also become better able to succeed in standard academic tasks such as standardized tests or the composition of argumentative essay. Perhaps more important in this context, however, are opportunities to observe and participate in non-pedagogical interactions, leading to greater control and awareness of the social interactive aspects of language such as speech acts, features of conversation, and register or style. Even more significant is the uniqueness of study abroad for revealing the cultural concepts guiding language use. No environment engineered for language learning, no matter how expertly, can easily or fully provide resources for understanding how Russians conceptualize apologies, or why a switch from *vous* to *tu* can be interpreted as flirtation, as a bid for solidarity, or as an insult.

This chapter has been about **what** students can learn, the language-related ‘products’ of study abroad that have been reported in the literature. This research suggests that if you are interested in the success and satisfaction of your language students, study abroad is well worth fighting for, both in terms of the amount of student participation and in terms of the qualities of programs. As teachers, we should point to the many advantages that study abroad can offer for the development of specific abilities. We can also argue that study abroad is unique in the way it complements classroom learning through opportunities to infuse that learning with richly lived experience in an array of contexts difficult to replicate in schools. In the next chapter, we will consider what is known about the process of language learning in study abroad, that is, **how** students learn languages in study abroad contexts.

3 | *How students learn languages abroad*

Understanding the process of language learning is very complex matter that has occupied the minds and energies of scholars and teachers for centuries. In this chapter, we will sidestep much of the complexity involved in the search for insight on language learning in order to consider in broad outlines the nature of study abroad as a language learning environment and the qualities of students' activity abroad as they relate to this endeavor. Readers of the research on this topic will find that in recent times, approaches to language learning tend to divide into two general categories (Kramsch, 2002). On the one hand, there are scholars who view learning as a universal and context-independent process of **acquisition**. In this approach, the learner is analogous to a computer receiving and processing input in order to advance the internal system and to produce output. The goal of research is to confirm or disprove hypotheses about the nature of the processor in relation to input, and the goal of learning is to develop a complete grammatical system, identical to that of any other expert language user.

There are numerous studies attempting to link student activity abroad to language acquisition, but most often these studies conceptualize activity as a simple matter of time-on-task, or at best, as an aggregate of types of time-on-task, such as interactive versus non-interactive activities. Sometimes these studies succeed in demonstrating a link between the use of time reported by students (e.g., Freed, Segalowitz and Dewey, 2004), and sometimes they do not (Ginsburg and Miller, 2000). However, they do not in general provide more than a cursory treatment of the dispositions that hosts and students adopt toward their activities abroad, they categorize students *en masse* as language learners, and they assume that language ability is fundamentally disconnected from its own history.

On the other hand, there are scholars who view learning primarily as an inherently social and cultural process of **apprenticeship**. In this view, language learning is part of the process of becoming a particular kind of person. As we are *socialized into* using language, we are also *socialized through* language into local ways of 'acting, feeling, and knowing, in socially recognized and organized practices associated with membership in a social group' (Ochs, 2002, p. 106). Although the line between these approaches is not clear-cut, in this chapter, I write primarily from the

socialization perspective, because this approach is better suited to inform us about the relationship of students' activities to their achievements as language learners.

The language socialization paradigm frames this process as the emergence of unique communicative repertoires organically related to their context of origin. In other words, students will develop repertoires that may be transferable to many settings, but that originate in the communicative environments where they have participated. Rather than conceptualizing language as a bloodless, abstract object, this approach encourages a view of language as intimately intertwined with the entire business of meaning making (Lantolf, 2007). As students learn linguistic forms, they also *inevitably* learn culture. That is, they become acquainted with local ideologies, beliefs, and worldviews; they discover how their hosts conceive of interpersonal relations, including the concept of the self and of in-group and out-group relationships; and they learn how language functions to transmit information, to perpetuate values, or to promote group harmony (Scollon and Scollon, 1995).

One important concept for understanding how language socialization does (or does not) take place in study abroad is **legitimate peripheral participation** (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Lave and Wenger developed this concept through their observation of the ways in which apprenticeship takes place in **communities of practice**, defined as groups of people 'who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 464) and who share common assumptions and values along with the ability to participate in the activities of the group. Communities of practice are 'everywhere' (Wenger, 1998, p. 6). They are pervasive and so familiar that we do not usually stop to notice or analyze them. They coalesce around many different activities: family survival, collaboration at work, sharing an interest, etc., and they evolve over time as participants come and go, or change their orientation to the collective activity.

Like the proponents of approaches grounded in language socialization, Lave and Wenger are social learning theorists who believe that participation is a form of belonging, and has an impact on our identity. Each individual belongs and participates in many different communities, to varying degrees. At the beginning of any process of learning, the learner must be granted legitimacy as a participant. He or she must desire and seek access to the community, and must be accepted as a potential member deserving of the group's assistance in learning how to participate. Initially, a novice can only participate in a peripheral manner, mainly through observation, but over time, as his or her expertise increases, there can be movement toward the 'center' and eventually, the right to exert influence on the practices and values of the group.

For study abroad, then, much depends both on our students' own motives and on the ways in which they are received in their host communities or families. In the best case scenario, students desire a degree of integration into the lives of their local people, they are mindful (Jackson, 2008) of their role as legitimate but peripheral participants who should respect the beliefs and practices of their hosts, and they

willingly engage in a variety of activities. Their hosts interpret them as welcome guests who are entitled to sensitively delivered assistance in learning how to do the things that they routinely do, and who may even, eventually, deserve to have some influence upon their hosts' cultural practices or beliefs. Ensuring that such a scenario plays out in reality required as large measure of goodwill and equal investment of effort on the part of everyone concerned.

We can get a sense of the ways in which the experiences of students abroad can vary by reading some of the stories recounted in the applied linguistics qualitative literature. One such story comes from the work of Churchill (2006), a high school English teacher in Japan who chaperoned a group of his students on a short-term sojourn in the US. During their stay, different groups of Churchill's students attended several different schools. Their experience was profoundly affected by the reception they were given by their host institution. The students who attended St. Martin's, a small, elite private school, arrived on their first day to find their photographs and names posted at the entry. They were assigned a schedule based on previously stated preferences, and a 'campus friend' helped them to find their way to classes. As of the first day, in other words, they had someone to talk to about something obvious (the schedule). In class, their presence was welcomed, and their participation immediately and officially sanctioned. Churchill recounted the experience of Natsumi, who was invited to display her ability to solve an algebra problem too difficult for the local students. Another student, Masa (Churchill, 2005) was accepted into the school's sports culture and even invited to compete in a track event early in his stay. As a result, he quickly developed a wide circle of friends with whom he discussed many topics of interest to high school boys: music, games, sports, and girls. He became a broker of social networks, introducing friends to his female classmates. Although Masa started his sojourn as one of the lowest performing students of English in the group, by the end of his stay he demonstrated speaking proficiency far superior to that of a female peer with a similar initial profile.

Another group of Churchill's students attended Belleville High, a large, suburban, public school with a 'labyrinth of concrete halls' (p. 211). At Belleville, it was business-as-usual: the administration had not prepared any particular welcome or accommodation for their Japanese guests. These students were told to follow one of their American peers, apparently chosen at random, through his or her class schedule. In the classroom, their presence tended to be interpreted as inconvenient and potentially unsettling. Nanae, for example, tried to interact in English with her peers in enrolled in an English course, but was accused of disrupting the class.

Another example, this time from the homestay, comes from Wilkinson's (1998) qualitative research with students of French in a summer immersion program. Wilkinson contrasted the experiences of two students who began their program with apparently similar motives and capabilities, but whose experiences were quite different one from the other. Molise had immigrated to the US with her family as a

young child, and had been inspired to study French by a course including readings on the identity-related struggles of immigrants. She was welcomed into a family that actively and respectfully assisted her performance as a speaker of French, and she reciprocated with baby sitting and help in the family garden. By the end of her stay, she was a valued family friend, invited to accompany the family on their vacation, and she decided to return to France for a full year of study. Ashley also had experience of foreign travel, mainly as a tourist. Upon arrival, she discovered that her host family had not bothered to pick her up at the train station. While all the other students were greeted and whisked away to their new homes, she was orphaned. Eventually a member of the program staff drove her to her family's place of residence where she was left to her own devices for several hours. After this initial disappointment Ashley never developed a relationship with her hosts, accusing them of indifference to her language learning and vague hostility toward her presence in the home. We do not know what efforts Ashley made to engage her hosts or join in their activities, but it seems clear that her family was less welcoming than Molise's, at least at first. In the end, Ashley's opportunities to participate in informal French-mediated conversation were very limited, and by the time the program ended she had decided against further study of French.

As these stories demonstrate, students abroad may be granted various levels of legitimacy in both classrooms and homes. This variation can have important consequences for the quality of their participation, and consequently, for their language learning and longer-term goals. It is important to remember, though, that desire, willingness, and respect on the part of students is a crucial part of the picture. For example, a negative first impression may have led Ashley to avoid contributing her part to the success of her homestay. In order to overcome such obstacles, students need a durable commitment to their own language learning, and genuine curiosity about their hosts.

All things being equal, language learning in study abroad can involve three major processes: observation, participation, and introspection. The sections below will consider each in turn.

3.1. Observation

In the initial phases especially, students can learn quite a lot simply by **observing** their new environment. Even before they have established local relationships, they can observe how people normally interact and what linguistic routines or formulas they use to accomplish various things in different public contexts. Like the ethnographer Hassall (2006), they might focus on a particular function such as learning to say 'good-bye' or on the routines used in service encounters. They can also observe the 'linguistic

landscape' and the ways in which formal and informal signs (such as graffiti) are placed and used to convey locally relevant meanings. The local print and audio-visual media, and their uses, can also yield significant insight. If they live with a family, even before they are equipped for sustained interactive talk, students can watch the ways in which the family members use and relate to language. For example, Hashimoto (1993) described the resources available to an Australian high school student living in Japan for a year. Among many other features of language use, this student was able to observe the process of first language socialization for younger host siblings. In one instance, the student gained awareness of honorific forms when her host sister incorrectly used the form *chan* after her own name, and was quickly upbraided by her mother.

3.2. Participation

Depending on their abilities, and the extent to which these abilities are cultivated by their entourage, their motives and those of their hosts, students abroad can also **participate** to different degrees in a wide variety of activities, including service encounters, classroom talk, and informal conversation at family dinner tables and elsewhere. A number of studies indicate in particular that interactions with host families, especially at mealtimes, can be veritable crucibles for language socialization. When host families 'draw out' the comments of their student guests, and make an effort to convey and to clarify the meaning of their talk, they may be providing comprehensible, negotiated input (McMeekin, 2006) but more importantly, they are assisting the performance of their guests through a process known as 'scaffolding.' Scaffolded interaction metaphorically 'supports' the participation of novice language users: more expert speakers enable the participation of novices and gradually tear down the 'scaffold' as the novice develops greater communicative independence. In the meantime, expert speakers also inevitably convey knowledge of folk beliefs and values (Cook, 2006; Iino, 2006) and socialize students into local culinary practices and taste (DuFon, 2006).

Obviously, it is preferable for students to arrive at their destinations equipped with the minimal proficiency required to engage in informal conversations. However, proficiency seems to be far less crucial than the willingness of hosts and students to pursue a mutually enriching dialogue. In this context, it is useful to consider the experience of Bill, the participant in my 2008 study whose speaking ability was illustrated in Chapter 1. Bill had studied French in elementary and middle school, but only taken up the language again in one intermediate-level college course. At the beginning of the study, Bill displayed virtually no ability to speak French. In the role-play and narrative tasks we used to assess speaking, many long pauses and switches to

English characterized Bill's performance. He was able to emit an occasional word in French, but these were ill placed or inappropriate for their context. Bill also began the study with the lowest score of the group on the standard test of reading and listening that we used, the *Test de Français International*.

Bill was an outgoing, people-oriented business major who claimed that he had chosen study abroad in Dijon in order to interact with people there and learn from the differences between French and American ways of life. In addition to conversing within many student groups and with his classmates, who appreciated his expertise in marketing for their own success at group work, Bill participated in regular, lengthy dinnertime conversations with his host family. On these occasions, to Bill's occasional dismay, the family focused their attention almost entirely on him: his life history, activities, concerns and questions. In Bill's words:

when I first got here like conversations were really slow. um and a lot of it in the beginning was uh:: like words and (xxx) like it was like every night was like a French lesson + it was great [...] it's always focused on me, like I'm the topic of- like the conversation has to revolve around me at dinner + like I wish- I just wanna hear them engage in French like how they would rather than like slowing it down, and uh ++ but so like it's whatever I did + whatever I'm going to do + whatever I've learned + whatever I'm learning + whatever I need help with + um stuff like that. (Kinging, 2008, p. 89)

According to Bill, his classmates also provided 'incredible,' detailed and patient attentiveness to him during their group work deliberations, even though he was minimally capable of self expression in French at the beginning of his stay:

I had a group that was the class was in French so the work was in French + and like the first obviously the first full month- first month four weeks I I mean I had no clue + I mean I couldn't hear words and in French and sentences at all + um ++ and like they would they would sit there + I mean I'm sure meetings took longer because they'd sit there and they'd encourage me to + well what do you think Bill? and so I was always like uh + with each word + then I'd look in my dictionary + and then they'd have to explain it to me in French a thousand times + well this is why you're wrong this is well this is a really good point what do you mean. they they they took the time to allow me to try to be French, or to be a part of their group um ++ and I mean I see that on numerous occasions. and I think that's incredible. (Kinging, 2008, p. 89)

Bill's high level of engagement in French-mediated activities, and his many experiences of scaffolded language use in a variety of contexts, resulted in an impressive overall profile of achievement. By the end of the semester, he could perform the speaking assessment tasks entirely in French, and he could tailor his language to the norms of formal versus informal situations. His results on a post-administration of the *Test de Français International* showed one of the highest gain scores in the group. In addition to upgrading his academic listening and reading skills, and developing a remarkable

repertoire in his speech, he also developed strong awareness of colloquial French and the *tu/vous* distinction.

The process of language socialization around host family dinner tables is best illustrated in the work of Cook (2006), Iino (2006), and DuFon (2006). This research allows us to catch a glimpse of the kinds of interactions that Bill, and others like him, can enjoy while they are abroad. All of these studies are based on actual recorded samples of the participants' interactions with their hosts, and all of them suggest that mealtime conversations can be a rich resource for language learners. In these conversations, host family members offer insights into their values, beliefs, and practices as they assist their guests' participation. In Cook's study (2006), students living with Japanese host families encountered and occasionally challenged a number of local folk beliefs about Japanese versus foreigner identities (for example, the belief that certain foods are too uniquely Japanese to be appreciated by others, or the stereotype of Americans as unable to live without beef). Cook argues that the socialization process she observed is a two-way affair, with the hosts benefitting as much as their student guests from intercultural insights. Iino (2006) also studied mealtime conversations between students and Japanese hosts, and found that the language in use was 'unlike the model dialogues found in Japanese textbooks' (pp. 170-71) particularly because it included both regional dialect use and simplified talk designed to enhance communication with novices. Some of the families in Iino's study adopted a 'cultural dependency approach' to their student guests, offering more assistance than the students wanted or needed. Others, however, operated under the 'two-way enrichment' assumption identified by Cook, and all parties engaged in enlightening dialogues about cultural perceptions.

DuFon (2006) examined the socialization of taste in Indonesian host families. In interaction with their families, these participants learned how to talk about food as they learned Indonesian ways of valuing, understanding, and using food. DuFon observed occasions where host family members explicitly helped the students orient to unfamiliar foodstuffs and culinary preparations. These interactions bore a strong resemblance to a classroom pattern drill in every way but their purpose, which was to help the students learn the names of the ingredients and dishes they were about to eat. For example, Bruce engaged in the following dialogue with his host mother:

Bruce: *Saya senang. Apa namanya?*

I like this. What is it called?

HM: *Jagung*

Corn.

Bruce: *Jagung saya?*

Just corn?

HM: *Dadar jagung.*

Corn pancake.

Bruce: *Dadar.*

Pancake

- HM: *Dadar jagung.*
Corn pancake
Bruce: *(Dadar jagung)*
(Corn pancake)
HM: *Ada dadar telur.*
There is egg pancake.
Bruce: *Hm*
HM: *Tapi ini jagung- Ini ja-. Itu jagung dicampur telur.*
But this is corn- This is co- that is corn mixed with egg.
(DuFon, 2006, p. 98)

In addition to orienting the students to the food, the Indonesian hosts explicitly counseled students on many other food-related themes: how and when it is appropriate to offer compliments, what tastes good and bad, the role of food in ritual gift-giving, the economics of food, and the relationship of culinary habits and health. They learned, for example, how one participates in the practice of *oleh-oleh* (offering gifts of regional specialty foods when returning from a trip) and the belief that drinking cold fluids will aggravate a cough. They were required to adjust to overt criticism of food preparation considered substandard. Overall, according to DuFon, the host family dinner table ‘offers many opportunities for learning *through the use of language* about a culture’s beliefs, attitudes, and view of food, and for learning *to use language* in certain ways to talk about food’ (p. 118).

In the exercise below, students are presented with the findings of a study about the perspectives of host families on the qualities of student experience. This activity is designed to promote reflection on, and curiosity about the host family’s point of view. Many study abroad participants choose or are required to live with a local family during their in-country sojourn. For most, it is the homestay component of their stay that transforms the experience from mere study to actually living abroad. Host families normally try to involve students in their routine activities and teach them about their way of life. Around the family dinner table, for example, there are many opportunities to teach and learn about local food ways, social customs and manners, how to carry on an informal conversation, and how to talk about, appreciate, and understand food.

One way to find out about how the study abroad homestay works is to talk to the people who do it. This was the focus of a project by Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2002; 2004) who interviewed 24 host mothers in Spain and Mexico, and then surveyed 90 students who had participated in homestay living arrangements abroad. The host mothers interviewed come across as a group of concerned, generous and loving individuals eager to help as much as they can. They revealed a few surprising views:

- Students do not normally experience great difficulties in adjusting to their new surroundings unless they are in a very short term program and spend a lot of time outside the home.
- The most successful participants are not necessarily those with the greatest linguistic ability. Students' openness, confidence, and propensity for harmonious co-existence are far more important.
- Students from close-knit families, who have partners at home, or who have little travel experience have the most difficulty in immersing themselves in a new experience.

The difficulties their host mothers listed include:

- Students who had difficulties eating unfamiliar food.
- Students who made long phone calls without understanding the expense they are incurring for the family.
- Worrying about students who stayed out all night without informing their host family.
- Students who refused to communicate, participate in family activities, or take advantage of the family as a resource.

The host mothers recommended that students arrive with greater knowledge of their host country and its customs. They also recommend that students understand that they are the visitors to another culture, and therefore they are the ones who must make the greatest effort to adjust.

Most of the students surveyed after their stay indicated that they felt comfortable with their families, had received a lot of help from them, and had enjoyed many advantages, including expanded opportunities to speak Spanish, especially at meal times. For most, the homestay family turned out to be their central connection to local life. Some students, however, complained that their families had not made enough effort to integrate them and include them in their activities.

Preparing to Make the Most of the Homestay

For students or for language educators

Questions:

Consider the homestay from the family's point of view. What might be their reasons for welcoming a foreign student into their home?

There is a discrepancy between the host mothers' and the students' views on who is responsible for integrating student visitors. What might be the source of this mismatch?

Figure 8: Preparing to Make the Most of the Homestay

To date the language socialization research involving study abroad participants focuses exclusively on one particularly salient setting, namely the family dinner table. But we can easily imagine that similarly supportive interactions can become accessible to our students in other settings, to name a few: the classroom and interactions around academic work among peers, students' workplaces, if they are involved in internships, sports organizations such as Masa's track team, or community service environments such as the soup kitchen where Louis' volunteer work connected him to a circle of like-minded comrades, of all ages, who welcomed him into their lives and helped him to expand his repertoire of spoken French (Kingtoner, 2008). Participation in a variety of social settings and interactions is clearly a significant aspect of language learning in study abroad, and the key to participation is *engagement* based on the desire of all parties, students and local inhabitants, to be in dialogue together.

3.4. Introspection

In addition to observation and participation, **introspection** can become a significant aspect of language learning in study abroad. Learners in many contexts rely on reflection as a way of monitoring their own progress, coping with challenges, forming reasonable short- and long-term goals, and generally achieving self-regulation. In this process of introspective reflection, people try to derive coherent accounts of inchoate experiences as a basis for further action. In this way, through introspection, learners assist their own learning and construct their own Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

As famously defined by Vygotsky, the ZPD is 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined by problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In the language learning literature, the ZPD is most often portrayed as an overtly social and

collaborative affair. When Bruce's host mother oriented him to the naming of Indonesian foods, for example, there is every reason to believe that she was working in his ZPD, sensitive to his emerging ability to talk about the food and guiding him toward more independence in this activity. There is also reason to believe, however, that the ZPD concept is relevant to the work that people do to guide their own learning.

To exemplify this process, let us consider the experience of Camille, another participant in my 2008 study. Camille arrived for her semester in Paris with intermediate-level proficiency in French and an apparently very strong determination to 'become fluent' over the course of just four months. For Camille, early in her stay, fluency was a relatively effortless, osmotic effect of study abroad. She seemed to believe that if she could associate herself with the right people, fluency would come to her rapidly and naturally. Over the course of the semester, she used her journal to organize her thoughts and to form and re-form her goals. If we follow her progress, we find that over time, although she did not 'become fluent' to the extent that he had anticipated, she did develop more a more reasonable appreciation of the time and effort required for language learning. In this process, she became a much more sophisticated language learner.

In one of the earliest of her journal entries, Camille formulated the goal of extracting herself from her American cohort, making an effort to interact with French people. She also revealed her belief that it would be possible to achieve fluency in French by the end of the semester:

I feel that the whole point in being abroad is to become immersed in another culture and to learn the language. So from now on I am going to try to spend less time with Americans and more time with French people. So starting tomorrow I am going to make an effort to meet French students and make friends. I've been intimidated so far but I think that I need to stop being shy and go meet some nice French students and make friends. Otherwise, I may never learn this language, and if I don't become fluent by the end of my stay I will be very annoyed with myself. (Journal 1/22/03)

The next day, she confided in her journal that she was worried about the amount of time she was devoting to conversation in English, and she warned herself that she was being unduly impatient. In this journal entry, she also expressed frustration at her own lack of knowledge about the amount of time it takes to develop fluency. In this context, she invoked a 'clicking' metaphor, as if fluency were analogous to a light switch or some other mechanism that can be turned on in a matter of seconds:

je m'inquiète un peu d'apprendre la langue française. Je m'inquiète parce que pendant la journée je parle beaucoup l'anglais avec les autres étudiants anglais. Et ce n'est pas aider mon français. Ce problème est que je suis très impatient, alors combien de jours, mois, années jusqu'à on est facilement ? je ne sais pas mais je vraiment veux être facilement quand je quitte France. [...]

Hier soir, j'ai parlé beaucoup avec la fille de ma hotesse. Elle est très gentille et elle m'a dit que quand je commence rêves en français je serai facilement. Et d'accord, mais quand ? un jour,

I am worried about learning the French language. I am worried because during the day I speak English a lot with the other English students. And that is not to help my French. This problem is that I am very impatient, so how many days, months, years until you are easily [fluent]? I don't know but I really want to be easily [fluent] when I leave France. [...] Last night I talked a lot with my host mother's daughter. She is very nice and she said that when I start dreams in French I will be easily [fluent]. And OK, but when? One day,
 ((switch to English))

will it just click ? I hope so. But I'm very worried that I'll never become fluent. Very very frustrating. I wonder how much watching tv + movies in French also helps. I'm sure it helps, I just want it to click now. (Journal 1/28/03)

Like the other members of her cohort, Camille had initial difficulty in making informal contact with local students. Camille, however, had a plan and a significant advantage: a second family, long-term friends of her parents, who were interested in her welfare and the success of her stay. Through the social network of this family, Camille realized her goal of finding an 'approved' French boyfriend who could then shepherd her through her language learning process and link her to a circle of age-peers. Her interactions with the boyfriend and his pals occupy significant space in her reflective journal as she examined them retrospectively in light of their relation to her language learning efforts. By mid-March, she had apparently realized that four months might not be enough time to hone her language ability to a level she would consider 'fluent.' Meanwhile, she was trying to work out the reasons for her timidity in conversations with these age-peers, and had identified that one source of her difficulty was the non-standard they used, making their discourse less easy to navigate than the relatively slang-free talk of adults. While reviewing and justifying her tendency to hold back (e.g., not wanting to feel stupid), she also encouraged herself to take a more active part in the talk:

Je trouve qu'il est très dur à comprendre quand il y a plus que trois personnes. Parce qu'il y a deux ou trois conversations au même temps, et alors je ne peux pas suivre tous les conversations. Et aussi, les jeunes gens utilisent beaucoup de l'argot et alors je me suis perdue quelques fois. A cause de ça, je ne participe pas beaucoup et j'apercevois que j'ai besoin de participer mais je n'ai pas de confiance en moi-même. Et je ne veux pas sentir stupide. Mais après tous les amis de G. sortaient. Je parlais avec lui tout seul. Et il a raison je dois participer ou je n'apprends pas la langue. Alors, la prochaine fois je vais essayer de participer plus. Il me semble que je parle plus quand il est juste moi et un ou deux autres personnes. Je pense parce que je me sens plus confortable. Aussi, je comprends meilleure les adultes que les jeunes gens. Parce que les adultes ne parlent pas avec l'argot, comme les adolescents. Mais ça n'est pas un excuse. Je ne peux pas être timide en France spécialement parce que je suis seulement ici pour 4 mois et pas pour un an. (Journal 3/9/03)

I find it is very hard to understand when there are more than three people. Because there are two or three conversations at the same time, and then I cannot follow all the conversations. And also, young people use a lot of slang and so I got lost a few times. Because of that, I don't participate much and I perceive I need to participate but I don't have a lot of confidence in myself. And I don't want to feel stupid. But after all of G.'s friends left, I talked with him alone. And he is right I must participate or I don't learn the language. So, the next time I am going to try to participate more. It seems to me that I talk more when it is just me and one or two other people. I think because I feel more comfortable. Also, I understand adults gooder than young people. Because adults don't talk with slang, like adolescents. But that is not an excuse. I cannot be timid in France especially because I am only here for four months and not for a year.

Camille composed her journal primarily in French, and it is very clear that this choice was part of her overall approach to scaffold her own development as a user of that language. There were very evident changes in the quality of her written French over time as she incorporated routine formulas and turns of phrase she was learning, and wrote at increasing length, without switching to English. By the end of her semester in Paris, moreover, a remarkable change had taken place in Camille's awareness of language learning as a long-term process requiring an investment on the part of the learner. In a follow-up interview, she expressed satisfaction with her progress to date, but also critiqued her former naïveté:

- C: I wanted to learn about another culture and I wanted to learn French.
I: uh huh
C: I wanted to come home fluent ... obviously I am not. uh I'm happy. I'm proficient I just know that I have further to go at this point.
I: uh huh
C: and I think my goal like in the beginning, being naïve, oh I can come home fluent easily no problem.
I: uh huh
C: hum so I don't think that- I don't- haven't reached my goal necessarily. I just think like I have further to go.
(Post-Interview)

After her sojourn in Paris, Camille intended to rearrange her graduation plans in order to return to France for another semester and further work on her fluency. Camille's journal clearly illustrates that the success of her sojourn, its influence on her language ability and positive disposition toward continued study of French, are partly attributable to routine introspective reflection. She used her journal to create coherent accounts of her activities and orientation to learning, to gauge her own readiness for new activities, and to set short- and long-term goals. That is, as she progressed through her sojourn, she continually worked to construct her own ZPD in dialogue with herself. Overall, Camille's experience suggests that introspection can have an important role to play for language learners in study abroad.

In addition to awareness of language, our students might benefit from enhanced understanding of the language learning process. Like Camille, many American students enter their program of study abroad without appreciation of the fact that attaining advanced abilities is a matter of long-term investment, requiring time and effort. Like Camille, many students believe that they can learn the language while abroad just by being there. Because language learning tends to be trivialized in the media and even, occasionally, in educational discourse (Gore, 2005) our students' naïveté is perfectly understandable. As we have seen, one of the beneficial outcomes of study abroad can be a fuller appreciation of the work it takes to become, for example, 'fluent.' As educators we must tread lightly in this territory, for fear of discouraging students, but we must also convey to students the significance of engagement, through observation, participation, and reflection.

One way to impress upon students the importance of engagement, while also illustrating pitfalls for language learners abroad, is through stories. Appendix B includes simplified and adapted versions of the stories recounted by the participants in my 2008 study. These stories demonstrate in concrete terms that engagement is necessary for language learning; the students who were successful language learners became actively involved in local events, activities, literacies, and social networks, whereas those whose achievements were modest did not. Having students read and discuss these stories – or other stories of students studying abroad in other places – might help them appreciate and anticipate the need for a strategic use of time during their sojourn abroad.

In the chapter we have explored **how** students learn languages in study abroad settings. We have seen that students who go abroad usually find themselves on the periphery of communities of practice. The extent to which they become engaged in the activities of their new communities depends *both* upon the ways they are interpreted by their hosts and upon their own dispositions toward the people and activities they encounter. When students do become actively engaged in their host communities, this engagement can include observation, participation, and reflective introspection. The section below describes one approach to guide students as they learn to observe language in use, participate in communicative events, and reflect on their experiences.

3.5. Learning to observe, participate, and reflect: Introducing ethnographic techniques

If observation, participation, and introspection are the main learning activities for students abroad, they are also among the key techniques used by scholars in the *ethnography of communication*, a branch of anthropology focusing on the interrelationship of language and culture. As defined by Saville-Troike (2003) the

subject matter of the ethnography of communication is illustrated by one of its key questions: ‘what does a speaker need to know in order to communicate appropriately within a particular speech community, and how does he or she learn to do so?’ (p. 2). In other words, how can we describe the *communicative competence* of the speech community’s members? Ethnographers of communication carry out their studies primarily through field work: ‘observing, asking questions, participating in group activities, and testing the validity of one’s perceptions against the intuitions of natives’ (p. 3). They try to grasp the perspectives of insiders within the communities they study, remaining open to categories, practices, and modes of thought or behavior that may not have been anticipated. Further, in contrasting their own ways of speaking (and thinking) with those of others, they often find that communicative practices assumed to be ‘logical’ or ‘natural’ in fact reflect unique cultural norms, and this process leads to greater appreciation and understanding of cultural relativism.

Although we cannot anticipate that our students will become equipped to perform true ethnographic studies without serious training in that field, the similarity between the goals and methods of an ethnographer and of a language learner abroad are remarkable. To recall, in Chapter Two we considered the history of ‘communicative competence’ within language pedagogy, pointing out that many aspects of discourse and sociolinguistic competence remain inadequately described, and that study abroad therefore represents a significant opportunity for development in these areas. Later, we noted that experience within a relevant speech community appears to offer unique opportunities for students to perceive speech events in the way that native or expert speakers do. Explicit focus on ethnographic techniques might help some students to appreciate the relevance of observation, formal and informal participation (e.g., in interviews or in conversations), and introspection for language learning. Working with these techniques, furthermore, might encourage students to become more engaged in dialogue with their hosts.

3.6. In the pre-departure phase

Before they go abroad, students can become involved in small-scale tasks designed to offer practice in observing and reflecting on language in use. One such task might help them to appreciate the patterned nature of language use in routine interactions. In #1 below, students observe the rituals associated with classroom interaction. In #2, they consider the complex nature of service encounters.

Observing Language in Use: Patterns of Interaction

For students

1 As you go to your classes this week, notice how each professor begins and ends the class. What different elements of language are used? Are there features of language use that occur regularly in this setting? Does each professor have his or her own style, or are the openings and closings of classes always the same?

2 Plan to spend some extra time at a coffee shop or restaurant. Make yourself comfortable, and start watching how the service staff interacts with customers. (But be discrete!) How are people communicating? How often are they using words, body language, signs, or even silence? What are the 'expected' or 'ideal' forms of language in this setting? What are some of the ways that people exploit these expectations to express themselves?

Figure 9: Observing Language in Use: Patterns of Interaction

Students might also be assigned some tasks intended to enhance their understanding of register in English, as preparation for observation of variation in levels of formality or style while they are abroad.

Levels of Language Use

For students

1 Take a look at your e-mail inbox. Look for a message from a friend, from a family member, from a professor, and some spam. Now look at a message you've sent to a friend, a family member and a professor. Does everybody write to you in the same way? Do you write to others in the same way? What are the differences, and why?

2 Keep a record of your conversations over the course of a typical day. Who do you talk to, and how? Compare your interactions with, for example, a friend, a family member, and a professor. How do you greet each person? How do you end the conversation? Are there words or phrases that you use only with some people and not with others? Why?

What will you need to be able to do in your second language in order to adjust to different settings and interpersonal situations?

Figure 10: Levels of Language Use

Another possibility is to have students reflect on their knowledge of regional variation in American English, and consider the possibility that parallels might exist in the place where they will study.

Regional Variation and Stereotypes

For students

1 Language use can vary by region, and the varieties in use in different places can be associated with stereotypes. In the following example, the author proposed the creation of 'State Questions' to go along with State Mottoes and State Flowers. Can you match the state to its question? What stereotypes (positive or negative) are associated with the way English is used in different parts of the country?

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| ___ Is it completely organic? | a. Florida |
| ___ Hunh? | b. Alabama |
| ___ You got a problem with that, buddy? | c. California |
| ___ Yuh shure ah cain't carry it concealed? | d. New York |
| ___ So, how much did he leave her? | e. Texas |
| ___ Ain't that right, Jimmy Bob? | f. Mississippi |
| ___ You from the government? | g. Vermont |
| ___ May ah see yo driver's licence and registration? | i. Montana |
| ___ You got a green card, buster? | h. South Carolina |

Excerpted by Lippi-Green (1997, p. 208) from Beckerman, S. 1996. "Questions probe states of mind." *Centre Daily Times*. April 24. State College, PA: 4A.

2 What does it mean when we say that someone speaks American English well? Can it mean that they speak a particular variety of English?

3 Conduct a brief survey of your friends or family about the characteristics they attribute to speakers of English from:

New York, Southern California, Wisconsin, Illinois, Alabama

What do you know about the different varieties of the language you are learning, and any stereotypes associated with them? Is there a recognized local variety in the place where you will be studying? If so, where are you most likely to encounter it, and attitudes about it?

Figure 11: Regional Variation and Stereotypes

Another task might ask students to focus on varieties of language associated with generational identity and to reflect on how the age of the interlocutors might make a difference in the language use they will experience while they are abroad.

Language and Generational Identity

For students

If your parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents or other family elders are speakers of American English, what is the difference between the way you use the language and the way they use it? Are there particular words, or turns of phrase, that the older members of your family use, and that strike you as quaint, lovely, or old-fashioned? Do your parents or grandparents ever object to the way you or your friends use language? Why?

Interview three people: 1) someone your age; 2) a parent or someone of your parents' age; and 3) a grandparent or someone of your grandparents' age. Ask what is noticeable about the language use of people of different generations. Why do these differences exist?

How do you anticipate that your age, and that of the people you interact with, will influence your language learning experience while you are abroad?

Figure 12: Language and Generational Identity

As a more advanced step, you might consider asking your students to make a fuller description of one particular communicative event. In the task below, the goal is to hone observation skills but also to promote reflection about the meaning of language use for participants in particular interactions. The task is based on the analysis of communicative events as described by Saville-Troike (2003).

Describing a Communicative Event

For students

In our daily lives, we all participate in a large number of routine events such as service encounters (for example, ordering pizza in person or over the phone, buying a cup of coffee, or checking out a book at the library) greeting our friends, teachers, or family, participating in a worship service, or answering the phone. Choose a simple event, something that you do regularly or routinely with language. The event should be brief and self-contained, with a beginning and an ending that are easy to identify. Examples would be greeting, leave-taking, prayers, compliments, insults, or short exchanges around purchases or services. Observe how the event is carried out on one or more occasions. Try to describe what you observe as objectively and explicitly as possible, without imposing value judgments.

Setting: Where and when is it appropriate to engage in this activity? Does the event happen only at certain times and in certain places, or can it happen anytime, anywhere?

Topic: What is this event about?

Genre: What kind of event is this? How is it classified by the people involved?

Participants: Who has the right to be involved in this event? Does gender or age make a difference in the way it should be done?

Tone: What is the emotional tone of the event, or the range of possible emotional tones?

Message form: What are the precise words, gestures, silences, or facial expressions used to carry out this event?

Sequence: In what order are the message forms used? Is this order fixed or does it vary?

Rules: If you had to explain to someone from another planet exactly how to do this event, what would you say?

Interpretation: What is the common background knowledge that people use to understand what is going on in this event? What do you need to know in order to grasp the meaning of the event?

Figure 13: Describing a Communicative Event

The point of making an in-depth description of one communicative event is to consider the event from a number of different angles and reflect about the ways in which language use is connected not only to particular settings or to the identities of participants, but also to shared understandings about meaning and appropriateness. Practice in taking an analytic perspective on communicative events may help certain students to develop a dispassionate stance toward their interactions abroad, and even to see 'rich points' of 'languaculture' (Agar, 1994) where once there might have been only misunderstanding.

3.7. While students are abroad

Clearly, the best advice for students going abroad to learn languages is that they try to become engaged in as many different kinds of interactions and social networks as possible, and that when they encounter conflict, they stop to consider whether they have met with a learning opportunity rather than merely with ill will, incompetence, or anti-Americanism on the part of their interlocutors. If they have reflected in advance

on the possible motives of their host families, and the need to play an active part in their own integration into home based activity, they might enjoy more enriching interactions with these families. If they have considered some potential sources of misunderstanding about educational institutions, they might be more willing to analyze what they observe rather than simply condemning it. If students have begun to adopt an ethnographic stance toward their experiences of communication while they are abroad, the chances are greater that they will perceive language and culture as resources rather than as obstacles, and that they will be on the lookout for chances to gather insight from their experiences.

Regardless of their preparation, however, given the short duration and typical qualities of the contemporary sojourn abroad, many students will benefit from deliberate efforts to promote their engagement in learning experiences and their connectedness to local communities. These efforts can potentially include both formal and informal opportunities to become involved in relevant extracurricular activities. The literature on language learning in study abroad makes it quite clear that an advantage goes to students who actively pursue involvement, whether it be through pursuit of personal interests, engagement in community service, in work-related activities such as internships or in smaller-scale projects. Not only does this kind of involvement directly offer a range of settings for language learning, it can also link students to social networks of like-minded peers or colleagues, and thereby expand their connection to the local community beyond the specific activity itself:

The **pursuit of personal interests**, involving anything from music and sports, to religious observance, to video gaming, should be actively encouraged. For example, student musicians whose equipment is portable can find links to local communities merely by allowing their music to be heard. Students who wish to pursue other interests should be aware that the university may not be the primary locus of these activities, and should seek advice from their program directors about how to find local groups, clubs, congregations, or teams.

Community service activities, such as volunteering at a soup kitchen, nursing home, hospital, historic preservation site, or shelter for the homeless, can expand the social horizons of students beyond the classroom and the study abroad cohort. Students who participate in service learning programs make contact with the people they serve and can also establish durable friendships with their co-workers.

Internships are a valuable feature of many study abroad programs, offering students an insider's view of a workplace and an opportunity to meet other people with shared professional or vocational goals.

3.8. Language-based projects for students abroad

Beyond or alongside these efforts, student can become involved in language-oriented projects of many kinds, involving interviews, observation of their own and others' language use, mini-ethnographies, reflection, or some combination of these. For example, if students have carried out some of the small-scale pre-departure tasks described above, they might profit from continuing their investigation while they are abroad to gather comparative insights:

Observing language use: Patterns of interaction

For students

1 As you go to your classes this week, notice how each professor begins and ends the class. What different elements of language are used? Are there features of language use that occur regularly in this setting? Does each professor have his or her own style, or are the openings and closings of classes always the same? How do these openings and closings of lessons either resemble or differ from the ones you observed at home? If there are differences, how can you explain them? Are the roles of teachers and students different from what you are accustomed to observing at home?

2 Plan to spend some extra time at a coffee shop or restaurant as similar as possible in style and clientele as the one you observed at home. Make yourself comfortable, and start watching how the service staff interacts with customers. (But be discrete!) How are people communicating? How often are they using words, body language, signs, or even silence? Does there appear to be a standard routine used by the staff and the customers? If so, how does it compare with the routine you observed at home? If there are differences, how can you explain them?

Figure 14: Observing language use: Patterns of interaction

'Levels' of language

For students

Choose a simple speech act, such as greeting or saying good-bye, and note how people carry it out in a variety of circumstances. When do people say hello or good bye, and when do they refrain from doing so? What specific words and gestures do they use for this purpose? If you notice a number of different types of greetings and leave-takings, try to understand which forms are appropriate for which settings. Does the physical environment make a difference? Does the age, gender, dress, or appearance of the people involved make a difference? If possible, interview a local native speaker about which forms they use, and ask for an example of a situation calling for each of the forms they name.

Figure 15: 'Levels' of language

Regional variation and stereotypes

For students

Interview a member of your host family or another local person about their attitudes toward the way people use language in different regions of the country. You might start by asking if people in the capital city, or in another part of the country speak in the same way as locals do. Or you might ask if there are different ways of talking, or different dialects, in different parts of the country, what these are, and which are considered most and least prestigious.

*Figure 16: Regional variation and stereotypes***Language and Generational Identity**

For students

Interview three people: 1) someone your age; 2) someone of your parents' age; and 3) someone of your grandparents' age. Ask if there is a difference between the way they talk and the way younger or older people talk. Ask for specific examples of words or turns of phrase that are associated with youth or with older generations. Ask if these words or turns of phrase are connected to any historical or contemporary social phenomena that they can name. Does language mark generational identity in your host country in the same way it does at home?

*Figure 17: Language and Generational Identity***Describing a Communicative Event**

For students

If you described a communicative event while you were at home, choose a parallel event in your host country and repeat the exercise. When you get to the part about rules and interpretation, ask a local person or persons to help you describe the ideal way to perform the event and what you need to know to understand its meaning. Which aspects of the event are similar to what you observed at home, and which are different? Is there a possibility that misunderstanding could arise around this event if it involves Americans and members of the local community where you are studying? If so, why?

Figure 18: Describing a Communicative Event

In addition to carrying out smaller-scale projects, students might also expand the scope of their work or combine techniques from the ethnography of communication in more comprehensive projects of a semester or longer. Such projects can easily be adapted to their interests or major fields of study, allowing them to tailor their focus on language to their particular needs. Three sample projects are suggested here, for students of marketing, hotel and restaurant management or business, and urban planning or geography.

Sample Project #1: The Language of Publicity - For students of marketing

This project may include a combination of the following activities:

- Students gather examples of a particular type of advertisements (in magazines, on TV, in the street), or focusing on a particular product.
- Students examine these advertisements for evidence of special language in use: style, metaphors, or other reference to cultural phenomena.
- Students consult popular or scholarly publications or other sources about the language of publicity.
- Students interview expert speakers of varying age and background about the role of publicity in their lives, the strategies they think are in use in the ads they have collected, the cultural or historical references present in the ads, and why they do or do not think these ads are effective.
- Students construct a portfolio including the ads, summaries of their interviews, and an analysis of how the language used in connection with the images is appropriate, effective, coercive (or not), in its cultural context.

Figure 19: Sample Project #1: The Language of Publicity

Sample Project #2: The Language of Service Encounters - For students of hotel and restaurant management or of business

This project may include a combination of the following activities:

- Students observe a variety of service encounters (in cafes or restaurants, in shops, at the post office).
- Students choose one type of service encounter to study in depth, negotiating access to the setting if possible, or selecting a setting where they can observe unobtrusively.
- Students observe this type of encounter as many times as possible, and in a variety of settings (different neighborhoods, different shops).
- Students describe the basic structure of the service encounter: the speech acts involved and the specific language used to realize them.
- Students describe variations on the basic structure and what appears to trigger them (age, gender, appearance of the interlocutors, whether these people appear to know each other already)
- Students present this description to a number of native speakers and ask whether or not they agree, and why.
- If possible, students compare their own description of the service encounter with the portrayal of similar encounters in language textbooks, and describe the differences between "ideal" and "real" language use.
- Students keep a logbook documenting their own use of language in service encounters and the reactions it elicits as they develop their competence in this domain.
- Students construct a portfolio including a record of observations, summaries of interviews, a revised descriptive account, a precis of their logbook, and reflection on their learning within the project.

Figure 20: Sample Project #2: The Language of Service Encounters

Sample Project #3: Documenting and Interpreting the Linguistic Landscape - For students of urban planning or geography

This project may include a combination of the following activities:

- Students visit a number of different neighborhoods of their host city, observing how language is used on formal and informal signs (e.g., to regulate behavior, to convey other official messages, for commercial purposes, for self expression via graffiti, etc.).
- Students choose a focus for their project, e.g., the linguistic landscape of a particular street or neighborhood, or a comparison of two more different places; a focus on a particular kind of sign (official, illegal, publicity-oriented) or a comparison of two or more kinds of signs.
- Students take photographs of the signs relevant to their project and prepare a digital portfolio.
- Students present the portfolio to members of their host family or other local people and ask for explanations of any signs they cannot easily interpret, and for personal reactions to the signs.
- Students synthesize their own interpretation of the signs and that of their hosts to prepare a final portfolio, including reflection on what they have learned in the process of gathering data and of participating in discussions with hosts.

Figure 21: Sample Project #3: Documenting and Interpreting the Linguistic Landscape

The principle underlying the design of these projects is of course that learning takes place primarily through observation, participation, and introspective reflection. Each of the projects begins with focused observation and the gathering of evidence. Next, the projects invite students to interact with members of their host community for a clear reason, and using readily available yet culturally unique artifacts. More precisely, the projects invite students to enter into dialogue with their hosts around the linguistic and cultural expertise required to understand the meaning of the artifacts. Finally, students are encouraged to reflect on the value of the project for their achievement as language learners. Using these principles, one can imagine a variety of other projects designed for or by students in response to their own interests or academic foci. As long as the project maintains a focus on observation, participation, and reflection around language use, regardless of the specific topic it will likely serve to promote student engagement in the local community, and therefore serve to enhance language learning.

4 | *'Rich points': Stories about intercultural miscommunication*

One of the main points of going abroad is to encounter unfamiliar cultural practices and ideas, and try to make sense of them. Sometimes, these encounters lead to conflict or miscommunication, and all too often, students' first reaction in these circumstances is decidedly negative. Conflictual intercultural encounters, when left unanalyzed, can lead to the perpetuation of damaging stereotypes, and they can prompt students to neglect or even to abandon their language learning goals. In some cases, miscommunication can induce students to distance themselves from their host families (Kinger, 2008) or from others who, in different circumstances, might provide them with important opportunities to learn.

For this reason, some writers on the topic of language learning in study abroad feel that it is legitimate to view culture as an obstacle (e.g., Brecht, Davidson and Ginsburg, 1995). For these writers, the most obvious effect of intercultural conflict is a loss of time-on-task for focus on language. After all, in this view language is a neutral instrument without an intrinsic relationship with culture. While it is certainly true that misunderstandings can deprive students of the time, and alienate them from the relationships they need to engage in language practice, if we follow the argument outlined in Chapter Three, it is clear that culture is quite unavoidable and that we need a different way to understand its role. In this chapter, we will consider what it would mean to look upon culture not as a trouble maker and a source of problems, but instead as a resource inextricably linked to language and worthy of dispassionate investigation.

For this purpose, I recruit the work of the anthropologist and ethnographer Michael Agar, and in particular his concept of the 'rich point' (1994). For Agar, a 'rich point' is a clash in values, ideas, or practices at the intersection of cultures. 'Rich points' become available for our contemplation at times in places when we begin to perceive that we may be in the grip of a culturally derived conflict. Something inexplicable is going on, or people are behaving in ways that confuse us. We can only begin to understand if we step back and take a dispassionate look at the scene, aware that we bring our own culturally-derived perceptions into play. Rather than viewing such

events as problematic, in other words, Agar enjoins us to view them as opportunities to gather insight.

As an example of the 'rich point' Agar cited his own confusion about the use of address forms in German. Like many other European languages, and unlike American English, German has two ways to say 'you,' *du* and *Sie*. Agar tried to apply textbook-style rules of thumb to his use of these forms, rules that were 'clear as freshly washed crystal' (p. 18) and recommended using *du* for animals, young children or friends, and *Sie* for anyone else. If he was like other learners of European languages (see Chapter Two) he may not have fully appreciated at the outset that the choice itself made a major difference both in the tenor of his conversations and in the ways he was perceived. In any case, his failure to understand the subtle and occasionally not-so-subtle cues embedded in address forms led him into a series of dire misunderstandings, including one case where he never noticed that a colleague was trying to flirt with him. As Agar watched the 'social acrobatics' (p. 19) required to untangle misapprehensions caused by his inexperienced command of address forms, he realized that he had encountered a 'rich point.' And in fact, investigating this point could lead to significant insight about German 'face systems' or 'the way a cultural group organizes relationships among members of the group' (Scollon and Scollon, 1995, p. 129). Learning the meaning of *du*, for example, might involve any of a number of different social or situational categories, for which there are names in German:

- (1) *Situationsbrüderschaft* or 'situational brotherhood'
 - (2) *Stallwärme*, literally 'stall warmth'
 - (3) *Betroffenheit* or 'dismay'
 - (4) *Diskriminierung* or 'discrimination'
 - (5) *das deutschdeutsche Du* or the 'German-German informal you'
- Kretzenbacher and Segebrecht (1991, pp. 47-57)

In short, Agar's argument about 'rich points' encourages us to see intercultural conflict in a positive light. It is precisely when we do not understand that we are given opportunities to perceive and to discover. Rich points can relate not only to face systems, but also, for example, to ideologies and worldviews, socialization practices in homes and in schools, or to the performance of gendered or generational identities (Scollon and Scollon, 1995).

The study abroad literature includes a number of qualitative studies illustrating the kinds of intercultural conflicts that can arise for our students. Unfortunately, in many cases it appears that these conflicts lead mainly to the perpetuation of stereotypes and to the dampening of students' desire for engagement in their host communities. I will argue here that in these cases, our best option is to look for the sources of misunderstanding, try to learn from the search, and encourage our students to do the same. That is, rather than stopping at the perception of a cultural difference, it

is far more productive, interesting, and useful in the long run to view these differences as ‘rich points’ in a two-way dialogue between cultural histories. If more of our students and their teachers were to adopt such a perceptive, we could enhance the level of engagement characteristic of study abroad experiences. We could also improve the likelihood that students will return home from abroad with true insight into the language and culture (or as Agar puts it, ‘languacultures’) of their hosts.

In this chapter we will look at reports of intercultural conflict in three communicative situations. We begin with students’ complaints about unfamiliar classroom interactions. We then look at the complex question of sexual harassment. Finally we see that American students abroad encounter aspects of youth culture that are incomprehensible to them. For the first two situations, I provide the elements of a ‘rich point-’oriented analysis to show the kinds of investigation that can help to clarify why misunderstandings emerge. In the spirit of continued inquiry, I include some observations of students’ difficulty in understanding youth culture, even though I have no ready explanation for it, and hope that readers with more insight into this phenomenon will someday share it with me!

4.1. Conflicts in the classroom

American students who temporarily attend French universities are often quite baffled by the practices they observe there. Here, for example, are the comments of some students in my 2008 study. First, let us consider the remarks of Jada, talking about her French language teacher in Montpellier:

it’s really foreign for us to have a French teacher, who has French ideas, ideas in French, [...] because we’re not accustomed to that. I mean it’s good to have it. but at the same time it’s- it’s really confusing. because ya know she sits there and says, well it doesn’t matter how hard you work. it just matters if you do well. and you’re like ok so then I don’t have to come to class, I don’t have to put any effort in, but I just have to get a good grade? [...] and I guess that’s how it works in France. which is fine ya know? she told us like it is, which French people often do. [...] she’s like no you’re just stupid. stop. I’m like ok. sorry. ((laughs)) but um yeah and she just told people you know I’m surprised that you’re not capable of doing this, and ya know if you deserve a zero, you’ll get a zero, and everyone’s like but at least we tried, and she’s like yep so. ((laughs)) doesn’t matter, um-um. so that was a bit of a shocker for us.

And now, the comments of Delaney, who had just declared that French universities are ‘ridiculous:’

the kids don’t go to class, the teachers don’t always go to class, there’s not much work, they don’t do—I do so much less work here than ever at MidState University, I mean I’m taking less credits obviously, but even if I was taking the same amount of credits, like there’s so much less work. and they’re so relaxed and don’t really care.

Bill attended some 'integrated' courses in Dijon, and had some professors that he considered 'really cool.' However, he was completely unnerved by the qualities of routine classroom interactions he observed at school:

as far as the classroom situations, the biggest thing is like just talking and not paying attention to the teacher. like blatantly. like having a normal conversation, and the teacher not even caring, like you you could tell where the international students are, like especially the Germans and the Americans. they're in the front row, cuz you can't sit in the back cuz you won't hear anything, and especially if it's in French. (Kingerger, 2008, p. 89)

Finally, here are some rather pointed observations from Alice (Kingerger, 2004) at one of lowest points of her sojourn in Lille, France. Alice had received no welcoming guidance or orientation to the university, had gotten lost on the first day, and wound up sitting in the wrong class, too intimidated to get up and leave.

Here in France everyone just fucking talks during class and you can't even hear or understand the prof. I'm so sick of it already. How am I ever going to survive a fucking year here? It's a good thing that I don't have enough \$ to go home for X-mas cause I wouldn't come back. Hate France, Hate French, Hate Life. I can't believe that this was my fucking life's dream! (Kingerger, 2004, p. 234)

After observing these kinds of phenomena, American students often conclude that

- French professors are cruel.
- French universities require little work from students.
- French students are disrespectful.

And these kinds of conclusions surely contribute to the general disregard, in the US, for the academic value of study abroad. But what is really going on here? In my view, we are faced with a 'rich point' in that French and American socialization practices in university settings, at least traditionally, are very different.

1. In the US, the college years are viewed as a transition time from adolescence to adulthood, when people should separate from their families but still require oversight of their bodies and minds by an institution that function *in loco parentis*.
2. Students expect their colleges to provide all manner of support services and guidance, and they believe that their teachers should take a personal interest in their performance.
3. The school becomes the locus of their social life, since most have left their home behind, and becomes a primary force in the establishment of their adult identity.

4. In the classroom, students as individual actors compete with each other for the good graces of the professor who is supposed to be in solidarity with them and to account for their presence and absence, and the qualities of their participation.
5. Gate-keeping evaluation takes place with the admissions process, after which students' coursework is evaluated in a variety of on-going ways, including exams and papers but also participation.
6. Overt criticism is believed to be destructive of the teacher-student dialogic relationship, and privacy laws forbid the disclosure of any fact about a student's performance, except to the student.

Although practices are changing rapidly in the context of the European Union's Bologna Declaration (Europa, 1999) and mass standardization toward an Americanized model, in the classical French university tradition we see the flip side of the description above:

1. The majority of students attend the university most convenient to their family home, and continue to reside there, at least at first. Although there are independent social organizations, the university itself has no particular pre-defined role in overseeing students' extra-academic affairs.
2. Local students normally do not need assistance in integrating into the university, and teachers have no business meddling in students' personal lives.
3. Students retain access to their families and the social circles developed throughout their lives.
4. In the classroom, students are in solidarity with each other in the effort to succeed (an arrangement that can be defined by US students as 'cheating'). The professor delivers instruction and grades but it is the students' responsibility to determine how he or she will perform.
5. Admission is available to any student with the appropriate secondary school qualification. Gate-keeping evaluation takes place in high-stakes examinations at the end of the year or diploma, and these exams 'weed out' the students who cannot succeed.
6. Students' success is more important than the teacher-student relationship, and this means it is legitimate not only for the teacher to be clear and direct about problems but also to announce grades and class standing, so that everyone knows how they have performed in relation to others and can make an informed decision about whether or not to work harder.

It may well be the contrast between the French and American approaches to university education that yields our students' disparaging remarks. When they see students ignoring their teacher in order to talk with each other, they may never have

imagined that classroom participation is simply not part of the evaluation process, or that these students need social interaction with each other more than they need to attend to the lecture, since lecture notes are circulated among the students before major exams. When they meet professors who do not take their effort into account, they may not realize that this is not necessarily an idiosyncrasy, but it part of a system that only rewards results. Most of all, since they do not participate in the high stakes testing process, they never get a chance to observe the fact that French students do in fact work, very hard, to prepare for these exams.

In preparing for a new academic culture, it might assist students to do some research about the specific differences between their home institution and the one they will join.

The task below is designed to promote reflection on these differences and how they might influence students' perceptions of the practices they observe at school. (A version of this grid is filled out for students from my institution who visit France, in Appendix C).

Academic Practices At Home and Abroad		
To be used with students		
Describe these features of university life and learning in your home institution, and compare them with those of your host institution. If you don't know about the host school's practices, ask other students who have studied there or find the answers through independent research. How might these differences affect the qualities of the experience for students and your perception of these qualities?		
	At Home	Abroad
Academic content: General or specialized?		
Locale (rural, urban, suburban?)		
Admission or selection of students		
Evaluation of students and grading		
Sources of knowledge		
Relationships of teachers and students		
Relationships among students in the classroom		
Social life		

Figure 22: Academic Practices At Home and Abroad

It is interesting, in this context, to consider how *French* students react to academic cultures of the Anglo-Saxon tradition. I am not aware of recent in-depth studies about French student's experiences in the US, but Patron (2007) provides an account of culture shock among a cohort of French students in Australia, where many practices are similar to those of the US. These students were just as astonished by the qualities of classroom interactions, student-teacher relationships, and norms of academic writing as my American students in France. Specifically, first of all, Patron claims that the Australian professors' laid back style was stressful, because it ran counter to the student's expectations. The notion that teachers and students should

exhibit solidarity with each other was entirely foreign. When Brigitte was invited to tea with her professor, for example, the only explanation she could muster was that he was trying to pick her up:

Au début ça m'a vraiment choqué, j'ai eu vraiment du mal à voir que vous [the author] et vos collègues organisent des soirées avec les étudiants, vous sortez ensemble. Pendant les cours on dit John. Je pouvais pas dire Mr. ou Professeur. Et même quand un prof m'invitait à prendre le thé, j'étais pas vraiment à l'aise. Je me disais: 'C'était pour me draguer? Me faire la cour?' Alors pas du tout. Il voulait juste me parler d'un sujet. Tout était la manière qu'on réagissait. Il fallait se remettre en question très souvent.

Initially I was really shocked. I had a lot of trouble coping with the fact that you [the author] and your colleagues organize soirées with the students, you go out together. During your classes you say John. I couldn't say Mr. or Professor. Even when a professor invited me to have tea, I was really uneasy. I said to myself: 'Is he trying to pick me up, to court me? But that was not it at all. He only wanted to talk to me about something. It all depended on one's reaction. You had to reassess your values quite often.

(Patron, 2007, pp. 112 – 113)

Secondly, and for reasons quite different from those of their American counterparts, the French students were shocked to find that their version of classroom etiquette was not observed in Australia. They criticized Australian students for their disrespect toward teachers expressed not as in-group student talk but as dress, and posture:

En classe [en France] on va être très formels [...] on va essayer de s'habiller formellement, on va pas venir en short à l'université. On se tient droit, on s'assoit bien dans sa chaise, pas avec les pieds sur la table, allongés sur la table, en savatte et avec des trous partout. C'est dégueulasse! En France les profs feraient des remarques.

In class [in France] one is very formal [...] one tries to dress appropriately, one does not come in shorts to the university. One sits up straight, correctly in the chair, not with feet on the desk, lying on the table, wearing thong sandals and with holes in one's clothes. It's disgusting! In France the lecturers would criticise this.

(Patron, 2007, p. 113)

The idea that students should regularly and actively contribute to in-class discussions was met with incredulity, as many of the students had never experienced such practices before:

Surtout dans les conférences, d'ailleurs ça c'était dur. C'est qu'en France quand on a une lecture, on ne parle pas, ya pas d'interaction comme ya ici. Par exemple, en Droit, le prof est comme un Dieu. On dit 'Maître' et les rapports entre les profs et ceux d'ici sont très différents. Dans les tutoriaux non plus ya pas d'interaction [...] Donc ya cette phase d'adaptation aussi parce qu'on appelle les profs par leur prénom mais en France c'est impensable, impensable! On ne tutoie jamais ses profs, c'est très, très mal.

Especially in lectures, that was hard. It's because in France during a lecture one does not speak, there is no interaction like here. For example, in Law, the lecturer is like God. We say: 'Master' and the rapport between lecturers and students compared to here is different. In tutorials, there is no interaction [...] So there is an adaptation phase also, because you call lecturers by their first names but in France it's unthinkable! Unthinkable! One is never informal with one's teacher, it's very bad.

(Patron, 2007, p. 115)

Finally, the French students quickly discovered that academic writing conventions in Australian universities were quite incongruous with their prior socialization. They needed to grasp the local meaning of 'plagiarism' and learn how to track down and cite the references they used in their papers, or risk receiving poor grades. Some students criticized the idea that tests would require 'regurgitating' information presented in class, with no personal interpretation attached. One student claimed that Australian educational practices squelched students' own development as thinkers, and therefore lowered the overall level:

Dans les recherches, il faut cracher ce qui dit quelqu'un ici [...] on nous apprend à chercher, mais pas à penser par nous-mêmes. [...] C'est une spirale, on part de l'intérieur et on va vers l'extérieur, tandis qu'en France, on part de l'intérieur vers l'extérieur, et on s'exprime. Et on a le droit de le faire. Mais ici non. On peut pas donner notre avis sur plein de questions. Et alors le système de références, c'est complètement nul!

When you do research you have to spit out what someone else has said [...] they teach us to carry out research but not to think for ourselves [...] it's a spiral, and we move from the outside in, whereas in France, we move from the inside out, and we express ourselves. And we are allowed to do it. But here you can't. You can't give your opinion about many things. And this system of referencing, it's completely useless!

(Patron, 2007, p. 116)

At the beginning of their stay, in summary, the French students in Patron's study expressed beliefs very similar to those of my American students, but for different reasons:

1. Australian professors are strange.
2. Australian universities require little independent thinking of their students.
3. Australian students are disrespectful.

In the end, however, in part because they were in Australia for a full academic year, most of these students adapted to local educational conventions and even began to value them. Meanwhile, contrasting their initial perceptions with those of American students in France suggests that academic norms and classroom practices can be 'rich points.' Rather than simply condemning these norms and practices, it is useful to delve into the values and worldviews underlying them in order to understand what purpose they serve.

4.2. Sexual harassment

The qualitative research on American students abroad is filled with references to sexual harassment. Whether they are in France (Kline, 1998), Spain (Talbert and Stewart, 1999), Russia (Polanyi, 1995), Costa Rica (Twombly, 1995) or Argentina (Isabelli-García, 2006), American female students complain about unwanted advances from local men, including catcalls on the street and more subtle coercion, such as the interaction below recounted in Polanyi's (1995) study. Here, Sylvia is recounting a visit to a Russian Orthodox Church on Easter morning in the company of a young Russian man:

At first we were talking about religion... And then it got, the talk came around to me and how he thought I looked like the Madonna, and it was really strange. At many times I thought I couldn't hear something correctly that he said, because I figured he couldn't be saying something so strange, but he really was, it turned out.

So that was rather interesting. It was just the two of us hanging around in front of these icons and me kind of trying to put space between us in an impossible situation because there were people crowding around us. It was slightly stressful. I mean, I didn't want to insult him, he kept saying, "Oh. Well. I know why you don't like me, it's because I'm Russian and you think that we're all these stalking bears and you don't like me." And that's not true. He's a nice person, but I don't know him very well, and it was just a weird situation. (Polanyi, 1995: 282)

In interpreting this example, Polanyi notes that in Sylvia's story, "discomfort leaks through her brave posturing" (p. 284) as she attempts to shed a positive light on an experience in which the only role she could claim was that of a sexual object.

In this literature, the harassment that female students report is often directly connected to their relatively modest language-related achievement in comparison to men. Polanyi's study, for example, was part of a larger effort that included Brecht, Davidson and Ginsburg's (1995) efforts to determine which factors predict the development of proficiency in Russian study abroad. Their findings showed that gender was a significant predictor, with men far more likely than women to display gains on the OPI at the end of their program. Polanyi was asked to perform a narrative analysis of student participants' journals in order to explore the reasons for this result. She found that the female students were rarely interpreted as competent speakers, whereas the males were, and that the women were constantly harassed.

Another, more recent example comes from Isabelli-García's (2006) analysis of social networks, motivation and the development of Spanish language proficiency in Argentina. Isabelli-García followed four students through their experience, noting the extent to which they became engaged in local social networks, the qualities of their motivation, and whether or not they overcame ethnocentric attitudes. The three young men in the study all succeeded to some degree, either in improving their score on the post-test of proficiency (SOPi) or in changing their stance to include greater

intercultural awareness. One of them became involved in a wide circle of age-peer friends, and made important progress both in his language ability and in his ethnorelative approach to intercultural communication. The young woman, however, reported feelings of alienation and distance from Argentine culture as a result of harassment on the street. She did not become integrated into her host family or its social network, and spent most of her time with an American female friend that she met within the program. She was the only participant in the study who made no measureable progress toward proficiency in Spanish. By the end of her sojourn, she declared that there was no place for her in Argentina and that she had given up her desire to become a speaker of Spanish.

Most of the time, the research reporting experiences of sexual harassment is based on student journals or interviews only. This research does not include the point of view of local people, nor does it include observations of the behaviors that may induce foreign men to harass our students. However, as part of a larger ethnographic project Goldoni (2009) has collected multiple perspectives (of home and host institutions as well as students) on a number of 'rich points' including female students' experience of sexual harassment. Goldoni was a participant observer in a 7-week summer study abroad program in Cadíz, Spain. Seven female participants in the program alleged to have been harassed; for example, they were pursued in the street as they walked home after midnight, one young woman was licked on the face outside a pub, and another was a victim of obscene gesturing.

The task below presents some of Goldoni's data, based on field notes, with questions to guide your interpretation.

Comparative perspectives on sexual harassment in Spain

To be used with students

Consider the difference between the interpretations of study abroad participants and their home university's faculty and those of the host institution's director.

US female students (the victims) + home-university coordinators and director's perspective	Host-institution director's perspective
We did not do anything to provoke these guys or to cause this situation. We were in a public place minding our own business.	The way of dressing of US girls, and the fact that many of them are blond and have blue/green eyes, make them stand out. They look attractive and exotic to locals. US girls tend to congregate and drink more than other international students such as Italian, French, German, Belgian girls, and therefore they catch the attention of locals more easily than other girls. Some US girls dance and act in a very provocative way at times, especially when they are in the disco, and they drink more than necessary. Local guys may interpret their behavior and intentions in the wrong way.
We do not know how to behave or what to say in these situations. We do not want to make things worse. We are afraid that things like that will happen again. We want to know what we can say in Spanish next time that something like that happens. We are afraid of going out. Men here are too aggressive and vulgar.	Adolescents and young guys are usually harmless, especially if they are in a public place. If they molest you, shout at them, tell them to go away and leave you alone (the right wording in Spanish was given to the victims). Other female (inter)national girls, including local girls from Cádiz, may have to deal with the same problem. They are not afraid of using strong words with aggressive guys, in Spanish or in their mother language.
Home-university coordinators suggested going to the police to file a report. They requested more police patrol in certain area of the city where previous episodes of physical and verbal harassment occurred.	It is a waste of time. The police will file the report and that will be the end of it. That is how the system is.
This is a case of gender violence.	This is just the way adolescents behave and there is not much we can do. He tried to minimize the gravity of the situation.

Why do American female students have more difficulty in these situations than local or other international students?

What are the sources of the conflict between the American and the Spanish perspectives in this case? Is it really true that the US students 'did not do anything' to cause this situation'?

How can we understand the host institution director's relative indifference to the plight of these young women?

What advice might we offer to our students for understanding and coping with these kinds of episodes?

Figure 23: Comparative perspectives on sexual harassment in Spain

In addition to considering the views of host institution directors, it is once again instructive to seek out the interpretations of young women from the societies under critique in the American study abroad literature. In Patron's (2007) study of French students in Australia, there are some quite telling data about the perceived quality of gender relations. One of the participants, Arlette, was both surprised and hurt, at the beginning of her stay, by the *absence* of activities that Americans would normally interpret as harassment. For Arlette, the fact that no one was overtly attempting to pick her up 'struck at the core of her identity as a woman' (2007, p. 62):

La drague, j'ai trouvé ça vraiment bizarre. Parce que c'est presque politiquement incorrect de draguer. Au bout d'un moment je me suis dit: 'Bon, il doit y avoir un problème avec ma personne. Voilà je dois pas être belle ou je dois avoir pris du poids, ou ya quelque chose parce que ya jamais personne qui me drague. Personne me fait des compliments' [...] les gens ne se regardent pas en fait [...] C'est désagréable parce qu'on se sent moins bien et en meme temps on se sent plus en sécurité.

Picking up, I found this very weird. Because it's almost politically incorrect to pick up people. After a while, I said to myself: 'OK, there must be a problem with me. There, I must not be beautiful, or I must have put on weight, or there must be something because no one ever tries to pick me up. No one gives me compliments' [...] In fact, people don't look at each other [...] It's as if they would be slapped for it [...] It's really unpleasant because you don't feel good about yourself but at the same time you feel much safer.

(Patron 2007: 62)

The perception of sexual harassment is a very obvious problem for our students when they go abroad. For those who feel harassed, the experience can severely curtail engagement in local activities and social networks and thereby limit language learning. This fact is particularly distressing in light of the feminized nature of study abroad, with its majority of female participants. Even for males who do not see themselves as

victims of sexual harassment, the experience of observing their female classmate's difficulties can cement negative attitudes toward the host community. In my 2008 study, for example, the male participants used their perception of gender-related incidents as a way of celebrating their own superiority as politically correct persons raised in an environment where gender equity is (assumed to be) in effect. In some instances, they were able to interpret themselves as valiant heroes protecting foreign women from their own violent and chauvinist men.

If we consider the ways in which these activities are interpreted by local people, including representatives of host institutions and the presumed victims of sexual harassment, we may find that we are in the presence not of inexplicably appalling behavior, but of a 'rich point' worthy of further investigation. Instead of rushing to the conclusion that the rest of the world is wrong about gender relations, and we are right, it might be better to consider 1) how our students' behavior is interpreted in the contexts they frequent, and 2) what purposes are served locally and how people might feel that they are benefitting by the activities we call 'sexual harassment.'

4.3. Politics and parties: Encountering youth cultures

As a final example of a potential 'rich point' in the experience of our students abroad, I would like to propose the astonishment I have observed in my students' commentaries about the preferred social activities of their French peers. A previously mentioned, this 'point' continues to puzzle me, and I am still unsure about how to analyze it. In my projects on the experiences of American students in France, I have found that students on short-term programs rarely enjoy extended interactions with age-peers. When they do, however, they are sometimes quite baffled by their peers' choices of activity.

For example, Beatrice (Kinger, 2008; for more about Beatrice, see Chapter Five) was a devoted language learner who was placed with a Parisian host family including two daughters near her age (17 and 19). Unlike many other American students in semester-long or shorter programs, Beatrice had opportunities to link to groups of young people through her host family. That is, her host sisters made an effort to include her in their social lives. One occasion Beatrice described was an invitation to a party with her younger host sister:

- B: I went to a party with her once and it was like an intellectual=
I: yeah.
B: I'm like what the hell is this? this is not a party.
I: were they drinking?
B: they—I believe they were, they had special brownies if you know what I mean.
I: ohh::
B: but I was like what the hell is this? and so=
I: =thank god you knew about the brownies.

- B: oh I looked at them and I was like I know what those are I am not touching those brownies. but they all sit there together in this smoke filled room and talk about like ... intellectual things, and I'm like this is a party? what are we doing? I would love to go to MidState just for one party. (Mid-Term Interview)

Beatrice was apparently so alienated, not only by the brownies but also by the 'intellectual' discourse, that she spent her time at the party speaking only with another American who happened to be there. That is, she gave up an opportunity to interact at length in an informal setting with local people her own age.

Another example comes from Alice (Kinger, 2004). Although Alice preferred to consider herself an 'Earthling' rather than identifying with her national identity, prior to her sojourn in France she had not taken more than a cursory interest in world events or global politics. She claimed that she 'didn't do politics,' essentially bracketing that entire category as irrelevant to her. While she was in France, Alice made a personal mission of integrating herself into the social lives of local students at her university in Lille, but once she began to get the access she so craved, she was often shocked to find that her French peers were not inclined to let her get away with resolute apathy concerning political events and the influence of her own country. At one point, she had a 'huge fight with a guy named Cedric':

On a commencé de parler des vacances mais Cedric a dit qqch de Bill Clinton... Moi, je fais pas la politique, je m'en fous... et je peux pas expliquer ce que est arrivé après ça sauf qu'il a mis toute d'erreurs de la terre entière sur Bill Clinton... On a disputé un peu et puis car je fais pas la politique, j'ai demandé si on pourrait changer le sujet... j'ai essayé au moins 3 fois de changer mais chaque fois il a continué. Enfin, il a dit "Franchement, je n'aime pas les Etats-Unis..." Moi, j'ai pris ça un peu personnelle. Il voulait pas parler d'autres choses, donc, j'ai arrêté de parler. Je voulais pleurer franchement! (...) Je fais pas la politique et en plus, je sais pas m'exprimer quand même -- je connais pas la vocabulaire... et je m'EN FOUS.

Après quelques minutes pas du tout confortables, ils ont dit "bonne nuit" et sont partis. J'étais cassée. Je me suis allongé sur mon lit et j'ai pleuré. Je voulais être toute seule... Je voulais rentrer aux Etats-Unis car si c'est "Français" de faire la politique... si je dois parler de choses qui m'intéressent pas, je devrais quitté ce pays maintenant parce que je ne suis pas ici pour ça. Je suis pas Française et je veux pas être Française... donc j'ai toujours le droit de refuser de parler de n'importe quoi. (Journal – Lille 1/4/99)

We started talking about the vacation but Cedric said something about Bill Clinton... I don't do politics, I couldn't care less... and I can't explain what happened after that except that he put all the mistakes in the whole world on Bill Clinton... We argued a little and then since I don't do politics, I asked if we could change the subject... I tried at least three times to change but each time he continued. Then, he said "Frankly, I don't like the United States..." I took that a little personal. He didn't want to talk about other things, so, I stopped talking. I wanted to cry frankly (...) I don't do politics and plus, I don't even know how to express myself – I don't know the vocabulary... and I DON'T CARE.

After a few minutes that were not at all comfortable, they said “good night” and left. I was broken. I stretched out on my bed and I cried. I wanted to be all alone... I wanted to go back to the United States because if its “French” to do politics... if I have to talk about things that don’t interest me, I should leave this country now because I’m not here for that. I am not French and I don’t want to be French... that way I still have the right to refuse to talk about whatever I want. (Kinging, 2004, pp. 236 – 237)

If Alice had come home at the end of her first semester, her refusal to ‘do politics’ might well have survived and been in some sense solidified. In Alice’s case, though, a long sojourn (of two years), no doubt involving more than one encounter of this kind, resulted in a change of heart. By the time she returned to the US, she had developed strong interest in world events and had begun to seek out the global perspectives that made her feel ‘alive’. Moreover, marveling at her own ability to ‘have these long philosophical conversations in French using big long French words’ she pronounced herself the ‘Queen of France’ (p. 236). In the case of students who spend less time abroad, I wonder to what extent the relative absence of American-style partying and the insistence of peers upon conversation deemed too ‘intellectual’ might contribute to stereotyping the French as snobs. I also wonder to what extent misunderstandings about what counts as ‘fun’ for college students serve to block the engagement of our students in social networks of their peers, both in France and elsewhere around the world.

We know that American students come from a country that is geographically isolated and has traditionally been more inward than outward looking, and we know that the internationalization of our campuses is more often seen as a matter of bringing talent from abroad than of improving the education of our own students (Kinging, 2009). Our mainstream media outlets tend not to provide the level or quality of international coverage found elsewhere. As a result, our students are relatively uninformed about global events and may feel quite unprepared to discuss them, especially if they arrive without adequate proficiency to do so. But this does not explain why the students who take the trouble to go abroad - those who concretely demonstrate an interest in the rest of world - should occasionally react so negatively to the efforts of their peers to engage them in conversations about world events. American students’ reactions to the youth cultures they encounter, including the preferred modes of language use in interaction, may in fact be yet another ‘rich point’ for our consideration.

In this chapter we have explored some of the misunderstandings that American students abroad can interpret either as intractable problems or as sources of discomfort. No doubt there are many other such stories emerging from the interaction of American students’ perspectives and those of their hosts in many parts of the world. When intercultural contact becomes conflictual, this process can serve to diminish students’ desire to participate in their host societies and to alienate them from their hosts. Therefore it is important to devise ways to cope through interpretation and

understanding. In these cases, it is not enough to confirm students' generalizations about their host communities, we must also help them to become more dispassionate and less judgmental. For this purpose, the concept of the 'rich point' offers considerable promise in that it encourages us to look at the interaction of our own and others' histories and expectations and try to identify the reasons underlying conflicts. In the next chapter, we will look more closely at some of specific additional forces and choices that can constrain students' engagement in their host communities.

5 | *Pitfalls for language learners abroad*

Throughout this Guidebook I have been arguing that if language learners abroad are to profit from their sojourns they must be attentive to local realities, and willing to engage in them through observation, participation, and introspective reflection. Given that typical sojourns now last a semester or less, it is all the more important that students know how to make the most of their time abroad, because this time has become quite precious. In the interest of furthering teachers' ability to counsel their students on this topic, in this chapter I review some of the ways in which students' can be distracted from their language learning goals or can adopt stances that detract from their ability to learn.

5.1. The shelter of the American cohort

For students and indeed, for everyone concerned about language learning, the most obvious of these constraints is the centripetal force of the American cohort. Some writers are quick to point out that spending time with compatriots can have positive effects on the qualities of sojourns abroad. American study groups can provide supportive hybrid cultures offering much-needed breaks from the stress of acculturation and space for collective reflection on complex events (Kline, 1998). They can help students achieve a thoughtful approach with respect to cultural and identity-related phenomena (Talbert and Stewart, 1999) and generally ease students' transition into their new communicative environment (DeLey, 1975).

However, other writers take a more disapproving approach to the role of American cohorts in defining the experiences of our students abroad. Ogden (2007) for example, compares American students to colonial occupiers, watching the activities and people of their host communities from the safe distance of their fully equipped and air-conditioned verandahs. In Levin's (1999) ethnographic study of US students in France, the program explicitly downplayed language learning as a natural by-product of study abroad (in a manner similar to Camille's reflections on fluency in Chapter Three). The program leaders encouraged students to view their experience as process of gaining maturity and self-reliance, yet within the program itself everything was arranged to promote group solidarity among the Americans and to curtail independent movement outside the group. Levin documented how the students conspired, from the

first day, to avoid interactions in French, for example, by shunning the university cafeteria in favor of shopping for familiar products in big box stores. Although some students eventually ‘escaped’ into meaningful interactions with local people, most did not. For my own study (2008), data were collected at the onset of socio-political tensions between the US and many European nations during the US-led invasion of Iraq. The consequences of this change in the political atmosphere included a general increase in students’ apprehensiveness and tendency to stick together, and the efforts of one program to make sure that American students were occupied among themselves on weekends and frankly discouraged from venturing forth on their own. A number of other studies show that students from all over the world can come to rely primarily on groups of their own compatriots for social and psychological support while abroad, thus limiting their access to local realities or social networks (e.g., Twombly, 1995; Kline, 1998; Isabelli-García, 2006 for US students; Tanaka, 2007 for Japanese students; Jackson, 2008 for students from Hong Kong). However, the American practice of favoring cohesiveness and closure in study abroad groups, as described in Chapter One, appears to be particularly durable and consequential. In concluding their article on the features of study abroad programs promoting the development of French language proficiency, Magnan and Back (2007) make a quite unambiguous statement on this topic, namely that orientation sessions ‘indoctrinate students into an Americanized community of practice that will impede their language acquisition’ (p. 57).

All of this research suggests that it is worthwhile to consider the design of programs when deciding which ones to recommend to language learners. There are programs that focus on cultural/linguistic integration, taking specific steps to encourage it (e.g., Engle and Engle, 1999). These programs might, for example, require students to attend official functions accompanied by a local friend or host family member, propose projects designed to further students’ interactions with their hosts, or offer ways to explore personal interests in the local community. The research also suggests the relevance of advice about judicious ways to profit from an association with other Americans, for example, when a ‘break’ is needed, without allowing the American group to dominate one’s agenda. It is probably unrealistic to imagine, as many students do, that the American group will play no role in the quality of a sojourn abroad, but it is possible to counsel students about ways to extend their focus beyond that of their study abroad cohort.

5.2. English as *lingua mundi*

English has become the acknowledged *lingua mundi*, a language that is in regular use and in high demand throughout the world. This phenomenon has several consequences

for American language learners abroad. First, they will find it increasingly difficult to find both informal and formal situations where they may practice their foreign language. Among international students in Europe, such as ERASMUS (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) participants, for example, English often overpowers the local language as the preferred medium for social interaction. Many universities the world over have begun to offer instruction to their own and international students in English. Secondly, they may find that their own competence in English is in demand; their interlocutors may insist upon using English as a way of furthering their own learning rather than supporting the progress of our students. Thirdly, witnessing the spread of English may have a profound effect on the motives of our students who may decide that there is little reason to pursue advanced competence in other languages.

This issue is not new. In 1980, for example, Francine Schumann published an analysis of her language learning journals from a sojourn in Iran and Tunisia, stating that most of her attempts to use the local language in service encounters had been preempted by her interlocutor's desire to practice their English. With the continued spread of English, however, the resulting influence on study abroad appears to have intensified. The student participants in my 2008 study quickly noticed the ubiquity of English in France. Benjamin went on a trip from his host city of Paris to Brittany, partly in an attempt to be somewhere where people speak less English. To his astonishment, though:

English was everywhere! We were on the train back to Paris and we were sitting across from a Finnish girl that spoke nearly perfect English. You can't escape it. (Journal 2/19/2003)

In host family settings, if there is not a commitment to the language learning efforts of the student guests, or if the student does not present adequate initial proficiency for everyday conversation, English can also become the preferred medium of communication. This may be especially true if there is more than one Anglophone student in the home. In my 2008 study Liza, for example, enjoyed a budding French-mediated relationship with her host mother in Strasbourg, until the arrival of a second less proficient American guest, at which point all parties switched to English. Olivia arrived in Paris with low initial proficiency, and although she lived in a home with age-peer host brothers, she could not rely upon them to honor her efforts to speak French:

I really cannot understand my host brothers in Paris. They must mumble or not enunciate because I think I say 'Quoi'? every time they say something to me. I say 'quoi' because I want them to repeat it more clearly and slowly so I can figure it out myself. But instead they switch to English which is so aggravating and frustrating. (Journal 2/28/2003)

This reality once again suggests careful attention to the choice and design of programs. For motivated language learners, there should be preference for programs with explicit emphasis on language, foregrounding opportunities for formal and informal language use. Students themselves might be counseled to think strategically about how they can design their stay to include as many language learning opportunities as possible.

5.3. Playing 'student' outside the classroom

A number of writers have pointed out that classroom language learning, particularly in the early stages, can promote certain 'structures of expectation' (Lafford, 2004, p. 213) about how foreign language interaction is supposed to play out. Specifically, students who have used their language only in classroom settings have experience primarily in talking with teachers: teachers' whose mission is to help them in a situation where the form of their talk is subject to scrutiny. They may not yet have begun to assume responsibility for the meaning and clarity of their own utterances. As we saw in Chapter Two, study abroad can play a major role in furthering this realization. However, some students may take longer than others to reach this understanding. Especially in short-term stays with little occasion for informal language use, they may impede their own progress by interpreting their conversations with native or expert speakers as similar to classroom talk, and limiting their participation accordingly.

Working with participants in a short-term summer program in France, Wilkinson (2002) asked the students to make short recordings of their conversations with host families. Wilkinson's analysis of these conversations showed that many of the participants played 'student,' or occasionally 'teacher,' in talking with their hosts. That is, they used the familiar pedagogical structure of Initiation- Response- Evaluation (e.g. I: *Qu'est-ce que tu as fait aujourd'hui?* R: *J'ai étudié.* E: *Très bien!*). That is, rather than expanding their repertoires, in this situation the students tended to rely on what they already knew how to do.

An especially poignant example is provided in the case of Ashley. To recall, Ashley's host family did not offer her occasions for conversation in French. In order to meet her responsibilities as a participant in Wilkinson's study, Ashley 'borrowed' Heather's 10-year-old host brother Girard as a partner in the recorded conversation and used the resources at her disposal to engage him in dialogue:

1. AC: et (.2) *qu'est-ce que tu fais* (.) *qu-* (.) *quelle aut- quelle autre* (.5)
2. NS: *langues?*=
3. AC: =*chose.*
4. NS: *peut-être j'veais faire peut-être*(.) *espagnol.* (.2)
5. AC: *ah oui?*
6. NS: *j'aime bien.* (.8)
7. AC: (quietly) *oui?* (1.0)

8. AC: et (1.0) uh:m (.) *je n'sais pas huh! huh! huh!*
 9. NS: *hhh! .hhh! hhh! après?, je vois pas, moi.*
 10. AC: *.hhh!*
 11. NS: *après je ne sais pas.*
 12. AC: (quietly) *je ne sais pas?, tu ne sais pas. m? (1.0)*
 13. AC: et (.2) *Heather? hhh! huh! huh! [huh! t(hhh)u*
 14. HF: [tu as des questions pour lui?
 15. AC: *.hhh! oui.*
 16. NS: *f(hhh) chais pas? (1.0)*
 17. HF: (quietly) *(demande-lui) quelque chose.=*
 18. AC: *=oui. demande-moi.*
 19. NS: *(hhh!)o. hhh! ah je vois pas?, moi. hhh!! m qu'est-ce que je pourrais poser?*
 20. AC: *oui. (1.2)*
 21. AC: *hhh!-*
 22. NS: *tu es déjà venue en France?*
1. AC: and (.2) what do you do (.) wh- (.) what oth- what other (.5)
 2. NS: languages?=
 3. AC: =thing.
 4. NS: maybe I'm gonna do (.) Spanish (.2)
 5. AC: oh yeah?
 6. NS: I like it. (.8)
 7. AC: (quietly) yes (1.0)
 8. AC: and (1.0) uh:m (.) I don't know huh! huh! huh!
 9. NS: hhh! hhh! hhh! after this?, I don't see it happening.
 10. AC: .hhh!
 11. NS: after this I don't know.
 12. AC: (quietly) I don't know?, you don't know. m? (1.0)
 13. AC: and. (.2) Heather? hhh! huh! huh! [huh! (hhh) you
 14. HF: [do you have questions for him? ((HF means "her"))
 15. AC: .hhh! yes
 16. NS: f(hhh) dunno? (1.0)
 17. HF: (quietly) (ask her) something=
 18. AC: =yes. ask me.
 19. NS: (hhh!)o. hhh! ah I don't see how?, . hhh!! m what could I ask?
 20. AC: yes. (1.2)
 21. AC: hhh!-
 22. NS: have you come to France before?
 (adapted from Wilkinson, 2002: 166 – 67)

What appears to have occurred in this interaction is that both Ashley and Girard assumed relatively passive roles. Running low on resources for topic nomination early in the game, Ashley's structurally familiar solution was to mirror the classroom practice of asking and answering semantically hollow, unmotivated questions. That is, Ashley appears to talk for the sake of producing evidence that she can talk, and does not take much interest in what Girard might actually have to say. The conversation is remarkable for the length and number of pauses that may well have been perceived as awkward (timed pause lengths are given in parentheses, in seconds), and for Ashley's

laughter, filling in for talk when she finds herself nominated to speak but can't figure out what to say (in turns 8 and 13). When Ashley was at a complete loss for ways to prolong the talk, she appealed to Heather (turn #13) who assumed the pedagogical role of assigning responsibility for the next question to Girard (turn #17). Girard resisted (turn #19) before eventually coming up with an acceptable question (turn #22). According to Wilkinson, Ashley did not recognize her own part in the limited success of the conversation. Instead, she blamed Girard for failing to meet her expectations, interpreting this interaction as a frustrating encounter with an uncooperative child.

As Wilkinson herself points out, this reliance on pedagogical discourse is a natural consequence of students' prior socialization in classrooms, and is probably to some extent unavoidable. But it seems likely also that if students were more aware of the differences between classroom talk and other forms of discourse, and if they had a better sense of the potential for language learning in study abroad (as outlined in Chapter Two), some might arrive at an earlier realization about the importance of a focus on the meaning of their conversations as well as observation of their form.

5.4. The electronic umbilical cord

Language teachers all around the world have much to celebrate in the spread of global telecommunications technologies. Whereas twenty years ago we were enjoined to search for everyday texts and other 'realia' in paper form, and pedagogical exchanges took place via videotape, letter, or shoebox, today we have unprecedented access to artifacts and people via the Internet. Cell phones, Skype, Facebook and IM have reordered the social landscape, with physical distance playing a diminished role in shaping the nature and qualities of relationships. On one hand, these changes open our classrooms to the world. On the other, we can no longer be as certain as we used to be that it makes a difference to change places. Students who go abroad can and usually do maintain constant contact with their friends and family at home, and may spend hours at a time scrolling through the pages of fox.com or other American media outlets. As noted in Chapter One, they control their own communicative environments, choosing as never before either to admit or to exclude local reality.

Study abroad researchers have long been aware that students who are experiencing alienation or solitude while abroad take refuge in various technologies, from the book to the Blackberry. Twombly (1995) saw that her female participants in Costa Rica often chose to block out the sounds of *piropos*, and everything else on the street, with their Walkman. When Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2002) interviewed host mothers in Spain and Mexico about the adjustment problems of their student guests, one frequently cited issue was the 'electronic umbilical cord' linking homesick

students to their accustomed social circles and excluding local people. My own 2008 study included a participant called Deirdre who spent every possible moment of her time in France behind a computer screen in interaction with her friends and family in the US. Deirdre was miserable in Montpellier, counting the days remaining in her sojourn in the manner of prisoners' tallies on the wall. However, she made no effort to relieve her loneliness through social ties there, either within the study abroad group or with local inhabitants or other international students. Instead she carefully nurtured her longing for home, going directly from her classes each day to the study abroad center's computers, and remaining there until closing time. Deirdre's progress in French was singularly modest in comparison to that of other students who had become more engaged in local activities.

Our challenge is to find ways in which students abroad can use communication technologies to promote their language learning rather than using it to limit their own access to learning environments. Students should be counseled, of course, to reflect about their choices in this domain, too, that is, to think about the opportunities they might be setting aside in favor of English-medium communication with familiar people and texts. More than this, though, teachers should consider how communications technologies might serve to link students to their host communities. It is certainly possible for students to seek out and find local social networks in the communities where they study through Facebook, for example. Teachers might organize exchanges involving classes from the study abroad destinations of their students, and provide students with advance experience of informal social interaction through Internet-mediated interaction.

5.5. Visiting relatives can be a nuisance

Along with the spread of English and of communications technologies, globalization has significantly upgraded the ease of travel. Once again, this change presents both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, more students than ever before have access to study abroad. On the other, the students' friends and families are more likely than ever before to join them while they are away. In combination with the well-known 'helicopter parent' phenomenon, where parents hover protectively over their children wherever they go (summer camp, school, the playing field or the proscenium) the ease of travel means that many students entertain their mothers, boyfriends or roommates while they are abroad. Visiting relatives are not worrisome in principle; they can provide solace or meet other emotional needs. But in the context of a sojourn lasting several weeks to several months, when students devote considerable time to their visitors it quickly becomes clear that they are *not* spending this time in any profound form of local engagement.

One of the participants in my 2008 study, Liza, spent one semester in Strasbourg. In retrospect she claimed that she regretted having missed the opportunity to form local connections, but while she was there visitors from home continually claimed her time. Her mother accompanied her to Strasbourg at the beginning of her stay. Her boyfriend arrived on her doorstep several weeks into the semester, and she dropped all of her local activities in order to entertain him for ten days. A few days later, her father showed up, once again for over a week. Given that Liza also spent considerable time travelling as a tourist on her own, the amount of time she spent on her own in Strasbourg was actually very limited, and it is no wonder that she made few social connections to the place. Liza's experience was not atypical of the students in this cohort. Nearly every study participant, in fact, received visits from home. When one student complained to her parents about the material circumstances of her stay, her father promptly appeared on the scene to confront the director of the program.

The extent to which students in study abroad programs choose to entertain visitors from home is of course their business. Further, it may not be possible to address this issue simply by counseling students since it is their parents who so often choose to intervene. But all parties should be aware that if students are abroad for a limited amount of time, and wish to make the most of this time for language learning, then prolonged visits from home may not always be advisable.

5.6. The Grand Tour as infotainment

In Chapter One I presented Gore's (2005) findings to the effect that the dominant interpretation of study abroad in the US is related to the history of the Grand Tour. Specifically, Gore argues that many American educators look upon study abroad as a frivolous and decorative pursuit, mainly appropriate as an add-on or finishing touch in the education of elite women. Students who go abroad, according to this interpretation, may gather symbolic capital along with their souvenirs, but they do not engage in serious work. Nor do they develop capabilities relevant to economic striving. We have already seen that the origins of this view may emerge in part from students' very peripheral involvement in the local educational institutions they join, and the misunderstandings resulting from the fact that our students rarely witness the hard work of their local counterparts. Now we must consider the fact that some students share this dominant view, and use their time abroad less as a learning opportunity and more as a chance to partake in global infotainment.

In the contemporary Grand Tour, as critiqued by Ogden (2007) or Feinberg (2002), study abroad is an opportunity for culturally edifying leisure activity taking place on a superficially exotic but basically familiar backdrop. My 2008 study includes the story of Ailis, a student who began her sojourn in France with apparent desire to

learn French, but who devoted little attention to her local surroundings or school work. After a few weeks of loneliness and malaise, Ailis joined a group of American women and spent the rest of her considerable free time travelling with this group. Ailis visited many major landmarks and European capitals. She tried to eat in a Hard Rock Café in every town she visited. Her forays to museums, monuments, and bars are recounted in her journal with superficial commentary, comparisons to familiar phenomena (e.g. an Italian waiter resembling Mathew Broderick), and complaints about foreign practices. By the end of her stay, Ailis was completely satisfied with her accomplishments, though she could not produce evidence that she had learned French, and in fact was granted a lower score for one of the assessments than she had earned before departure.

Whereas Deirdre screened herself from local interactions, Ailis literally fled from them. Clearly, she profited from her stay, claiming that she had learned a lot about herself, notably, discovering a taste for travel of which she had been unaware. However, Ailis' experience illustrates the obvious fact that group travel with other Americans cannot be easily interpreted as an environment for language learning. If our students are to use their sojourns about for language learning, they will need to navigate competing interpretations, and especially the temptation to join the dominant group in its celebration of study abroad as an occasion for leisure.

5.7. Recoiling into national superiority

The final pitfall we must consider is the potential for recoil into national superiority. According to Block (2007), 'when the going gets tough for study abroad students, the subject position of the American abroad emerges as dominant' (2007, pp. 170 -71). Block is referring to investigations of the American student experience where students are shown to interpret conflicts in an 'Us versus Them' manner, concluding that We are have the moral high ground, and They do not. A final example from my 2008 study will illustrate this process.

Beatrice was a marketing major with a minor specialization in French, and many years of prior classroom language study. She claimed to be principally motivated to improve her French, which she described primarily as a matter of skill. In Paris, she attended a 'sheltered' program designed for her cohort, and had few occasions to interact with French students at school. However, she was placed in a host family with two children around Beatrice's age still living at home. Beatrice was therefore invited to converse at length with her host sisters and parents in a variety of settings. In the early phases, all seemed well, but as the semester (Spring 2003) progressed it became increasingly clear that the US-led invasion of Iraq was going to take place, and this event became the focus of many family discussions. One of the parents was of Tunisian origin, and the family's political orientation was left-of-center. Beatrice felt that is was

her patriotic duty to support President Bush and his foreign policy, especially since she had first-hand experience, through her extended family, of the 9/11 tragedy. It would appear that Beatrice was repeatedly asked to clarify her stance, and that as a result, she became increasingly alienated from the family.

One incident in particular solidified Beatrice's perception that the family was simply anti-American, and taking out their hostility on her as they 'mocked' and corrected her French. A classmate, Olivia, approached her professor with a lengthy explanation of her projected absence from class for the purpose of visiting the Normandy beaches with her visiting parents. The professor not only refused to grant Olivia an excuse, but also criticized her for requesting one. When Beatrice reported this event to her family, they agreed with the teacher. Beatrice's take on their reaction was not that Olivia had violated the norms of teacher-student interaction, although she had done so. Rather, Beatrice asserted that the French are ungrateful cowards who refuse to acknowledge the heroic intervention of US forces during the Second World War. Since this was the era of the 'Freedom Fry,' in making this claim, she borrowed from the resurgent French-bashing campaign taking place at the time in the American media. After the 'Normandy Incident,' Beatrice distanced herself from the family, and ceased taking advantage of her sole opportunity for significant engagement in a French-mediated communicative setting.

Of course, American students are not the only people who react in this way to the initial phases of a sojourn abroad. Jackson (2008) presents case studies of students from Hong Kong as they interacted with their British hosts during a five-week program in the UK. Cori, for example, had difficulty adjusting to life in England. Anticipating discrimination, Cori tended to interpret unsuccessful intercultural encounters as the result of racism. She complained of discomfort around the food provided in her homestay, and was surprised to find that her interlocutors did not recognize her distinct identity as a resident of Hong Kong. She worried about losing her fluency in Chinese and showed little interest in developing personal bonds with her host family. In sum, study abroad led to a "a stronger sense of belonging' (p. 121) to her Chinese identity.

As I argued in the previous chapter, students- and American students in particular - frequently arrive at their destinations without having given serious consideration to the image of their own country abroad. The refusal of US students to engage in 'intellectual' dialogue about world events can be interpreted as the apathy of privilege, and may constitute a 'rich point' for our longer term consideration. As language teachers, we do not normally consider it our duty to upgrade students' overall global engagement or awareness of our national image, yet it is clear that when students recoil into national superiority rather than expressing curiosity about the perspectives of their hosts, they can shut down the relationships that might otherwise support their language learning. At the very least, then, we should encourage our

students to take a dispassionate stance, and attempt to understand the views of their hosts before condemning them without a trial.

In this chapter we have reviews some specific social and historical circumstances and also *personal* stances that can limit students' engagement in language learning while they are abroad. These include the closure and cohesion of American study abroad cohorts, and our students' tendency to re-enact the classroom in other, non-pedagogical contexts. They also include several effects of globalization, such as the spread of English, the ease of travel both for students and for their families and friends, and the ubiquity of global communications networks. Finally, they include the tendency of American students, and in fact of students in general, to recoil into a heightened sense of national identity at the expense of dialogue with their hosts. There are of course many students who recognize and overcome these constraints on their own, without assistance from their teachers. If we are looking to advise all students about how to improve their chances at language learning, however, these are some themes we may wish to include.

6 | *Extending engagement in language learning after study abroad*

Throughout this Guidebook, we have considered practical suggestions emerging from research on language learning in study abroad with particular focus on promoting students' engagement in their host communities through observation, participation and introspective reflection. For the pre-departure phase, I have argued that students can benefit from an explicit attention to the potential language-related outcomes of study abroad and from tasks designed to enhance their awareness both of language itself and of the process of language learning. I have also suggested that teachers work with their students to articulate goals, and to reflect upon and research the home and school settings they will frequent. Finally I have recommended techniques from the ethnography of communication that can support a discovery-based approach to language in use as students pursue their individual interests and develop their unique communicative repertoires. For the study abroad phase, I have suggested ways to extend ethnographic tasks practiced at home in order to achieve a reasoned comparative approach, grounded in systematic inquiry. I have also set forth the principles for design of larger-scale projects integrating observation, participation, and reflection, and have provided three examples. Finally, this chapter reviews several suggestions for continuing to further students' language ability once they have returned to campus from their travels abroad.

6.1. Integrating the study abroad experience into the curriculum

How can teachers welcome their returning language students to a campus with recognition of their achievements and commitment to their continued success? In many programs, study abroad is construed as the end of the language learning process, with further attention to language development deemed unnecessary. Yet, as we have seen in Chapter Two, for American students on short-term sojourns, study abroad cannot be considered a magic formula or a cure-all for communicative incompetence.

Rather, students may develop their communicative ambition, discover greater overall desire for language competence, increase their social interactive abilities and become better prepared for instruction in the finer points of grammar and literacy. In the perspective emerging from the research, in other words, students' return from a sojourn abroad is prime time for teachers' investment in their language learning. In ideal circumstances, students returning to campus would be offered further instruction, including:

- courses with an explicit focus on advanced grammar and discourse
- courses in language analysis designed to prompt students' awareness of their own communicative repertoires, and of areas requiring further improvement
- content-based instruction in their preferred or major disciplines, on the model of Languages Across the Curriculum (Straight, 1998)

The best case scenario, in brief, would be one in which teachers offer challenging instruction to complement the achievements of study abroad that are typical for their students and can help them achieve well-rounded overall language ability.

In addition to accommodating returning students via the curriculum, teachers might consider any of the practices below.

Project exhibitions

Students who have carried out language-related projects awhile abroad might be invited to exhibit their work in a public or departmental forum, perhaps a poster session or a series of short talks. Such exhibitions would highlight the value of the project work for all parties while also recognizing students' achievements in an official way.

Peer-to-peer mentoring

Many institutions take advantage of the insights students bring home from abroad by organizing peer-to-peer mentoring, where experienced students advise those who are contemplating a sojourn abroad. This practice could be extended toward an explicit focus on language learning, with successful learners invited to recount their experiences and counsel their peers on ways to negotiate access to learning opportunities.

Revisiting goals

If students have been enjoined to articulate their goals before their sojourn abroad, teachers might provide a follow up opportunity to revisit these goals and consider the extent to which they have been reached. Whether or not it is part of a formal assessment procedure, revisiting goals can encourage focused reflection not only upon what has been achieved, but also on plans for the future.

For American students, access to language learning - and to the profound appreciation of others that comes from speaking their language - is imperiled. This state of affairs has become a contemporary social justice issue calling for an active response from those who are best placed to address it. In this *Guidebook*, I have argued that teachers should develop an activist stance toward language learning in study abroad. I have provided some elements of that stance: **knowledge** of the contributions that study abroad can make to our students' language ability and of the constraints on learning currently in force; **critique** of some of the *idées reçues* circulating in the professional folklore and in the research; and proposals for **engagement** on our part, as language educators, in the pedagogical design and desired outcomes of study abroad. To pursue meaningful, educationally relevant student sojourns abroad will involve further dialogue, more informed advocacy, investment of creative effort, and inclusion of teachers' and study abroad professionals' collective and individual expertise.

7 | *Further Reading*

7.1. General

If you are interested in more in-depth treatment and empirical study of language learning in study abroad, the recent works below are recommended.

DuFon, M. and Churchill, E. (eds). (2006). *Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

This volume illustrates the state-of-the-art in study abroad research about language learning, with a variety of studies taking a range of different methodological approaches, and including a number of studies about language socialization in host family contexts.

Jackson, J. (2008). *Language, Identity and Study Abroad: Sociocultural Perspectives*. London: Equinox.

Jackson provides ethnographic case studies of four students from Hong Kong learning English in a short-term program in the UK. The cases illustrate how students negotiate access to communities of practice, both successfully and not-so-successfully, and provide a useful mirror image of studies involving American students.

Kinginger, C. (2009). *Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Reading of Research*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

This volume presents a critical reading of the entire body of research devoted to language learning in study abroad, with chapters on: policy and practice, measurement of proficiency and fluency, domains of communicative competence, communicative settings (school, homestay, and informal encounters), language socialization and identity, and implications for program design and teaching.

Kinginger, C. (2008). *Language Learning in Study Abroad: Case Studies of Americans in France*. Modern Language Journal Monograph, Volume 1. Oxford: Blackwell.

Here, I offer a case study of a cohort of US-based students on semester-long sojourns in France, including quantitative assessment of language development for the whole group (general proficiency and social interactive abilities) and in-depth profiles of six students whose varied stories illustrate the variety of contemporary study abroad experience.

Patron, M.-C. (2007). *Culture and Identity in Study Abroad Contexts: After Australia, French without France*. Bern: Peter Lang.

This volume relates the findings of a study examining the effects of a study abroad experience on self-reported identity and culture among European Francophone student sojourners in Australia. Although it does not concentrate at length on language learning, in contrast to the majority of qualitative studies in this domain, this project is truly longitudinal, examining both the process of acculturation in Australia and the “reverse culture shock” characterizing the readjustment period following the sojourn abroad.

7.2. Program intervention and design for language learning in study abroad

If you are interested in examples of interventions to help students, this annotated bibliography will help you select readings.

Archangeli, M. (1999). Study abroad and experiential learning in Salzburg, Austria. *Foreign Language Annals*, 32(1); 115-24.

Students were required to interview native speakers. Out-of-class contact has a positive effect on students’ self-confidence and willingness to use the L2

Cain, A. & Zarate, G. (1996). The role of training course in developing openness to otherness: From tourism to ethnography. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 9 (1): 66 – 83.

Defends and illustrates training in ethnography for students

Calle, L. H. & Alley, D.C. (1999). Paving the way for a successful study abroad experience: A cross-cultural orientation model. *Dimension*, 1999: 57-66.

Cross-cultural orientation in four areas: 1) awareness of self and of native and target cultures; 2) attitudes; 3) knowledge; and 4) skills

Chieffo, L. P. & Zipser, R. A. (2001). Integrating study abroad into the foreign language curriculum. *ADFL Bulletin*, 32 (3): 79-85.

On structural integration of SA into the language curriculum

Dupuy, B. (2007). Global simulation: Experiential learning and preparing students at home for study abroad. In Wilkinson, S. (Ed.), *Insights from Study Abroad for Language Programs* (pp. 134 – 156). Boston: Thomson Heinle.

Describes the use of global simulation projects to prepare students for the complexity of the study abroad learning environment.

Einbeck, K. (2002). Using literature to promote cultural fluency in study abroad programs. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/ Teaching German* 35(1): 59 – 67.

Describes a literature course designed for students studying abroad, aimed at improving their chances of becoming "culturally fluent" during their stay abroad.

Engle, J. & Engle, L. (1999). Program intervention in the process of cultural integration: The example of French practicum. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 5 (2): 39-59.

<http://www.frontiersjournal.com/back/back.htm>

Describes a French practicum course developed as part of the curriculum of the American University Center in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Gorka, B. & Niesenbaum, R. (2001). Beyond the language requirement: Interdisciplinary short-term study-abroad programs in Spanish. *Hispania* 84 (1): 100-109.

Short-term study abroad programs offered early in the curriculum spark student interest in L2 learning.

Goulah, J. (2007). Village voices, global visions: Digital video as a transformative foreign language learning tool. *Foreign Language Annals* 40 (1): 62 – 78.

Adolescent high-intermediate Japanese language learners created digital 'uncommercials' to enhance their language learning and awareness of environmental and geopolitical issues.

Hokanson, S. (2000). Foreign language immersion homestays: Maximizing the accommodation of cognitive styles. *Applied Language Learning* 11 (2): 239-64.

Accommodation of cognitive styles in homestay settings

Ingram, M. (2005). Recasting the foreign language requirement through study abroad: A cultural immersion program in Avignon. *Foreign Language Annals*, 38 2: 211 – 222.

Describes a pilot program integrating short-term study abroad into the curriculum for courses meeting the basic language requirement at a liberal arts college.

Jackson, J. (2007). Ethnographic pedagogy and evaluation in short-term study abroad. In Byram, M. & Feng, A. (Eds.), *Living and Studying Abroad: Research and Practice* (pp. 134 – 156). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Jackson, J. (2006). Ethnographic preparation for short-term study and residence in the target culture. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 30(1): 77 – 98.

Describes training in ethnographic observation and project realization by students in Hong Kong studying in English speaking countries.

Jordan, S. & Barro, A. (1995), The effect of ethnographic training on the year abroad. In G. Parker & Rouxville, A. (Eds.), *The Year Abroad: Preparation, Monitoring, Evaluation, Current Research and Development* (pp. 76 – 90). London: AFLS/CILT.

Jurasek, R., Lamson, H. & O'Maley, P. (1995). Ethnographic learning in study abroad. *Study Abroad: Research on Learning Language and Culture in Context*. Proceeding of

RP-ALLA '95. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University National Foreign Language Resource Center, pp. 62 – 84.

Describe a program in ethnographic observation for study abroad participants from a small liberal arts college.

Kern, R. G. (2004). Literacy and advanced foreign language learning: Rethinking the curriculum. In Byrnes, H & Maxim, H. (eds.) *Advanced Foreign Language Learning: A Challenge to College Programs*. Issues in Language Program Direction. Boston: Heinle.

Proposes revision of the curriculum in language departments to favor advanced language development for students who study abroad.

Kiely, R. & Nielson, D. (2003). International service learning: The importance of partnerships. *Community College Journal*: 39 – 41.

Advocate international service learning for assisting students in local integration.

Ogulnick, K. (1999). Introspection as a method of raising critical language awareness. *The Journal of Humanistic Education*, 37 (3): 145-159.

Advocates introspection and reflection via language learning diaries.

Paige, R M., Cohen, A.D., Kappler, B., Chi, J.C., Lassegard, J.P. (2002). *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Students' Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

A manual for training in language and culture learning strategies.

Pertusa-Seva, I. & Stewart, M. (2000). Virtual study abroad 101: Expanding the horizons of the Spanish curriculum. *Foreign Language Annals*, 33 (4): 438-42.

Describe the design of on-line “virtual” study abroad programs.

Phipps, A. (2007). *Learning the Arts of Linguistic Survival: Linguaging, Tourism, Life*. Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.

Re-imagines tourism as a language learning experience in a positive light.

Raschio, R. A. (2001). Integrative activities for the study-abroad setting. *Hispania*, 84 (3): 534-541.

Activities designed to stimulate L2 use during the SA experience

Roberts, C. (1997). The year abroad as an ethnographic experience. In Byram, M. (Ed.), *Face-to-face: Learning 'language-and-culture' through Visits and Exchanges* (pp. 62 – 76). London: CILT.

Roberts, C., Byram, M., Barro, A, Jordan, S. & Street, B. (2001). *Language Learners as Ethnographers*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

In-depth description of the Ealing Ethnography Project providing training and institutional support for ethnographic approaches to learning abroad.

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Appendix A: Opinions about study abroad and language learning

1. Study abroad is one of the most important contexts in which American students can develop foreign language competence.

TRUE, but study abroad does not always foster foreign language competence.

2. The number of American students going abroad is increasing each year.

TRUE. The number of American students abroad increases by about 8% each year, according to the Institute for International Education.

3. The proportion of American students going abroad is rising each year.

FALSE. Even though the number of students abroad goes up each year, the proportion remains low, at less than 2% of full time college students (Gore, 2005).

4. When studying abroad in non-Anglophone countries, students experience foreign language immersion.

MAYBE. The extent to which students experience immersion depends upon their own dispositions and the ways in which they are received by their hosts.

5. There are equal numbers of male and female participants in study abroad programs.

FALSE. Study abroad both in the US and in Europe is now and has always been a feminized experience, with about 60% female and 40% male participants.

6. Female students are more successful at language learning abroad than males.

IT DEPENDS. One study (Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsburg, 1995) found that male gender was a robust predictor of gains in oral proficiency in Russian. Female participants often comment on their restricted access to communicative settings or complain about sexual harassment.

7. Study abroad programs are academically weak in comparison to programs of study in the U.S.

FALSE, but this perception is widely shared among American educators outside language departments (Gore, 2005).

8. Students abroad are usually open to meaningful intercultural experiences.

IT DEPENDS.

9. Students who live with families abroad tend to develop higher language proficiency than those who live in apartments or residence halls.

IT DEPENDS. Students who live with host families often do have more routine opportunities for everyday communicative interaction, but not all families are the same, and not all students take advantage of these opportunities.

10. The home stay context fosters knowledge of local ways of life.

TRUE.

11. For developing speaking fluency, study abroad is superior to all other learning contexts.

FALSE. One study (Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey, 2004) found that a domestic immersion program was superior to study abroad in developing fluency, and that students in the domestic immersion program spend more time engaged in foreign-language mediated activities than students in a study abroad program.

12. Students abroad are exposed to authentic, native-speaking language use.

TRUE, but students may also be exposed to Foreigner Talk, a simplified register used for communicating with individuals not yet competent as language users.

Appendix B: Case studies adapted from:

Kinginger, C. (2008). Language Learning in Study Abroad: Case Histories of Americans in France. *Modern Language Journal Monograph Series*, Volume 1.

Each of the case studies presented below includes a short version of the student's own account of the study abroad experience and the results of language assessments. These assessments included a test of general proficiency (the Test de Français International), a tally of the number of times the student used address forms appropriately in formal or inform speaking tasks, and the results of a Language Awareness Interview assessing the ability to understand colloquial words and phrases.

In reading each case, consider: what is the relationship between the students' activities and their documented language learning? What do successful students do? What do unsuccessful students do, and what could they have done differently to improve their chances of language learning given their situation?

An international perspective: Liza

I think it will open + probably + my viewpoint. I will probably be more aware of international issues just because like being in the US + even as an International Politics Major like I'm interested in those things and Europe is just a bunch of countries. France is in the middle of all this + stuff and I think they're probably just a lot more aware of what's going on next door + than we are + so I think that I'll be more aware of what's going on in the world and hopefully I'll be able to + bring that back here + and keep up on that + that's what I would love + that's what I'm interested in.

A 20-year-old double major in French and International Politics, Liza undertook her program of study abroad with a clear professional goal in mind: to become more international personally in preparation for a career in foreign service or international business. She began the study with the highest TFI score in the cohort (810), a score rising to 865 over the course of the semester. At the end of her sojourn, she also demonstrated increased awareness and appropriate usage of address forms, as well as heightened understanding of colloquial French.

Unlike many of the other students, Liza came to study abroad with experience of independent travel. She had spent two of her college summers working away from home, first in Wyoming, and then in an internship with the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, DC a post she had secured on her own initiative. In Washington, she had begun to appreciate the value of foreign language competence in professional contexts. Throughout the study, she positioned herself as a mature future professional keenly aware that an informed outlook might be the outcome of study abroad. In her pre-departure interview, she seemed ready to appreciate the perspectives of others and to accept her part of responsibility for any misunderstandings that might arise.

Liza spent the Spring semester in Strasbourg where she was placed in the home of a single mother with an "empty nest" but an active social life. Liza was invited to many gatherings in the home, and her host mother went out of her way to assist her, help her explore the region, and feel at home. Eventually, she developed a close

relationship with her host mother and the homestay became her most productive environment for language learning during the first half of the semester. During the second half, another American student joined the household, and most interactions took place in English. At school, Liza followed “integrated” courses in French literature and politics. She also developed an active social life involving other students in the program and a group of ERASMUS participants. In many interactions involving other Americans in social and service encounters, Liza became the spokesperson for the group, due to her advanced proficiency in French. In social encounters with groups of European students, she tried to practice her French even though English was the preferred medium.

Liza represents the group of students who study abroad because they believe that international education and multilingualism provide unique insights relevant to future careers. Because it enhanced her desire to “become more international personally” the sojourn in France fulfilled Liza’s desires and strengthened her professional aspirations. In short, as a student participating in the kinds of discourse that Gore terms “alternative” Liza presents a case where study abroad is understood as an academically strong source of pertinent learning by way of the liberal curriculum. Nonetheless, at the end of her stay Liza expressed regret at having limited her interactions with local people, and stated that she might have profited more from her stay in Strasbourg had she limited her travel and visits from home.

Liza	Pre	Post
TFI	810	865
Appropriate address form use	11	8
Colloquial words	10	19
Colloquial phrases	14	16

Literature and authorship: Louis

Mon acquisition du français s'est accompli quasiment dans un cas d'urgence - l'envie de lire cette drogue qu'était le style léthal de Céline dans la forme la moins adultérée me tenaillait irrésistiblement. Avant, j'étais pareillement obsédé par les recits de guerre de Malraux et de Sartre. Je n'arrive pas à communiquer rien de tout cela aux étudiants si jeunes (j'ai vingt-quatre ans) qui ne connaissent pas cette littérature consciente de la mort, soit par peur de les blesser, soit par chagrin face à la sottise de leurs divertissements. (Journal 10/6/2003)

[My acquisition of French took place almost as if it were an emergency – I was in the irresistible grip of desire to consume the drug that was the Céline’s lethal style in its least adulterated form. Before, I was equally obsessed my Malraux and Sartre’s narratives of war. I can communicate nothing of all this to such young students (I am twenty-four) who know nothing of this literature’s consiocusness of death, either out of fear of wounding them, out of chagrin at the foolishness of their pastimes.]

Louis was a 24-year-old double major in French and Comparative Literature who spent an entire year in France. Although he had begun formal study of French only in his later college years, he was enrolled in the most advanced undergraduate courses available before his departure. In his pre-departure interview, Louis revealed that he had taught

himself French with the specific goal of reading certain 20th century works of literature in the original. Because he departed for France prior to the beginning of the study, there are no formal data on his pre-departure performance. However, in the post-sojourn testing Louis: 1) received the highest score recorded to date for a North American on the TFI; 2) demonstrated great sensitivity to the colloquial meaning and emotional resonance of all the items on the Language Awareness Interview, without exception.

Louis spent his year abroad studying literature in “integrated” courses and living with a host family. In the host family, he got along well but did not develop close friendships: dinner was reportedly a functional affair, and not an occasion for extended interaction. At school, however, the excellence of his performance, including the citing of his insights by teachers, drew attention to him. He became a popular member of working groups and eventually developed strong social ties to other students. He also volunteered his time with a local soup kitchen where he quickly became truly integrated into the social lives of other participants of various ages and backgrounds. He read extensively, including assigned works of literature, independent readings of critical works, and journalism. Finally, he wrote: for this project he produced detailed journal entries in French amounting to several hundred pages; on his own, at the beginning of his sojourn he began working on his own novel in French.

Although he succeeded in all his courses, Louis was also reminded of his marginal status as a study abroad participant when teachers lowered their expectations on his behalf. When he asked for an explanation of his grade, his professor:

wrote a note, it was something about + the French system + and she said that it would be + I don't know a 14? or something like that. And she said that- she just kinda commented about how + I hadn't totally + mastered French rhetoric or something like that but it didn't really matter. and so I came up to ask her, you know, what my grade was + because I thought + I just didn't y'know I didn't really expect to get a 20 and she said that that's what she'd given me because I was + [...] because she knew that I wasn't staying there to sort of- it was a second year class. and she wasn't expecting me to master + everything that French students would have to master. (Post Interview)

Louis presented a well-rounded, high-level profile of expertise in the French language, including ability to perform extremely well on a standard examination, a rich vocabulary of standard and non-standard terms, and sensitivity to the contextual meaning and emotional resonance of colloquial variants. These findings make sense in light of the nature of his disposition toward French language learning and the qualities of his experience. Throughout the year, Louis was on constant lookout for insights about the language and for sources of knowledge about the extremes of expression made possible in French. Louis' experience in France also brought him into contact and active engagement with a broad range of communicative settings: the host family and the university, but also his circle of peers and companions in community service, and above all, his books, the very numerous works of literature he read and their artful representation of the French language.

Louis	Post
TFI	980
Appropriate address form use	12
Colloquial words	25
Colloquial phrases	30

The challenge of interpersonal relationships: Bill

I had a group that was the class was in French so the work was in French + and like the first obviously the first full month—first month four weeks I I mean I had no clue + I mean I couldn't hear words and in French and sentences at all + um ++ and like they would they would sit there + I mean I'm sure meetings took longer because they'd sit there and they'd encourage me to + well what do you think Bill? and so I was always like uh + with each word + then I'd look in my dictionary + and then they'd have to explain it to me in French a thousand times + well this is why you're wrong this is well this is a really good point what do you mean. they they they took the time to allow me to try to be French, or to be a part of their group um ++ and I mean I see that on numerous occasions. and I think that's incredible. (Post Interview)

Bill was a 22-year-old Marketing and International Business major who had studied French early in his life but had taken only two language courses in college, several years prior to his study abroad in Dijon. Before his departure, his knowledge of the language was no longer current, thus he presented the lowest score of the cohort on the initial TFI administration (315). He was able to demonstrate only very limited speaking ability and awareness of sociolinguistic variation. At the end of the study, however, Bill had made the most dramatic gains in the group. His TFI score rose by 190 points, and although this achievement still placed him only among those students with Intermediate proficiency, he also showed remarkable gains in the other testing domains. He controlled and tailored his use of address forms to their context, and he developed considerable appreciation of colloquial language.

An outgoing, people-oriented individual, Bill set out on his study abroad program in search of a significant challenge, a situation where he would be faced with a baseline obligation to struggle with his own language-related problems. He chose Dijon as his destination because he hoped to be isolated from tourists, and he chose France because he interpreted that country as different from the United States both in terms of political orientation and in terms of social conventions and fundamental moral values. A sojourn in France would put him on the spot, place his prejudices on a contrastive backdrop, and force a re-evaluation of his American way of life. Bill was in pursuit of difference and even hardship as a catalyst for personal development.

Bill was well received in many settings. His host family made of him, his opinions and his progress, the major topic of lengthy and consistently offered dinner conversations. At school, he struggled to make social contacts and eventually succeeded, adopted specific strategies to further his inclusion: joining campus associations and interest groups, attending church services, and identifying students with international interests as potential friends. Early in his stay, Bill reorganized his priorities, putting language learning at the top of the list. He had understood the significance of language competence as a major prerequisite for the attainment of his

previously stated goals, namely to gain access to different perspectives and to experience challenges to his core values. Also, he had encountered many young Europeans whose multilingualism, an outcome of their natural habitat, struck him as admirable. Together, these circumstances and Bill's disposition toward study abroad yielded strongly enhanced motivation for language learning framed as culture learning, a goal best pursued in active interaction with others.

Bill	Pre	Post
TFI	315	505
Appropriate address form use	3	14
Colloquial words	3	17
Colloquial phrases	4	18

A defensive posture: Beatrice

my family lives and works in New York. and so September 11th ya know was really a crazy time especially when we couldn't locate one member of my family for a couple hours + and she was fine but ya know and um and so that hit pretty hard especially because I know my aunt lives on this block- they actually live in New Jersey + but they're close enough to the city that they commute in + and of the twelve houses on her block like eight of the families + like lost someone that day. and I've actually met them. (...) so I carry that with me + and then I read things—I read something in LeMonde that really disturbed me + by saying that everybody was being too sympathetic with the Americans + ya know we had it coming + and I just remember thinking if somebody flew a plane into your Eiffel Tower I'd like to see what you have to say.

Beatrice was a 20-year-old Marketing major who enrolled in the business-related program in Paris, where she lived with a host family and participated in courses specially designed for the study abroad group. Beatrice claimed that she had chosen Marketing on the insistence of her parents, who hoped she would get a practical education at college, but that she had hoped to major in foreign language and to become a French teacher. She had studied French continuously since middle school and presented a high score on the TFI of 715 points. By the end of the semester, she had made modest but appreciable gains in the abilities examined in the Language Awareness Interview. Her score on the TFI rose only very slightly, by 35 points total, including a 60 point increase in the Listening score and a 25 point drop in the Reading score.

Beatrice positioned herself as a determined language learner whose long-term investment in French should be matched by generosity on the part of interlocutors whose role was to help her learn. She saw language learning primarily as a matter of skill building, and study abroad as a chance to enhance her spoken French. From the beginning, she claimed that she had been attracted to France by her teachers' love of

French culture and literature, but that she anticipated finding the French to be disdainful of Americans and parsimonious with their friendship. Her defensive posture was bolstered by a strong emotional reaction to the events of 9/11 and fear that she would be challenged on matters of American foreign policy.

In the Paris program, the American study abroad participants received instruction separately from the local students enrolled at the host institution. Thus, there were no naturally occurring contexts in which Beatrice might have made contact with expert users of French, beyond her instructors, at school. She made several attempts to arrange such contact, but these attempts did not yield the desired result. Realizing that her language competence would not be well served by time spent with other Americans, Beatrice decided early on to detach herself from the group and focus her efforts on learning at home, with her hosts.

Beatrice was placed with a host family in many ways ideal for the situation, with two parents living at home and host sisters of similar age. The host family therefore might well have become a significant context for Beatrice's informal language socialization. However, with the onset of the war in Iraq the host family began to question Beatrice about her opinions on U.S. foreign policy, and Beatrice was unable to respond dispassionately. Her journal reveals a number of cases where a defensive attitude led away from mutual understanding as Beatrice recoiled in national superiority instead of attempting to examine the opinions of her hosts. By the end of her sojourn, Beatrice was estranged from her host family, and had spent many of her later weeks in Paris taking solace in the company of compatriots. There case of Beatrice therefore shows how a devoted language learner may nonetheless emerge from a study abroad experience without having developed significant intercultural awareness or appreciation of its value.

Beatrice	Pre	Post
TFI	715	750
Appropriate address form use	7	15
Colloquial words	6	18
Colloquial phrases	9	18

The electronic umbilical cord: Deirdre

I've noticed there's no respect to women + I'm not a feminist by any means + but I feel like again with the guys and the way they just talk to girls when they're going down the street. I mean + I just think that there's no respect for them at all + there's naked women pictured in ads everywhere just half naked in their lingerie + um and I guess I mean the French are more comfortable with women being naked. you see it on the beach all the time + but I mean it's just everywhere I go feel like there's some sort of harassment that I can expect. no matter how I'm dressed + or no matter what I look like that day + no matter how I'm presenting myself + like if I'm coming back from the beach + or I'm coming back from class. I just—I expect it. (Post Interview)

Deirdre was a 20-year-old major in Information Science with a minor specialization in French. She had studied French continuously throughout her secondary and college

years, and would spend her semester abroad in Montpellier, living alone in an apartment arranged by the program. (The apartment option was selected by Deirdre based on her desire to host visitors from home and to experience independent living.) Deirdre initially presented a score of 545 on the TFI, placing her in the Intermediate range on that assessment. Her post-test score on that same test was 585, showing a gain in the Listening score of 60 points and a drop in the Reading score of 20 points. In both the pre- and the post-test phases of the study, she demonstrated difficulty in selecting and consistently using appropriate address forms in all contexts except service encounters, where she learned to use “vous.” Her gains on the tasks related to colloquial French were slight.

Deirdre saw study abroad as the last in a series of steps she would take in her study of French, the reward for many years of effortful investment, and a key aspect of basic, middle-class education. The semester abroad was Deirdre’s first significant travel as well as her first experience of living on her own. Although she claimed in the pre-test interview that she was hoping to become actively engaged in French language learning while abroad, once she arrived in Montpellier she rapidly became despondent, and never recovered a positive disposition toward her new surroundings. Lonely and alienated, she devoted most of her commentary on the experience to ways in which Montpellier compared unfavorably to her home, and to the people at home, particularly her boyfriend, whose company she missed. In her journals, Deirdre positioned herself as a victimized consumer, cheated at every opportunity not only by unscrupulous French service providers, but also by the study abroad program itself.

Deirdre was placed in both language and “integrated” courses where, according to her, students were not invited to engage in interaction with the instructor. Her daily routine involved attending these classes, then going straight to the study abroad center where Internet linked computers were made available to the program participants. She spent as much time as possible, that is, an average of four to five hours per day, interacting with her boyfriend, her family, and other members of her home-based social network via email and synchronous messaging. Thus, Deirdre coped with her loneliness by retreating into the relationships she had already established, and made no effort to connect with the local context. In addition to computer-mediated meetings, she also received visits from her family and boyfriend during her stay in Montpellier. Thus, Deirdre presents a case in which an immersion experience was effectively bypassed through the ready availability both of travel and of global communications networks.

Deirdre	Pre	Post
TFI	545	585
Appropriate address form use	3	2
Colloquial words	2	8
Colloquial phrases	1	9

The modern-day Grand Tour: Ailis

So for this bar crawl we paid 23 euros and we went to 5 bars and either got a free shot, wine or beer at each of them! And before we even started they gave us Sangria (which is really popular in Barcelona). So at the end I had had 2 glasses of Sang, 2 glasses of wine, shot of Baileys, a bee [...] and a shot of Absynthe which is illegal everywhere but Spain (sic.). But it didn't seem extra 'dangerous'...it was just like any other shot. And then we went to a dance club and got in for free. So 23 euros was an awesome deal for all that! And we met ppl from England, Australia, NY there on the crawl as well... it was fun. (Journal 4/8/2003)

Ailis was a 20-year-old college junior who, like many of the other participants, had studied French for many years prior to studying abroad in Montpellier. However, at the time the study began Ailis was enrolled in a second year grammar course and had taken no advanced courses in French. Her initial TFI score of 490 placed her in the Intermediate range. Ailis claimed to have chosen the homestay option for residence in order to develop an intimate knowledge of the French language and French family life. She stressed her desire to grow out of the constraints imposed by a small-town upbringing. By the end of the semester, Ailis had improved her TFI score by a slight 20 points (with a 25 point gain in Reading and, remarkably within this group, a 5 point drop in Listening). She showed growth in her appreciation of address forms but only very modest gains in awareness of colloquial French.

Like Liza, Ailis was placed in the home of a single woman with grown children. However, in this case the homestay offered few opportunities for social interaction. It quickly became clear that while the host mother generously provided a home-cooked dinner of culinary interest every night, she would not become a major contributor to Ailis's language learning. Working full-time, the host mother was only available during mealtimes, but all meals and other evening activities took place in the company of the television. At school Ailis was placed in four courses intended for foreign students and was also permitted to enroll in one "integrated" course, eventually settling on a class dealing with cinema. Like Deirdre, she complained about the integrated course consisting of lectures delivered at a distance by the professor, while the students took notes. Overall, however, her courses occupy very little space in Ailis's account of her experience. Thus, overall, Ailis found few opportunities to use French in the routine order of her life in Montpellier.

Like Deirdre, Ailis began her journal of study abroad recounting misgivings about the experience and expressing deep loneliness. However, unlike Deirdre, Ailis quickly found comfort in the company of other young American women in her program. These women became her companions as she designed for herself a program of constant weekend travel. After the initial weeks, Ailis was on the road every weekend throughout her stay, traveling to destinations within France but more often to other countries. Ailis participated in many of the classic young American tourist scenarios for Europe: she toasted Jim Morrison's grave at the Père Lachaise cemetery, made an effort to eat at a Hard Rock Café in every major city she visited, tried the local McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken fast food restaurants, went on an organized pub crawl in Barcelona, collected representative trinkets from each country, and complained about all the "carbs" she was consuming in Italy. In her journal, she

assembled a densely-packed catalogue of short-term social engagements and appreciations of Culture, all interpreted in terms of travel as globalized infotainment. Given her hectic schedule of of get-togethers with other Americans and trips away from Montpellier, there was little time left for efforts at language learning or indeed for study of any kind.

Ailis	Pre	Post
TFI	490	510*
Appropriate address form use	3	7
Colloquial words	2	8
Colloquial phrases	5	6

Appendix C: Academic practices at home and abroad: Example

Describe these features of university life and learning in your home institution, and compare them with those of your host institution. If you don't know about the host school's practices, ask other students who have studied there or find the answers through independent research. How might these differences affect the qualities of the experience for students and your perception of these qualities?

	Penn State	Classical French University
Academic content	General education and specialization, may include a moral dimension related to values or citizenship	Specialization only
Locale	Rural, with the university as an enclosed social setting	Urban, with the university open to other aspects of city life
Admission of students	Selective, based on academic merit, character, motivation, teacher recommendations	Non-selective, based on official qualification only
Evaluation of students and grading	Continuous (in courses and across semesters), multi-dimensional, based on knowledge plus effort and participation; results are private	High stakes gatekeeping exams, based on demonstrated knowledge and mastery of subject matter; results are public
Sources of knowledge	Knowledge comes from officially recognized, established sources, teachers, teacher- student dialogues and the creative efforts of students.	Knowledge is the historically-established high standard of excellence to which students must aspire.
Relationships of teachers and students	Solidarity of teachers and students in an effort to assist student's learning; Teachers must be available to students in and out of the classroom.	Hierarchical: Teachers are authorities and guardians of the institution's standards and exercise autonomy in their own use of time.
Relationships among students in the classroom	Hierarchical, with competition for good grades via the approval of the teacher	Solidarity and mutual assistance in learning and attainment of institutional or political goals
Social life	Largely located in or near the university, actively supported and sponsored by the university	Community based and continuous with life before and outside the university

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