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Enhancing Language Learning in Study Abroad

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Research demonstrates that study abroad can have a positive impact on every domain of language competence, and that it is particularly helpful for the development of abilities related to social interaction. However, some results suggest that study abroad intensifies individual differences in achievement: Certain students thrive while others founder. Qualitative studies provide insight into the sources of these differences both in the stances that students adopt toward their host communities and in the ways in which they are received. Overall, the research points to a need for language learners' broader engagement in local communicative practices, for mindfulness of their situation as peripheral participants, and for more nuanced awareness of language itself. This article offers a rationale, based on the current state of the art in research, for including the expertise of language educators in the choice and design of study abroad programs. Students will benefit from programs specifically designed to foster language learning through observation, participation, and reflection.

In the United States particularly, both professional and lay folklore encourage a view of study abroad as a magical formula for the development of language ability, an effortless process of "easy learning" (DeKeyser, 2010, p. 89). Study abroad has occasionally been interpreted as a cure-all for language problems, as a rationale for neglecting students' language-related needs (Polio & Zyzik, 2009), and even as an excuse not to teach languages at all (Coleman, 1997). The growing research base on this topic, however, presents a very different picture: If indeed study abroad holds the potential to enhance students' language ability in every domain examined thus far, this enhancement requires effort and engagement on the part of all concerned, including students, teachers, host families, and program administrators. When students cultivate language abilities in their host communities, the qualities and outcomes of this process emerge from a complex interplay of students' dispositions, features of their environments, and host communities' stances toward their guests.

This article first outlines major findings of contemporary research following an array of traditions within applied linguistics. Ranging from investigations focusing strictly on outcomes, where study abroad is to be interpreted as a

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form of experimental treatment, to in-depth qualitative and hybrid studies, this research offers considerable insight for pedagogy. Specifically, research findings point to (a) the need for greater and more qualitatively meaningful engagement of students in the practices of their host communities and (b) closer attention to students' preparation for language learning abroad. Having established a rationale for recruiting the expertise of language educators in the design and best use of study abroad programs, we move on to consider an array of illustrative projects and suggestions for enhancing study abroad as an environment for language learning.

OVERVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH

As outlined in Kinginger (2009a), the research on language learning in study abroad generally follows overall trends in the applied linguistics literature. This research may be divided into four broad categories. The earliest and most prominent efforts focused on the outcomes of study abroad in terms of language, variously defined. A number of projects have attempted to measure or predict the development of general proficiency as operationalized in tests, whereas other studies have pinpointed outcomes defined as components of communicative competence (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, or strategic abilities). Although carefully designed outcomes-based inquiry does demonstrate that study abroad can enhance every aspect of language ability, it also reveals that outcomes are occasionally lackluster in comparison to the expectations held by teachers and students. Further, many studies find significant individual differences in outcomes, leading one researcher (Huebner, 1995) to speculate that study abroad intensifies these differences.

Why do some students register impressive gains in proficiency scores or documented communicative abilities, whereas others do not, and some may even appear to have forgotten some of what they knew of the language before their sojourn abroad (Kinginger, 2008)? When students are supposedly surrounded by a constant stream of "high quality, contextualized exposure" to language (Isabelli, 2007, p. 333), how can we explain their occasionally quite undistinguished achievement? This mystery drives investigations of a second type, namely, studies attempting to specify independent behavioral variables, such as time-on-task, that correlate with linguistic gains. Much of this research retains a deterministic outlook, searching for the causes of success or failure in quantitative accounts of students' activities, such as diaries reporting amounts of time spent using the language in question, or the Language Contact Profile (Freed, Dewey, Segalowitz, & Halter, 2004) documenting student activities and accompanying language use. Sometimes this approach yields interpretable results, as in the case of Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey's (2004) investigation of fluency development in French under three conditions: study abroad, domestic immersion, and classroom learning. Using data from the Language Contact Profile, these researchers were able to show that the domestic immersion learners' superior fluency development took place in a context where students used significantly more French than did their counterparts both at home and abroad.

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On the other hand, Ginsburg and Miller (2000) reported with astonishment that their calendar diary data appeared to shed no light on students' proficiency scores in Russian.

It would appear that a purely quantitative approach to understanding students' use of time may not suffice if the goal is to understand how and why language learning does or does not take place in study abroad. Thus, researchers began to pursue a third type of empirical investigation, this time seeking to understand the qualities of the in-country sojourn, mainly from the perspective of students. The qualitative research on language learning in study abroad has included ethnographies of cohorts and settings, such as the homestay or the classroom; case studies of individuals; and close, detailed study of language socialization as it takes place in host family interactions. This research clearly demonstrates that language learning in study abroad is a dialogic and situated affair whose success depends on not only the attributes and intentions of the student but also the ways in which the student is received within his or her host community. A student who is mindful of his or her role as a peripheral participant (Lave & Wenger, 1991); who actively seeks access to learning opportunities; and who is welcomed as a person of consequence, worthy of the hosts' time and nurture, is likely to succeed. Conversely, achievement may be more modest for a student who interprets study abroad as a parenthetical diversion from serious study (Gore, 2005), who avoids contact with local people (Feinberg, 2002), or who is received with indifference. This research also illuminates the role of identity, and particularly gender, in shaping the study abroad experience. When students are framed by their interlocutors in unfamiliar ways, as representatives of a category, much depends on their ability to choose unbiased analysis over judgmental rejection of these practices.

Since the mid-2000s, researchers have continued to develop the three strands of inquiry outlined earlier. They have refined these approaches and explored the intersections between them. Gaining in prominence is a fourth type of study in which researchers combine in-depth qualitative study of student experiences and documentation of learning outcomes. In the following section, I will present examples of the most recent research in each of these categories: (a) outcomes-based research on general proficiency development and on aspects of communicative competence; (b) studies of specific learner activities believed to correlate with language development; (c) ethnographies and case studies; and (d) mixed-method studies combining qualitative inquiry with measurement or other documentation of language learning. This review is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive, but instead examines selected studies illustrating both the potential benefits of study abroad for language learning and issues of concern to language educators.

Proficiency and Communicative Competence

As already noted, the contemporary literature includes both studies of general proficiency development and investigations of particular components of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic abilities (e.g., Savignon, 1983). In the first category, the most robust and

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well-regarded U.S.-based study, sponsored by the American Council on the Teaching of Russian (ACTR), examined predictors of gain scores on a variety of holistic proficiency tests. When data for 658 participants had been gathered between 1984 and 1990, Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsburg (1995) reported that the major predictors of gain in Russian oral proficiency were experience in learning another language, command of reading and grammar skills, and gender, with men more likely than women to reach the Advanced (2) level on the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Oral Proficiency Interview.[1]

A replication of this study by Davidson (2010) involved 1,881 U.S.-based students of Russian who had participated in ACTR programs of various durations between 1994 and 2009. For this cohort, results pertaining to reading ability and structural control replicated the findings of the earlier study. In addition, duration of the program was correlated with gain in speaking, reading, and listening. In the case of gender, however, the earlier correlation with gain scores was no longer in effect. Davidson interpreted this finding in terms of changes in gender roles since the collapse of the Soviet Union and also mentioned "dedicated training in self-management and strategy selection provided by ACTR to its departing groups with special attention to female participants" (p. 20). In concluding the report, Davidson noted the "remarkable" (p. 23) levels of individual variation in outcomes. He argued that language learning in study abroad holds "enormous potential for meeting the needs of education in the 21st century" (p. 23), but that this potential would not be realized until study abroad was integrated into the curriculum and enjoyed strong support from all stakeholders.

The uniqueness of study abroad as an environment for language learning is illustrated in the work of scholars examining particular modalities of language use or features of communicative competence. For example, the role of study abroad in the development of writing ability is illustrated in Sasaki's (2009) exploration of the long-term effects of Japanese students' sojourns in English-speaking environments. In a study examining changes in second language writing ability and related motivation as they evolved over a period of 3.5 years, Sasaki found a predictable significant effect for writing practice and metaknowledge of English. More compelling are the results of her qualitative inquiry into the motivation potentially underlying efforts at writing improvement: Only those students who had spent some time abroad formed a second-language-related "imagined community" (p. 71) to inspire and inform these efforts.

In the case of grammatical ability, the distinctive advantages of a sojourn abroad have not always been easy to prove, particularly when the construct under study is broadly defined. The findings of some studies have suggested that students abroad gain in fluency at the expense of accuracy (e.g., Walsh, 1994), or that academic or classroom learning may be equal to or better than study abroad in this domain (Collentine, 2004). When researchers narrow their focus to particular grammatical features, the picture becomes more complex; though the findings of some studies suggest that study abroad leads to modest gains in grammatical competence, others offer no such evidence. Isabelli and Nishida (2005), for example, examined modality in Spanish through the use of the subjunctive by U.S.-based participants in a 9-month program of study abroad. In comparison with their peers at home, some of these students produced more

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complex syntax requiring the subjunctive and more actual tokens of verbs in the subjunctive. Although they did not master this aspect of Spanish grammar in its entirety, they demonstrated readiness for further learning that offered a clear advantage in subsequent classroom instruction (Isabelli, 2007). Similarly, study abroad participants in an investigation by Howard (2005) were shown to have advanced in the long-term process of learning to mark past tense and aspect in French. In comparison to their peers at home, these participants possessed an expanded repertoire for autonomous use of this grammatical system. On the other hand, Isabelli-García (2010) found no difference between study abroad and at-home learners in the acquisition of gender agreement in Spanish.

It is in the investigation of abilities related to social interaction that the most significant advantages of study abroad become evident. Whereas classroom interaction is most often limited to the theatrical use of sanitized, preselected language forms, study abroad participants may become engaged in a wide range of communicative settings where their interlocutors' purposes and intentions may vary significantly, and their own language use becomes consequential. This participation may enhance students' communicative repertoires through the development of sociolinguistic, discourse, and pragmatic abilities.

Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009) investigated the development of sociolinguistic competence in study abroad from a variationist perspective. They found that although classroom learning is useful for acquiring the categorical features of a language, a key advantage of the study abroad context is in providing exposure to that which is variable in the speech of expert users. Regan et al. scrutinized the performance of Irish advanced learners of French who had studied in France to show that these learners developed nativelike ability to manipulate certain variable features (e.g., deletion or retention of "ne" in negation, or choice of "nous" versus "on" to index the first person plural). According to these authors, sociolinguistic competence is a crucial aspect of second language ability, because it allows learners to signal their integration into the host community. Furthermore, they argued that study abroad is the optimum context for this domain of second language acquisition.

Similar findings emerged from Iwasaki's (2010) study of style shifting in the Japanese of American learners. Choice of plain or polite style is obligatory in Japanese, and difficulty in learning to speak appropriately as a second language learner is widely attested in the literature. Iwasaki's study showed not only that study abroad participants learned these forms, but also that they learned to use and mix them as a resource for the creation of interactional contexts (e.g., to express emotion), just as expert speakers of Japanese do.

The most prevalent focus of study abroad research on social interactive abilities is the speech act, that is, how students "do things with words" (Austin, 1975) such as requesting and apologizing. Schauer (2009), for instance, examined the performance and awareness of English-language requests by a group of German sojourners in Britain, showing that the students' ability to craft appropriate requests and to recognize pragmatically inappropriate requests were both enhanced by study abroad. Magnan and Back (2007a) showed that American learners of French whose proficiency increased during an in-country stay also developed greater ability to balance direct and indirect requests, although some

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of the baseline native request features they collected were not represented in the learner data. Taguchi (2008) focused on comprehension of direct and indirect opinions and refusals in American English by a cohort of Japanese students. Although only modest gains were made for comprehension of indirect opinions, Taguchi found that study abroad improved accuracy in assessing the implied meaning of indirect refusals. Thus, the results of current research on speech act performance and comprehension mirrors earlier finding: Students abroad make gains in this domain but do not become simulacra of native speakers.

The most compelling study of speech acts, and the one that most convincingly demonstrates the unique nature of learning in study abroad, remains Shardakova's (2005) examination of American students' apologies in Russian. Shardakova argued that it is not only the performance of speech acts that must be studied in relation to that of native speakers but also their interpretation. According to the author, speakers of Russian evaluate situations involving intimacy, unfamiliarity, or hierarchy in ways that are distinct from Americans' perceptions of the same situations. Using a research design involving native speakers and four groups of learners, with intermediate and advanced proficiency, with and without study abroad in Russia, Shardakova provided evidence that only a sojourn in-country would allow learners to "see things from the point of view of a Russian" (p. 445) and choose (or not) to apologize accordingly.

In summary, the contemporary research on outcomes of study abroad highlights a number of themes. First is the sheer power of a sojourn abroad, given adequate institutional and pedagogical support, to further language proficiency. Second is the subtlety of some language-related development, particularly in the domain of grammatical competence. Third is the unique potential of study abroad to enhance social interactive language abilities. Finally, if one goal of language learning is to see things from the point of view of others, that is, to develop true intercultural understanding, then study abroad has much to be recommended. This research also shows, however, that a sojourn in-country does not guarantee language learning, that outcomes for individual learners are highly variable, and that student performance often does not approximate that of expert speakers.

Correlating Students' Activities With Linguistic Gains

The search for an explanation of individual differences in the linguistic outcomes of study abroad has led some researchers to question the extent to which students actually do enjoy "high quality, contextualized exposure" to language (Isabelli, 2007, p. 333) and unlimited access to expert speakers while abroad. Tanaka (2007), for example, interviewed a cohort of Japanese students about their contact with English during a 3-month sojourn in New Zealand. Many of these students confessed that they preferred to construct a "cozy Japanese environment" (p. 50) over seeking out opportunities to interact with local people. Due to insecurity about their language proficiency or shyness, they avoided interactions with their host families.

Magnan and Back (2007b) designed an investigation of proficiency gain in French in relation to housing (with or without native speakers of French) and

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reported activities such as reading local newspapers, watching films, and speaking French with American compatriots versus local people. Beginning their semester-long sojourns with intermediate level proficiency, the majority (12 of 20) registered gains on the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview, but eight maintained their predeparture score. Echoing the findings of an earlier study (Ginsburg & Miller, 2000), the researchers found no significant correlations between housing type and reported activity, with the exception of a negative correlation with the amount of French spoken with American classmates against level of improvement. A post hoc test of the relationship among age, gender, and level of previous coursework revealed an effect only for the latter variable, where advanced studies predicted gain. Magnan and Back suggested that students with intermediate proficiency may not be prepared to engage in extensive interactions with native speakers, but that readiness for learning may be enhanced by prior academic experience. They further suggested that American students in programs of one semester's duration may be returning home just as their self-confidence increases to the point where "ability to maneuver in academic and social spheres permits them to form the bonds with native speakers that will lead to increased proficiency" (Magnan & Back, 2007b, p. 53).

Ethnographies and Case Studies

Although studies of language contact attempt to link language proficiency gains to quantitative accounts of time-on-task of various kinds, case studies and other ethnographic works portray the qualities of study abroad sojourns, usually without external assessment of language development. These studies reveal that language learning in study abroad is a complex, dialogic, situated affair in which the subjectivities of students and hosts are deeply implicated. Jackson (2008) followed a cohort of Hong Kong–based Chinese university students as they traveled to Britain for a short-term intensive English language immersion experience, including homestays with local families. While these students recounted similar experiences of perceived racism and linguistic insecurity, their developmental trajectories were highly individualized. The amount and quality of dialogic interaction and mutual interest in the homestay settings varied considerably, as did the students' own openness to change, investment in language learning, and ethnocentric versus ethnorelative frames of mind. For example, one student perceived her host family as dismissive both of her identity as a Hong Konger (they referred to her as Japanese) and of her anxiety about safety. Her emotional detachment from her hosts limited the quality of her interactions at home, and she never overcame feelings of inferiority when speaking English. Another participant, however, chose to persevere in her efforts to build local relationships and lived with a family eager to spend time with her and to engage in multiple forms of dialogic interaction. By the end of the sojourn, she had learned to value English as a living language rather than as a mere academic object of primarily utilitarian value.

A diary study by Hassall (2006) illustrated the struggles of learners abroad as they attempt to work out pragmatic meanings within the languages they are learning. Hassall documented his own efforts to develop competence in

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leave-taking while studying in Indonesia. In the absence of pedagogical materials or empirical data to describe leave-taking formulae and clarify their uses in context, Hassall was obliged to garner this knowledge on his own, through cycles of observation, testing in interpersonal interactions, and reflection. The story of this effort unfolds in episodes of triumph, when Hassall's experiments are successful, and in defeat and embarrassment, when he applies a leave-taking formula in a way that is clearly, yet still mysteriously, wrong. Hassall concluded that acquiring pragmatic knowledge in a study abroad context is a "major task" (2006, p. 53).

A number of studies have scrutinized the role of gender in shaping the qualities of study abroad, normally focusing on the experiences of American women. These studies routinely show that U.S.-based female students interpret other societies as sexist, and many of their interactions as constituting or bordering on harassment (e.g., Polanyi, 1995; Talburt & Stewart, 1999). Two recent studies shed new light on this phenomenon. Churchill (2009) portrayed the uniquely positive experience of a male Japanese high school student during an English immersion program in the United States. At home, Churchill's participant was among the least successful learners in the cohort, isolated by his gender in a predominantly female class. In the study abroad context, however, he rapidly gained access to a broad social network through participation in sports. He was interpreted as a person of consequence, recruited as a broker of relationships with the female members of the group, and included in conversations on many topics relevant to adolescent boys: music, hobbies, and girls. An analysis of spoken narratives at the end of the program showed that, when compared to female students with similar initial proficiency scores, he made the most progress.

While it may appear that, as a general rule, male students enjoy enhanced status and greater language learning opportunities than do females abroad, a study by Patron (2007) offers some evidence to suggest that this finding may be in part an artifact of the U.S.-based cultural contexts under study. Patron investigated the experiences of French students on a yearlong study away program in Australia. In the initial phase of their sojourn, many of these students experienced culture shock as they encountered the everyday and academic practices of Australians. Among the more troubling issues, for the female students, was the absence of practices interpretable by American students as harassment. That is, these students reported feeling insecure in their gender identity because they received no compliments on their appearance and observed few instances of flirtation or gentility. Thus it may be that a true understanding of cultural practices in study abroad contexts will require true ethnographic studies that include the perspectives of students and their hosts.

Mixed Methods Research

In terms of research methodology, the most recent development in the study abroad research is the rise to prominence of studies combining in-depth, qualitative study with assessment of language development. Isabelli-García (2006), for example, tracked the social networks of four U.S.-based students enrolled in a semester-long Spanish language program in Argentina and interpreted Simulated

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Oral Proficiency Interview scores and a more fine-grained measure of proficiency development in relation to students' engagement with these networks. The highest achieving student, a young man, gained immediate access to a broad social network through a friend of a friend and became actively involved in this group's social and travel activities. The only female whose case was presented made no measureable proficiency gain. This student was initially placed with a family demonstrating no interest in interacting with her, then moved twice before settling with an acceptable family. She was distressed by the gender-related *piropos* (catcalling) she encountered in the streets. By mid-semester, her social network was limited to the host family, program staff, and an American friend with whom she spent most of her free time.

Kinginger (2008) offered case studies of a cohort and six individual American students enrolled in semester-long programs in France. In this study, a primarily qualitative focus was enhanced by measurement of overall proficiency (via the *Test de Français International*) and assessment of language awareness (via the *Language Awareness Interview* designed for the project). Individual differences in proficiency and awareness gains were interpreted in light of each student's reported experiences and dispositions toward their host community. The profiles of three of the most successful students were presented. One young man was an avid reader and writer of literary French who also became involved in voluntary service at a local soup kitchen. Another participated in an internship and in multiple campus-based associations, and he was housed with a family who actively pursued his language development in lengthy, routine dinner table conversations. A young woman viewed her study abroad experience as serious preparation for a career in international business or the Foreign Service. Students whose achievement was more modest, all of them female, retreated from engagement with their local hosts, albeit in different ways. After a series of uncomfortable discussions about American foreign policy and the war in Iraq, one student became alienated from her host family. Another viewed her sojourn abroad as a modern-day Grand Tour intended primarily to mix entertainment with the accumulation of highly regarded cultural experiences, and so spent most of her time traveling to European capital cities with other Americans. Yet another reattached herself to her home social networks, via the Internet, and screened herself from local reality to the best of her ability. Thus, to understand the sources of individual variation in outcomes, it is important to understand that the study abroad experience is highly variable.

DeKeyser (2010) proposed a closer look at the struggles of students, such as the participants in Magnan and Back's (2007b) study, who arrived in programs abroad with intermediate proficiency. Participants in the study were 16 U.S.-based learners of Spanish in a sheltered program in Argentina, which included a homestay component. Data included interviews in Spanish with stimulated recall sessions, questionnaires, and observation. DeKeyser's interest was in the process of monitoring, that is, the process of drawing on explicit conscious knowledge of grammar and vocabulary during communicative events. DeKeyser's findings paint a bleak picture of students in a "valiant struggle in a battle for which they were ill-equipped" (2010, p. 81). These students began their program with high motivation and belief in their ability to make dramatic

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strides in speaking proficiency, but quickly became discouraged. For DeKeyser, the culprit here is the students' inability to monitor the accuracy of their speech due to limited declarative knowledge of grammar and very little prior practice that might have helped to convert declarative to procedural knowledge. When faced with the cognitive challenges associated with social interaction in Spanish, many students simply opted out. They spent their time "reinventing the elementary grammar wheel in their classes and avoiding practice opportunities with native speakers because they were too painful" (DeKeyser, 2010, p. 89).

The findings of contemporary research on language learning in study abroad demonstrate, first of all, that study abroad holds great potential for students' intellectual growth through integrated language and culture learning. However, the outcomes and qualities of student experience are highly variable. These findings also suggest that when students do not make dramatic gains in language ability or intercultural awareness despite a professed desire to do so, it is because they do not become sufficiently or meaningfully engaged in the practices of their local host communities or because they lack guidance in interpreting their observations. The reasons for this lack of engagement are myriad; they can include, for example, (a) students' or programs' de-emphasis on language learning in favor of other goals, such as the accumulation of symbolic capital through tourism; (b) a retreat into national superiority based on observations about gender-related or other cultural practices; (c) increasingly, the tendency to remain virtually "at home," tied to an electronic umbilical cord or an immense personal library of home-based media; (d) inadequate preparation to practice the language, to understand the nature of language learning, and to observe and reflect upon their experiences in an unbiased manner.

PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING ABROAD

Clearly, students' interest and investment in language learning is not guaranteed, and there will always be a variety of ways in which study abroad is approached and interpreted. In the interest of students who truly desire language competence, however, it follows from the preceding findings that language educators have a number of crucial roles to play: promoting educationally relevant engagement in the practices of host communities, providing guidance in the interpretation of these practices, and preparing students to take specific advantage of language learning opportunities.

Before students go abroad, they can be guided toward the practice of unbiased observation, participate in informal dialogs with members of their host communities, articulate appropriate goals, and prepare to make the most of their sojourn. While students are abroad, they can engage in informal ethnographic inquiry through tasks and projects, and they can participate in service learning, internships, or independent research. When students return from their in-country experience, much depends on how their experience is received within their home institution: whether or not it is integrated into the curriculum, with

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ongoing attention to their need for instruction in language and advanced literacy practices.

Preparing Students for a Sojourn Abroad

There are several ways in which language educators can help students to prepare for a language-focused sojourn abroad. First among these is the provision of guidance in selecting a program prioritizing language learning. Subsequently, students may benefit from enhanced understanding of both what and how they may learn while they are abroad. Concerning the former, many students may hold "folklinguistic theories" (Miller & Ginsburg, 1995, p. 293), in which, for example, language is analogous to architecture, with words as building blocks and grammar as mortar. Absent from such portrayals are the social interactive abilities (sociolinguistic, discourse, or pragmatic) best learned in extensive interactive contact with expert speakers (Miller & Ginsburg, 1995). A short course in language awareness, such as the one outlined in Kinginger (2009b) or participation in an online pragmatics course (e.g., Ishihara, 2007; Sykes & Cohen, 2010; see also Shively, 2010) might help students to recognize and cultivate these abilities.

Kinginger (2009b) also noted the commonalities between the goals of language learners abroad and those of scholars in the ethnography of communication (see also Cain & Zarate, 1996; Jackson, 2008; Jurasek, Lamson, & O'Maley, 1996; Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, & Street, 2001). Observation, participation, and reflection or introspection are among the main modes of learning languages in study abroad settings, as revealed in the Hassall (2006) study already reviewed here. These modes are also the key techniques used by ethnographers of communication as they attempt to understand what a speaker needs to know in order to communicate appropriately within a given community, and as they carry out field work "observing, asking questions, participating in group activities, and testing the validity of one's perceptions against the intuitions of natives" (Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 3). Kinginger (2009b) and Jackson (2008) offered suggested tasks for training in ethnographic observation for the predeparture stage.

Through computer-mediated communication, it is possible to offer students occasions to practice informal, intercultural dialog (Tudini, 2007), virtual visits to their future host country (Pertusa-Seva & Stewart, 2008), and telecollaborative exchanges in which they interact directly with their peers at institutions abroad (Kinginger & Belz, 2005). Telecollaborative exchanges provide a sheltered opportunity to participate in socially consequential interactions, discover the social significance of linguistic choices, and begin crafting an appropriate foreign-language-mediated identity.

Finally, the findings of DeKeyser's (2010) study suggest careful consideration and cultivation of students' predeparture language proficiency. Other studies, including Kinginger (2008), offer evidence for the benefit of study abroad to students of quite varied initial proficiency. However, if students' aspiration is to quickly and efficiently develop speaking ability while abroad for a typical sojourn of a semester or less, guidance in preparing for this challenge is in order.

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Engagement in Host Communities

The contemporary literature on language learning in study abroad includes a number of practical suggestions for enhancing student participation and engagement in local communities. In addition to training and practice in ethnographic inquiry (Jackson, 2008), there have been proposals for various kinds of tasks and projects. Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2010), for example, found that a curriculum requiring students to initiate structured conversations with their host families offered considerable benefit. The structured conversations led to impromptu discussions and generally upgraded both the quantity and the quality of dialogic interaction in the homestay. Kinginger (2009b) proposed a number of larger language-related projects designed to foster focused observation of a specific phenomenon (e.g., the language of service encounters or of publicity) followed by interaction with members of the host community around culturally unique artifacts. Streitwieser and Leephaibul (2007) described a program offering training and support for undergraduate research for American students in Germany. Student research projects, often on topics of contemporary relevance, facilitated a "more intensive immersion into the local culture" (p. 169).

In addition to tasks or projects, engagement in host community practices may be furthered through service learning and internships. Ducate (2009), for example, reported on a program involving U.S.-based study abroad participants in teaching English at a German elementary school. This program offered students opportunities to participate in a variety of communicative settings, including their own classrooms and the homes of their hosts, away from their American peers. Kurasawa and Nagatomi (2006) discussed the language learning experiences of American undergraduate interns in Japanese. Although these interns contributed to the companies or institutions they joined through their expertise in English, they also participated in casual conversations in Japanese.

Technology also has strong potential to further students' involvement in their host communities, for example, in the creation of thematic digital video projects (Goulah, 2007) or in the use of e-journals (Stewart, 2010) and mobile blogs (Comas-Quinn, Mardomingo, & Valentine, 2009) to promote documentation of experiences, reflection on their meaning, and guidance from language educators or other experts.

Integrating Study Abroad Into the Curriculum

Although the integration of study abroad into the language curriculum remains a rare consideration in many institutions of higher learning, there is some indication that this issue is attracting professional attention. Moreno-Lopez, Saenz-de-Tejada, and Smith (2008), for example, described a project designed to integrate foreign language study abroad into the curriculum of a small liberal arts college with a mandate to educate students as global citizens. The project involved designing coherent sequences of courses cotaught by language and discipline specialists and including a service learning experience abroad. Within this program and others like it, the discipline-specific language needs of the students may be cultivated throughout their studies.

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CONCLUSION

This article has reviewed the contemporary literature on language learning in study abroad for its pedagogical implications. Whereas off-campus experiences are often considered to be outside the purview of language programs, findings of research provide a strong rationale for including the expertise of language educators in the choice, design, and use of study abroad. Every effort should be made to ensure that language learners abroad enjoy access to—and engagement in—the practices of their host communities as well as guidance in their efforts to learn and to interpret their experiences. Based on this need, language educators have recently proposed a number of suggestions for enhancing study abroad as a language-learning experience, but clearly, there is room for continued investment in this worthy endeavor.

NOTE

1 According to the guidelines provided by the ACTFL for rating the Oral Proficiency Interview, a speaker possessing Advanced (level 2) ability can participate actively in conversations and can narrate and describe in the past, present, and future.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

DuFon, M., & Churchill, E. (Eds.). (2006). *Language learners in study abroad contexts*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

This edited volume illustrates the theoretical and methodological diversity of contemporary approaches to language learning in study abroad. The introductory essay provides a useful and comprehensive overview of research on second language acquisition, development of pragmatic competence, and documentation of individual differences. Highlights include Hassall's diary study of learning to take leave in Indonesian, Churchill's investigation of Japanese students in the United States, and three studies, based on micro-analysis of recorded interactions, of language socialization at host family dinner tables in Indonesia (DuFon) and Japan (Cook & Iino).

Jackson, J. (2008). *Language, identity and study abroad: Sociocultural perspectives*. London, UK: Equinox.

This ethnographic study, grounded in socially and critically oriented theory, followed a cohort of Chinese students studying in Britain. The core of the volume is a series of four case studies or "journeys" following individual students throughout their experiences, from the pre- through the postsojourn stage. These cases demonstrate that even when students benefit from the prevision of expert guidance, the process of identity negotiation remains complex and unpredictable. Readers are provided an overview of a curriculum designed to train students as ethnographers.

Kinginger, C. (2009a). *Language learning and study abroad: A critical reading of research*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

This book outlines the history and current state of the knowledge base in applied linguistics research on language learning in study abroad. Following an overview of related language-in-education policy, the author surveyed the literature on

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measurement of language ability and research on components of communicative competence. Research on settings for language learning (the classroom, the homestay, and informal encounters) was also reviewed along with studies of language socialization and identity.

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