



January 2006

Study abroad social networks, motivation and attitudes: Implications for second language acquisition.

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Isabelli-García, C. (2006). Study abroad social networks, motivation and attitudes: Implications for second language acquisition. In E. Churchill & M. DuFon (Eds.), *Language learners in study abroad contexts* (pp. 231-258). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

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Journal Title: Language learners in study abroad contexts

Volume:

Issue:

Month/Year: 2006

Pages: 231-258

Article Author: Christina Isabelli

Article Title: Study abroad social networks, motivation and
attitudes: Implications for second language acquisition.

Cited In:

Call #: P118.2 .L3645 2006

Location:

Patron: Christina Isabelli-Garcia

Status: Faculty

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Chapter 9

Study Abroad Social Networks, Motivation and Attitudes: Implications for Second Language Acquisition

CHRISTINA ISABELLI-GARCÍA

Introduction

In order to study the development of a learner's oral communication skills and accuracy while abroad, extra-linguistic factors that may influence the acquisition process must also be considered. Studies that examine learners' attitude, motivation and behavior in the host environment and link these factors directly to linguistic development can show that learners may not magically become fluent speakers simply by being surrounded by the target language. One aspect of the host environment is the informal relationships contracted by the individual learner, which have been referred to as 'social networks', a term coined by Milroy (1987a). Analysis of these social networks can be used to account for linguistic development and variation between speakers at the level of the individual, and external tools – such as diaries – can document if motivation and attitude influence the establishment of social networks.

Research has shown that immersion in the target culture is of great value to learners' second language acquisition (SLA), especially in improving oral production ability (Brecht *et al.*, 1993; Collentine, 2004; Freed, 1990a, 1990b; Freed *et al.*, 2004; Isabelli-García, 2003; Kaplan, 1989; Lennon, 1990; Liskin-Gasparro & Urdaneta, 1995; Milleret, 1990; Polanyi, 1995; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Studies have also shown that the amount of contact with native speakers is an important factor in the acquisition of sociolinguistic and sociocultural knowledge (Lafford, 1995; Lapkin *et al.*, 1995; Marriott, 1995; Regan, 1995; Siegal, 1995a).

There are, however, inconsistencies in study abroad (SA) research since claims are made based on different acquisition aspects, and distinct amounts of time spent abroad and the type of interaction between learners and native speakers is frequently not specified. Research on study abroad, similar to many studies in SLA, does not account for sociolinguistic dimensions and prevents insight into the nature of learners' language (Firth & Wagner 1997).

This investigation aims to fill this gap by examining the effect of extralinguistic influences. Specifically, this study asks: What individual extralinguistic factors (such as motivation, contact with the host culture outside of the classroom and attitudes towards the host culture) can be related to the development of oral communication skills and accuracy? The findings of this study will add to the current literature on what is known about how interaction with the context affects motivation (Syed, 2001; Nikolov, 2001; Ushioda, 2001) and vice versa. Moreover, this study provides evidence of a four-way connection between motivation, significant target language interaction with native speakers in social networks, cultural adjustment, and SLA during the SA experience.

Literature Review

This study explores how differences in motivation and attitude can affect social interaction in the host culture and culminate in minimally extended social networks with native speakers. When learners are in a context where interaction occurs with a more expert speaker, they notice new or correct structures in the expert speaker's language or feedback (Donato, 1994). Building on the framework of Gass and Varonis (1994), in which attention allows learners to notice a mismatch or discrepancy between what they know about the language and what native speakers produce, Donato adds the notion of 'scaffolding' to describe the process by which learners develop their interlanguage through interaction. Additional restructuring outside the classroom acquisition context occurs through a process of destabilization, in which an increase in error rate in one area may reflect an increase in complexity or accuracy in another, followed by overgeneralization of a newly acquired structure (Lightbown, 1985). When additional syntactic patterns become available to learners, restructuring or destabilization occurs. This destabilization is at the base of language change.

On the surface, SA offers learners plenty of opportunities for interaction, to notice the gap and to engage in scaffolding. In the 30 years following Schumann's (1976) claim that the environment in which the

learners interact, the opportunities to use the language, and learners' motivational and attitudinal patterns all seem to positively influence their successful rate of acquisition, investigations have agreed (Brecht *et al.*, 1993; Kaplan, 1989; Milleret, 1990; Polanyi, 1995) and disagreed (DeKeyser, 1991; Freed, 1990a; Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Krashen & Seliger, 1976; Schmidt, 1983; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Spada, 1985, 1986). However, there is considerable variation in the language learning experiences of SA students. Some variation may be attributable to motivational factors and the learners' interaction with the context that, in turn, affects investment.

Attitudinal factors may also cause variation since attitudes towards the target language and community influence one's second language (L2) learning behavior (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Studies of motivation in SLA have identified various kinds of motivation orientations: integrative (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1959); instrumental (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991); resultative (Hermann, 1980; Savignon, 1972; Strong, 1984); and intrinsic and extrinsic (Dörnyei, 2001). Categorization of learner motivation is not black and white, but rather motivation represents a continuum of orientations (see Dörnyei, 2001 for more detailed analyses on motivation).

Integrative motivation embraces socio-cultural, socio-educational, and socio-psychological issues like belonging in a group, receiving affection, and identifying with the foreign language community. Instrumental orientation, on the other hand, deals with the utilitarian use of the language for personal gain, like finding a job or furthering a career. Resultative motivation arises when learners who experience success or failure in learning become more or less motivated to learn. That is, motivation may cause L2 achievement; however, it is also possible that motivation is a result of learning. Learners who have intrinsic motivation may not hold distinct attitudes, positive or negative, towards the target-language group. This motivation involves the arousal and maintenance of curiosity and can fluctuate as a result of such factors as learners' particular interests. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation involves performing a behavior to receive some extrinsic reward or to avoid punishment (Dörnyei, 2001).

Such conceptions of motivation do not capture the complex relationship between relations of power, identity, and language learning (Pierce, 1995). Rather, if the learners have some sort of 'investment' to learn a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources. The concept of investment envisions the language learner as having a

complex social identity and multiple desires. Learners are not only conveying information but also creating and maintaining their identities. Therefore an investment in the target language is also an investment in their social identity, which is constantly changing and shifting. The notion of motivation used in this investigation to describe the four learners draws on both Peirce's notion of investment and the various types of motivation described above. A more complex understanding of motivation is needed and an important question remains: how does the environment in which the learners interact create, foster, and maintain motivation?

For learners entering SA contexts, interaction with the context is most likely mediated by their various stages of acculturation. In order to accomplish the act of integrating into a new surrounding, Bennett (1986) poses the acculturation model, which states that one must pass through a state of ethnocentrism in order to reach a state of ethno-relativism or acculturation. This progress from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism occurs through a sequence of six states.

The first three states fall under the principle of ethnocentrism: the learner (a) denies the existence of cultural differences, which includes isolation and separation stages; (b) recognizes the reality of cultural differences but makes an effort to preserve hegemony of one culture over another; (c) and minimizes cultural differences in an effort to deal with the recognition that it is not tenable to preserve the superiority of one culture over another. The last three states fall in the category of ethno-relativism, the learner: (d) acknowledges the possibility of differences among cultures in adapting to the environment; (e) adapts to the host culture, and a sense of understanding and pluralism arise; and (f) accepts differences between cultures and enters a state in which these differences become essential to identity (p. 27).

The theory of ethno-lingual relativity is built on the work of Bennett (1986). The central idea is that openness to contrasting cultural and linguistic patterns of other peoples and a refusal to be limited by one's own cultural and linguistic experiences can facilitate L2 learning. Social attitude may be linked to ethno-lingual relativity as learners without an open perspective may be less motivated to learn a new language since it would seem less relevant to them (Citron, 1995).

One promising way to look dynamically at motivation and acculturation is through the use of social networks (Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Milroy, 1987a) documented by student diaries. Social networks are likely to correlate closely with how the learners envision themselves in the host culture. One cannot expect that learners will be motivated to

learn the target language and integrate themselves into the host culture if they find themselves in a state where segregation of the two cultures is still an integral part of their cultural outlook. Thus, drawing from theories of social networks developed in first language communities, I am applying the framework of social networks to learners in a SA context in this study. The learners that will interact mostly within their L1-speaking territory (in this case L1 English-speaking learners) are those who form closed, or dense, multiplex networks with other members of their L1 group and do not interact with the host culture. Their contacts will mostly be with one another, making their role relationships multiplex, as can be seen in Figure 9.1.

Each person X is viewed as a focus from which lines radiate to points (persons with whom X is in contact). In this dense network structure of English-speaking members, interaction will normally be in English; such interaction is, naturally, not conducive to acquiring the target language. The learners who participate in this type of network structure curb their opportunities to interact with native speakers. They accordingly limit chances to notice new or correct structures in the native speakers' language or feedback, which restricts the new information that can scaffold onto their already developing interlanguage.

SA learners who have open personal networks, moving outside the first language (L1) English-speaking territory of their fellow SA acquaintances, will establish contacts in the host culture, presumably with native speakers. Even when the learner is housed with a family and seems to have easier access to a new social network, relationships with the new members still have to be built since interaction does not always take place with the host family (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Rivers, 1998; Wilkinson, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000).

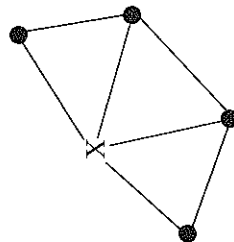


Figure 9.1 High density, closed personal network structure. (X is the focal point of the network) (Milroy, 1987a: 20)

In this low density, open uniplex network, learner X associates with local people (points) in a single capacity (see Figure 9.2). In other words, the individual interacts with others as just a colleague or employee, rather than in multiple capacities such as friends may do. This open personal network characterizes the network of a typical SA learner who maintains contact with several native speakers. Within these conversations on a simple topic, over time, the learner can become an expert at talking about, for example, only school topics. The learner is infrequently exposed to topic variety that comes up in multiplex interactions where arguments and supporting of opinions occur.

Although this uniplex network is the only type that a learner can expect to establish when new to the country, this situation changes when the learner's social network extends to a more multiplex structure. Within a multiplex network, the interactions with native-speaker members help the learners' interlanguage reach a close approximation of the L2 faster. Learners in a multiplex network are required to speak to each member in various capacities. In this manner, the interactions will then likely include a wider range of topics that allow the learner to practice varying aspects of the L2 with more frequency. This provides opportunities to notice gaps (Gass, 1997; Gass & Varonis, 1994; Schmidt, 1993; Schmidt & Frota, 1986) and engage in the scaffolding (Donato, 1994; Lantolf & Appel, 1994) that promotes restructuring of the interlanguage. Learners in extended networks with native speakers will acquire a set of linguistic norms that are enforced by exchange with those native-speaker contacts. Campbell (1996) hinted at this in her self-study when she made a conscious effort to access the social group in order to acquire language while socializing with the members of the group.

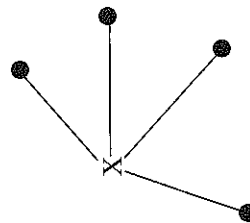


Figure 9.2 Low density, open personal network structure. (X is the focal point of the network) (Milroy, 1987a: 20)

'Network zones' are important to understanding the role that social networks play in successful interaction. The persons who are directly linked to X belong to his [or her] *first order* network zone (Milroy, 1987a). Each of these people may be in contact with others whom X does not know, but with whom X could come into contact via the first order zone. These more distantly connected persons form X's '*second order zone*' (p. 46) (Figure 9.3).

Messages that pass along these network links are seen as transactions, governed by the principle that the value gained by an individual in a transaction is equal to or greater than the cost. These transactions may consist of greetings, civilities, jokes, information or assistance, and when they flow in both directions between links, they are considered 'exchanges'. When learner X participates in a social network in which native-speaker Y (friend of a friend) is part of a second order zone that is closed, then his or her chances of observing and participating in prolonged interaction will then be considerably increased.

There have been few studies on SA that have integrated Bennett's model of acculturation to help account for changes in learner attitude and motivation that might influence the learners' desire to interact with native speakers. Another area that has yet to be brought to the area of SA is a more complex notion of motivation that includes resultative motivation and investment. Without studies that focus on the interdependency of language acquisition, interaction, attitude and this complex notion of motivation, L2 researchers will not understand the effect that the learners' perseverance to maintain social interaction has on their own language acquisition process. Moreover, due to the growing

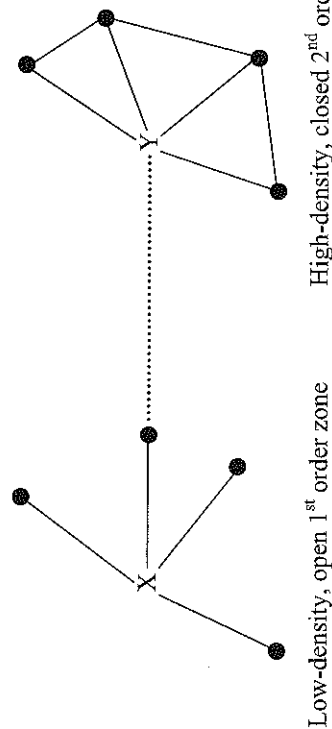


Figure 9.3 Low density network showing first and second order zones (Milroy, 1987a: 48)

participation of learners in SA programs, there is a need for data that can empirically show parents, teachers, and learners the kinds of linguistic development that can be expected from spending a semester abroad and the factors that may influence this development.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected from a group of SA students who were part of a consortium of three large U.S. public universities in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Prospective participants agreed to fill out a questionnaire from which students were selected on the basis of certain criteria outlined by Huebner (1995a), namely: (a) a willingness to participate in the project; (b) a pre-program oral proficiency interview level of Intermediate, according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (1986); (c) background factors such as foreign language and cultural background (i.e. those who had traveled extensively or had studied or spoke any language other than English were disqualified); (d) motivation to learn Spanish; and (e) realistic expectations of program outcome.

The participants were Caucasian, ranging in age from 19 to 21 years old. Three males and one female served as the informants for this study. They were from diverse regions of the United States and were eager to volunteer as participants in this study.

One student lived with a host family and three lived in student apartments with one to three roommates from different parts of the world. Those who did have English-speaking roommates had a rule to communicate with each other only in Spanish. At the time of the fieldwork, two informants taught conversational English in small language schools as a source of income. The language learning environment for the participants can be characterized as dual: a weak classroom and a strong natural environment. At the sponsoring university abroad, the subjects attended a language class for a total of two hours a week that was for all international students and was taught exclusively in Spanish. There was no textbook, but rather a pamphlet of 'homemade' creative activities, reading excerpts, and grammar paradigms. There was no homework assigned or exams administered. The participants took regular curricular courses with local students in fields such as Agriculture, Economics, International Business, and Politics from the sponsoring private university or from two other universities in the city. The participants' lives outside the classroom varied from being active with native speakers to being limited to activities with other English-speakers.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study uses both a quantitative and qualitative methodology. Analyses were performed on the four types of data: pre- and post-program oral proficiency interviews; informal interviews; diary entries for motivation/attitude orientation; and social network contact logs.

Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview and Informal Interviews

The quantitative measurements were derived from a pre- and post-test Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) and five informal interviews. The sole purpose of the SOPI was to have quantitative data on pre- and post-program proficiency. In addition to the SOPI, the investigator developed an informal interview to elicit data for various oral language skills. The prompt questions were designed to persuade the participants to narrate personal experiences, express and support opinions, relate past activities, and share future plans. All interviews were conducted exclusively in Spanish. These 15-minute recorded interviews were conducted once a month, for a total of five times over the course of the study.

Trained SOPI raters scored the SOPIs to determine the pre- and post-program oral proficiency ratings of the four student participants. The SOPIs were double-rated for reliability and, if a discrepancy was found between the two ratings, a third rater was used. Following a modified version of the ACTFL Guidelines (1986), the SOPIs were rated according to the criteria described for only four levels: Intermediate Low; Intermediate Mid; Intermediate High; and Advanced¹ (for a description of the levels see Byrnes and Canale, 1987: 16).

The learners' informal interviews were transcribed and analyzed for: (a) tense selection of present versus past; (b) imperfect versus preterite aspect selection; (c) person-number (subject-verb) agreement; and (d) gender-number agreement. The focus was limited to these syntactic elements since any considerable number of errors in (a) and (b) could hinder comprehensibility. Errors in (c) and (d) were targeted because accuracy in agreement is an element that shows improvement over time in language learners. These syntactic elements were also focused on since the SOPI guidelines list confusion of aspect and tense selection and agreement errors as markers of distinct oral proficiency levels. A more detailed version of the classification of linguistic accuracy and results for each participant can be found in Isabelli-García (2004).

Diary entries and network contact logs

Another especially important aspect for assessing SA proficiency development are tasks that help identify the environments, activities, and sociocultural views that lend themselves to more or less successful language acquisition. One means by which learners can record their thoughts, achievements, strategies, and impressions of the culture is through diaries (Bacon, 1995; Oxford & Crookall, 1989). To this end, the participants were given notebooks in which they kept weekly diary entries. The entries were written in English so that no subject material would be avoided due to limited linguistic capabilities in Spanish. The students were instructed to make comments on their perception of their language progress, and to relay positive or negative events that had occurred within that week.

The learners' social attitudes were measured and operationalized based on culture-specific comments from their diaries and informal interviews that included: (a) comparisons stating that one culture or system was better or worse; (b) descriptions of Argentines' personalities, actions or way of life; (c) feelings about a particular situation or event; and (d) new perspectives on the host country, people or experience. Any comments in these categories are significant since they offer a window into the learners' opinion-formation process.

By making comparisons, the learner is compelled to make evaluative comments. For example, the tendency to make more comparisons by stating that the U.S. culture exceeds that of Argentina in some aspect may be an indicator of a negative social attitude toward the host culture. If that attitude is constantly reported, then a conclusion about the learner's overall social attitude is made. For this study, the learners' culture-specific comments found in their diary entries were tallied and evaluated. If the total number of positive comments was greater than the negative comments, the learner was characterized as possessing a positive social attitude toward the host culture. If the opposite tendency prevailed, the learner was considered to have a negative social attitude. If the number of positive and negative comments were equal, then the learner was characterized as possessing a neutral social attitude, which did not occur with any of the learners in this study.

The learners' motivational orientation (intrinsic, instrumental or integrative) was obtained by two means. One method was based on comments in the initial, pre-program questionnaire that consisted of: (a) personal opinions based on their language learning experience as a whole, and (b) explanations for taking certain actions. The second approach was by translating the learners' positive or negative attitude

to a high or low motivational orientation, respectively. This manner of determining the learners' motivation is more reliable than implementing the usual self-report medium.

The participants were each given seven daily log sheets to fill out and a short page of instructions to help them recognize the personal networks in which they interacted. These log sheets were filled out at three different times during their stay abroad and returned to the investigator during the first, eighth and fifteenth week.

After interviewing the participants and collecting the network logs and weekly diary entries, the learners' social networks were identified. The social network concept is used here as an illustrative device for describing social relations abroad from which one can learn how the learner participants envision and incorporate themselves in the host culture. These networks show how the learners position themselves in their new environment and, more importantly, they show the extended network of acquaintances, possibly predicting advancement in SLA.

Results and Discussion

Table 9.1 shows the ratings each participant received on the SOPI given prior to and following the SA experience. All learners but one showed improvement in their pre- and post-SOPI. Stan, Tom and Sam showed a difference of one level between interviews and Jennifer remained at the same proficiency level as when she started.

The qualitative data were used to describe the learners' social networks, their attitudes, and their orientations towards learning. The social networks of four participants' in the host country along with excerpts and analyses of their diary entries are presented here. Extralinguistic features such as instances of positive or negative motivation and attitude are examined.

Table 9.1 Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview ratings

	<i>Pre-program SOPI</i>	<i>Post-program SOPI</i>
Stan	Intermediate High	Advanced
Tom	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High
Sam	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High
*Jennifer	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate Mid

*Learner stayed at same proficiency level.

Stan's attitudes and social network

Stan's overall disposition during the SA program was positive, as was noted in his weekly diary entries. Stan had a positive attitude towards his experiences in Buenos Aires and had high motivation to study Spanish and understand the new culture. He was continually eager to experience not only the 'real, big-city' life of Buenos Aires but also the very distinct culture of interior Argentina. His eagerness to learn more about the culture correlated with his high motivation to learn Spanish.

As evidenced from Excerpt (1), he wanted to go beyond just learning the language to get the full meaning of what it meant to be Argentine.

(1) This past weekend I went to Cordoba. [...] I spent two days in a friend of a friend's home, which was really nice. [...] It was good to spend a weekend with a family. I think I have a better idea of Argentina, of course more trips are necessary to improve the idea even more.

Stan's goal of understanding Argentina is reflected in his investment in learning the target language.

Stan lived in a university apartment with two Americans and one Mexican and, according to his Network Contact Log, spoke more Spanish than English in his social activities with his roommates and other acquaintances. During his first week he tended to socialize with his American friends because of the small number of Argentines in his social network, as can be seen in Table 9.2 and Figure 9.4, but Spanish was his language of choice.

Table 9.2 Stan's (X) first and second order zone social networks with Argentines

Month	SOPI rating	1st order zone uniplex members	2nd order zone multiplex members	Total social network members
1	IH	1		1
3		3	3	5
5	A	3	5	7

SOPI = Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview; IH = Intermediate High; A = Advanced.

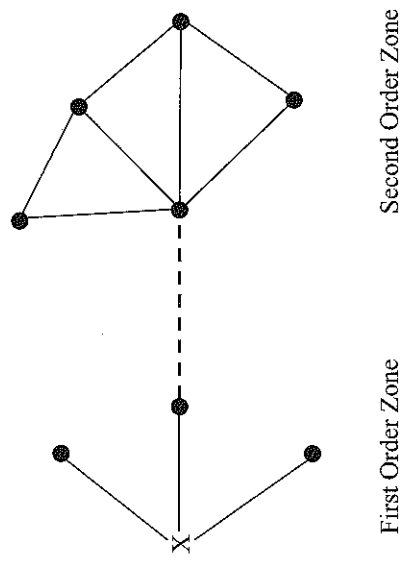


Figure 9.4 Stan's (X) first and second order zone social networks with Argentines.

Although he remained in the circle of friends with the roommates and several other American students, Stan stayed in contact with a friend of a friend who lived in Cordoba, a city about 10 hours from Buenos Aires. By the third month, he had become closer to this friend. As tallied from his self-reported Network Contact Logs at this time, Stan's social network consisted of five Argentine friends; three were members of his first order zone, uniplex social network and three were members of his second order zone, multiplex social network (one member being the conduit between the two networks). He entered into the second order zone through the friend of a friend who then introduced Stan to his two friends, and included him in activities with them.

By the fifth month, Stan had already taken two trips to Cordoba and consequently, his second order zone social network increased to five people due to the friends he made during those visits. These friends also came to visit him in Buenos Aires and all were planning a trip to Chile in the following months. According to his Network Contact Log, when he was socializing with both Americans and Argentines (mostly in Spanish) it was not uncommon for him to argue a point with a friend or to tell a story.

As measured from his diaries and informal interviews, Stan's positive attitude and high motivation were factors in the maintenance and development of his social networks from that of a first order zone to that of the preferred second order zone. By the last month, the latter consisted of friends in Buenos Aires and close friends from Mendoza and Cordoba.

Stan's second order zone social network, his positive attitude, and high motivation correlate with changes seen in his linguistic accuracy from the beginning of the program. The high linguistic accuracy during his first month (91%) gave Stan, who wanted to learn the real side of Argentina, the self-confidence to initiate and sustain different topics and use a range of speech functions from early on in the program. I assume that these social situations may have allowed Stan to participate in interactions in which he was able to detect discrepancies between his language and that of the target language, possibly giving him the opportunity to restructure his L2 knowledge. Accordingly, the more frequently that Stan participated in these social interactions, the more restructuring may have occurred, leading to development in his linguistic accuracy over time. By the fifth month, his average linguistic accuracy had risen to 94.2%.

Stan's ability to reach the later stages of ethnorelativism and to minimize cultural differences (Bennett, 1986) reflected the positive attitude that he maintained throughout the SA program. I posit that this attitude and extended social network was the basis for why Stan showed development in linguistic accuracy, moving from Intermediate High to Advanced by the end of the program.

Tom's attitudes and social network

During his first four weeks in Argentina, Tom lived with an Argentine host family in an affluent part of Buenos Aires. They included him in family meals and social outings. When the semester started, Tom moved into student housing with a French student and they spoke Spanish when addressing each other. In his first-month diary entries, Tom tended to make neutral comments about his observations, such as the lack of importance of punctuality in Latin American countries. An account of Tom's social network activity during his five months can be seen in Table 9.3 and Figure 9.5.

During Tom's first month, the members of his uniplex first order zone represent his host family members and three SA administrators. These associations were uniplex since his role with them was as a guest with his family and as a new SA student. During the third month, Tom was no longer living with his host family, and his contact with them decreased significantly. Instead, his social network during the third month consisted of five Argentines whom he had met at the church where he volunteered, and four other Argentine acquaintances with whom he had gone out several times. By the fifth month, Tom frequently had lunch with the group of five volunteers and began spending time with one Argentine

Table 9.3 Tom's first and second order zone social networks with Argentines

Month	SOPI rating	1st order zone uniplex members	2nd order zone multiplex members	Total social network members
1	IM	7		7
3		9		9
5	IH	9	(1) in progress	9

SOPI = Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview; IM = Intermediate Mid; IH = Intermediate High.

girl, Romina, having lunch with her and talking to her on the phone. Romina represents the beginning of a social network extension from first order zone members, with whom he associated in a uniplex manner, to a second order zone. Romina alone cannot be considered part of a second order zone social network; only when Romina includes Tom in her circle of friends and frequent interactions with those members occur can the social network be considered multiplex.

It appears that Tom's social network of fellow volunteer workers began out of the necessity to gain academic credit at his home university. Although the need to earn credit initially motivated him to integrate himself into a new social circle, this motivation became more complex during the program. He gained and maintained friendships with

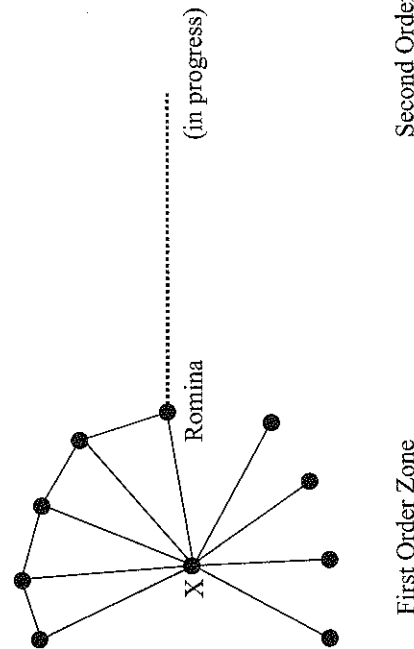


Figure 9.5 Tom's (X) first and second order zone social networks with Argentines.

people from another ethnolinguistic group he wanted to know better and with whom he wanted to communicate. In other words, Tom made an investment in learning the target language; to make and maintain Argentine friendships.

By the fifth month, Tom had adapted to the Argentine social and academic system, demonstrated by his successful library research and also by his social network of Argentine volunteers. Although it may be the case that Tom adapted to the Argentine lifestyle, he indicates his belief in Excerpt (2), taken from his fifth month diary entry, that the U.S. culture dominates over the Argentine culture.

- (2) One major problem I see for this country is whether or not the people will have the training and knowledge to advance as they want. I think major changes need to be made to give the people greater access to the needed learning materials [...]. I am being critical but it is only because I think there is a lot of room for improvement.

This excerpt was written after Tom relayed the difficulty he experienced in obtaining articles in the library and getting simple tasks accomplished, which he stated was an impediment to the advancement of the Argentine people. Although Tom did not stop at the stage of anomie and did not give up trying to learn the language, he still showed a hegemonic attitude toward the Argentine culture by condescendingly wondering if the people of Buenos Aires would have the training and knowledge to advance. This excerpt shows that one can adapt to the culture without liking everything. Tom separated those things he did not like about the Argentine culture from his experience in learning about the culture.

The enduring presence of these observations and comments is not necessarily hegemonic but the critical/patronizing evaluations of those observations are. But this was not an obstacle to Tom's acculturation, which may be an important step in the establishment of social networks. This acculturation was illustrated by the fact that Tom's social network grew to include a group of nine Argentines, the majority of whom were participants in his volunteer program.

Despite his continuing hegemonic attitude toward Argentina, Tom's social network of Argentines, his measured positive attitude towards the host culture, and his high motivation to learn the language affected his L2 development. Tom showed development in linguistic accuracy (90% during the first month to 96.2% during the last month) and stopped struggling to create appropriate forms as he was doing during his first two months abroad. An example from the first two months can be seen in Excerpt (3).

- (3) Sí, nosotros fuimos, después de ir al cine, un otro bar cuando no hay much-, cuando no había, no había mucha gente yo, yo llamé otros amigos y me, me dijo, me dijeron que hay mucha gente en su departamento y, y van al boliche todos juntos.

Yes, we went, after going to the movies, another bar when there isn't a lot, when there weren't, there weren't a lot of people I, I called other friends and he, he told me, they told me that there are a lot of people at their apartment and, and that they are all going to the dance club together.

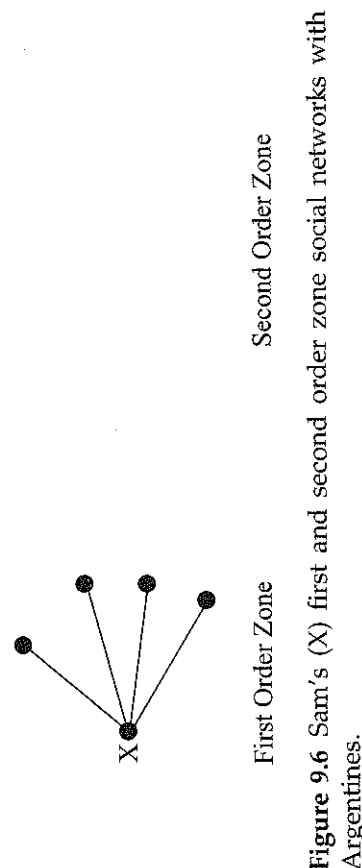
By the end of the stay abroad, Tom was able to produce more advanced speech functions, such as telling a detailed narrative and description and supporting his opinions.² Accordingly, his oral proficiency rating increased one level from Intermediate Mid to Intermediate High.

Sam's attitudes and social network

Sam lived in an apartment with three other exchange students, two Americans and a Mexican, with whom he reported speaking both Spanish and English. During his first week in Buenos Aires, his diary entry made reference only to his perceived progress in the acquisition of the language and to some difficulties he had in understanding Argentine colloquialisms. By the fifth week, his diary entry consisted of a lengthy discussion of his experience with corruption in Buenos Aires and various situations in which corruption occurs:

- (4) Corruption here is quite rampant [...]. Somebody told me that the police had to take cuts from whores, black market people to even be able to operate. And Menem calls this a First World country [...]. Argentines seem to think that they are the shit of South America for some reason. I read an article in a newspaper here that made some statement about the fact that God was Argentine. Whatever.

His reference to the fact that the former President of Argentina, Carlos Saúl Menem, called Argentina a First World country is, in fact, sarcastic. He questions how Argentina could belong to the First World when there is corruption and bribery taking place in a range of occupations, from the police force to ordinary businesses. One can only assume that he is comparing this activity to what he believes does not occur in the United States, a 'First World' country. Sam reinforces his perception of the hegemony of the United States over Argentina through derogatory remarks about cultural differences. In his view, the American society is morally superior to that of the Argentines.



average linguistic accuracy in Spanish improved, from 93% to 98.8%, but this was not attributed to his social networks. Although his linguistic accuracy improved, he did not show any development in producing more advanced speech acts such as supporting an opinion or giving a detailed narration, as did Stan and Tom. He produced accurate grammar in his brief responses (13.4 average words per response, lowest of all learners in this study) and avoided elaboration wherever possible linguistic difficulties could arise. Sam's interviews were characterized by his focus on the production of accurate grammar and functions lacking in content and detail.

Sam's pre- and post-program SOPI scores were Intermediate Mid and Intermediate High, respectively. Considering Sam's few opportunities to practice Spanish with native speakers, his preference for using English in social situations as the semester progressed, his negative attitude towards the people of the host culture, and low motivation, how can his proficiency development be explained? In offering a possible reason for Sam's jump in proficiency levels, we must look at an element from Sam's profile: he read many Argentine newspapers. Although Sam may not have participated actively (speaking vs. listening) in many conversational interactions with Argentines, his exposure to written text may have enabled him to develop certain aspects in his speech, such as semi-organization and connectedness, use of appropriate vocabulary and accuracy of grammar. It did not, however, enable his development of advanced discourse skills.

Jennifer's attitudes and social network

Jennifer showed motivation in her pre-program questionnaire to be part of the SA program. Her pre-program expectation was to become

By the end of the SA program, the low opinion that Sam had for male Argentines, who in his opinion were 'full of annoying prides', was quite evident. Sam was disgusted by the disregard that Argentine men seemed to show toward women. Throughout the duration of the program, it was shown through his diary entries that Sam regarded Argentine men as corrupt, foolish, and disrespectful towards women. These entries outnumbered his positive remarks about the host culture, which translated into a low motivation to learn the language. This perception may explain why his social network of Argentine acquaintances was limited to three to four people (two men and two women) throughout his SA experience, which is shown in Table 9.4 and Figure 9.6.

Those who were part of Sam's first order zone network during his first month were the two program organizers and his Spanish grammar teacher in Buenos Aires. By the third month, his social network included one program organizer and three Argentines whom he frequently went out with in large groups of SA students; his network decreased to the program organizer and two Argentines by his fifth month. He showed no indication of extending this first order zone uniplex relationship to a multiplex one with any of the members. Sam's lack of investment in learning the target language, his negative attitude toward the host culture, and low motivation hindered him from building significant social networks with Argentines.

He tended to socialize with other SA learners in English and, according to his Network Contact Log, he did speak in Spanish but usually in large groups of people. Although large group conversations can provide much exposure to listening to Spanish, they probably did not allow Sam the opportunity to practice various speech functions such as giving a supported opinion or a detailed description and narration, all of which need substantial floor time to accomplish. Surprisingly, Sam's

Table 9.4 Sam's first and second order zone social networks with Argentines

Month	SOPI rating	1st order zone uniplex members	2nd order zone multiplex members	Total social network members
1	IM	3		3
3		4		4
5	IH	3		3

SOPI = Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview; IM = Intermediate Mid; IH = Intermediate High.

competent in the language. She was an instrumentally motivated learner as revealed in her desire to incorporate Spanish in her future career in agriculture.

During her first month, Jennifer maintained a very positive attitude in her diary entries, in which she discusses the members of her social network at the time. Jennifer's diary entries focus on practices that do not happen in the United States, but seem to indicate her belief that they should exist: relaxation in the classroom, camaraderie with the instructor, and gentlemanly behavior of 18-year-old men toward women. These descriptions were tallied as positive attitudes toward the host culture but a negative attitude can be seen in some diary entries. For example, in Excerpt (5), she posits the advantage of the U.S. culture over that of Argentina:

- (5) When I am running in the park alone, the men playing soccer often stop and look and yell things at me. That would never happen in the U.S. I think it stems from arrogance because they think that all women want to impress them.

Excerpt (5) evidences a gendered experience, similar to that of other women who study abroad (cf. Polanyi, 1995; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Twombly, 1995). Since (5) was one of two mentions of a gendered experience in Jennifer's diary and interviews [see Excerpt (6)], it can be concluded that her experience abroad was influenced by these events. Although initially experiencing the euphoria of being in a new country, Jennifer showed signs of the second stage of ethnocentrism during the first month in that she recognized the reality of cultural differences but at times preserved the hegemony of her culture over the target culture. She peaked into the second stage of ethnocentrism but because she preserved her hegemonic feelings towards the host culture, which is characteristic of belonging to the first stage, it can be concluded that Jennifer did not advance past the first of six stages. This illustrates how complex attitudes can be for individuals even at a specific moment in time.

Jennifer's initial signs of positive attitude disappeared within the initial week of her stay abroad. Jennifer experienced an unpleasant first month because she was living with a single woman who treated Jennifer like a tenant in a very small apartment. She gave her a key and had little or no contact with her. This tenant-like situation corroborates conclusions of other researchers on the lack of interaction that can take place in a host family (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Rivers, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b) and underscores the positive

impact that a good relationship with a host family can offer (DuFon, this volume; Law, 2003; McMeekin, this volume). After rejecting another family comprised of only a husband and wife, she finally decided to live with a four-member family that included two children. The extensive moving around that Jennifer did from host family to host family could have made it considerably more difficult to move from a uniplex level to a richer social network. Each time she moved, she was almost back at square one working on the uniplex level. Her social network during the first month, which can be seen in Table 9.5, consisted of her host family (four members) and three Argentine classmates with whom she spoke Spanish.

Following these initial weeks in Argentina, Jennifer's social network of Argentines decreased to include only her host family and her American friend and remained this way throughout the duration of her stay abroad. With her host family, she usually had breakfast or a cup of coffee during the day. More importantly, she often played with the children or watched TV with them in Spanish. She also socialized on a regular basis with English-speaking people, going out or having dinner with them. In her diary entries, Jennifer indicated in her third week diary entry that her small social network with Argentines had influenced her progress in acquiring the target language. She was frustrated trying to speak Spanish and noted that it was difficult to speak when the majority of the people with whom she had talked to spoke English.

A week later, during her fourth week abroad, Jennifer also began to be critical of the Argentines' mannerisms and lifestyles. In Excerpt (6), Jennifer comments on the political incorrectness of pointing out and directly commenting on one's physical appearance, especially concerning the topic of weight.

Table 9.5 Jennifer's (X) first and second order zone social networks with Argentines

Month	SOPI rating	1st order zone uniplex members	2nd order zone multiplex members	Total social network members
1	IM	7		7
3		4		4
5	IM	4		4

SOPI = Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview; IM = Intermediate Mid.

(6) I have noticed that Argentine men are not at all shy about telling a girl she is fat. Several times I have been walking on the street or with friends and someone has pointed out the fact that I am not stick thin. I can't imagine being an Argentine woman and putting up with that [...].

Excerpt (6) reveals that Jennifer felt isolated and separated from the new Argentine culture, evidencing the effect that the 'ugly' *piropos* (catcalling) had on her (cf. Twombly, 1995). She even mentioned during her fourth informal interview that she felt that she did not have a part in the Argentine culture and was fed up with trying to 'find a place'. Jennifer's feeling of isolation feeds her negative attitude toward assimilating to the culture, which is translated into her low motivation to learn the language. This is also evidenced by the fact that halfway through the semester, her social network of Argentine friends consisted of only her host family. A possible explanation for Jennifer's feelings is that the manner in which native speakers treated her may have led her to feel inadequate as a member of a social group, which potentially may have prevented her from making further efforts to participate (Pellegrino, 1998). However, according to student perspective studies, feelings of inadequacy may also arise in light of difficulties learners have using their L2 to achieve communicative goals (Pellegrino, 1998).

According to her Network Contact Log, by the fourth week she was spending the majority of her time with an American friend, going to movies, exercising and traveling together. Although she reported that she spoke more Spanish than English in social situations, she participated in fewer activities and not only spoke less Spanish than during her first weeks abroad, but less English as well (see Figure 9.7). A possible explanation for Jennifer's self-report data is that it was easier for her to remember instances when she spoke Spanish and therefore tally it. When she was in Spanish social situations, she was with the children of the household or other Argentine staff or faculty of the SA program, in which the social interaction was not consequential. That is, interaction with these people may have not have involved extended discourse but was tallied as a social interaction nonetheless. The sense of isolation that Jennifer felt from the Argentine community overcame her. Many cultural things bothered her and instead of minimizing the cultural differences to adapt to the environment she maximized her time with what she was familiar with, American friendships and the English language. These American friendships served an important function: they provided the confirmation of native identity necessary to enable her to face the

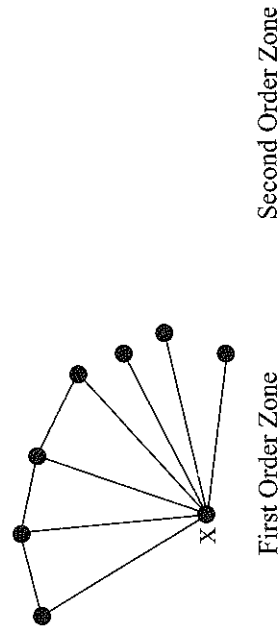


Figure 9.7 Jennifer's (X) first and second order zone social networks with Argentines.

potentially threatening situations of linguistic and cultural difference (Wilkinson, 1998a).

The establishment of social networks in a new environment, however, cannot be accomplished without advancement of the learner's cultural awareness and, the SA participant must reach a state of ethnocultural awareness before this occurs (Bennett, 1986). Jennifer stagnated in the first of six stages towards reaching this state of ethnocultural awareness, never gaining cultural awareness and finally giving up altogether on making Argentine friends.

Although Jennifer had a positive degree of development in linguistic accuracy (82.2% to 91.8%), there was no progress in her overall oral proficiency; she scored at the Intermediate Mid on both pre- and post tests, which was illustrated in the extreme brevity and limited quantity of her speech. Jennifer also relied solely on the use of the present tense regardless of the form needed, which may be partially explained by the fact that she did not have the opportunity to practice narrating in the past in Spanish; most of the time she did not talk to adults but rather to children. Past research may explain Jennifer's experience in her homestay interactions that may have consisted largely of short formulaic exchanges, such as greetings and simple requests (Frank, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998a). This resulted in a greater ability to communicate without necessarily holding the floor for a long time (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004).

I do not know enough to say what caused Jennifer's failure to acquire the past tense or if a single factor played a part in her lack of development in oral proficiency. One reason could have been that Jennifer did not seek opportunities with native speakers in which she could practice more advanced conversational strategies such as discussing topics of current public or personal interest. This fact corroborates the importance of a

broad network in order to be exposed to more varied language models (Campbell, 1996). In addition, the negative attitude that Jennifer had toward the host culture and her low motivation to learn the language hindered her from including more Argentines in her social network; she lacked any investment to learn the target language.

Conclusions

Overall, this study has illustrated that the type of motivation the learners had in learning the target language, the attitude they maintained toward the host culture, and the strength of their social networks were all connected. This helps explain the variation that may exist among individual learners' processes in SLA. One could posit that variation could be caused by the fact that some of the learners in the program were lazy or not intelligent (Cholakian, 1992; DeKeyser, 1991) whereas others refute this notion (Pellegirino, 1998; Wilkinson, 1997). We must keep in mind, however, that the students that participated in this SA program go through a rather rigorous selection process based on instructor recommendation letters and grade point average.

What was shown was that some learners' (Sam's and Jennifer's) diary excerpts started out on a neutral or positive note but, during the five months, changed to a negative attitude. On the other hand, other learners' attitudes remained neutral or positive throughout the process with fluctuations of negativity depending on the circumstances (Stan and Tom). All learners invariably felt frustrated at one point or another during the program, but it is interesting to note how these situations were dealt with depending on the individual learner. An analysis of the diary entries and Network Contact Logs provided an inside look at the learners' thoughts and opinions toward the new host cultural experiences. These measurement tools indicated that the positive or negative aspects of their thoughts and opinions played a role in their desire and drive to build a new social network (Stan and Tom). The study thus confirms the claim that motivation is not a fixed personality trait but must be understood with reference to social relations of power that create the possibilities for language learners to speak and that learners' social identities are complex, multiple and subject to change (Peirce, 1995). Also, it confirms that changes in motivation among students occur as a result of interactions or lack thereof (Wilkinson, 2002), as happened with Jennifer.

Why is it that Stan showed development in his linguistic and oral communication skills whereas Jennifer did not progress after the mid-point of the semester? Of course, these two participants represent the extremes in

this study but, nonetheless, these questions are reasonable to ask. It was shown that the learners with high motivation (Stan and Tom), as opposed to low motivation (Jennifer and Sam) developed more extensive social networks with Argentines. Stan and Tom developed connections into a second order zone social network, allowing for more practice in functions of a more advanced level. What was also shown is that the motivational orientation (integrative, instrumental, resultative, extrinsic or intrinsic) of three of the learners changed to another type during the stay abroad, depending on the ability of the learner to interact in social networks. For example, Stan, who was integratively motivated at the start of the program, had no trouble maintaining his motivation due to his success in interacting in a social network, with no fluctuation in motivational orientation. Jennifer, Sam and Tom, who began the program with an instrumental motivation, which associates a desire for learning the L2 with a recognition of the more practical merits of learning the target language, all experienced different fluctuations in their motivational orientation. Jennifer, who failed to create a social network and reported negative experiences, may have exhibited a resultative low motivation and negative attitude toward the host culture. The case was similar to that of Sam, who from the onset had a negative attitude resulting from his perception of corruption and annoying behaviors of the members of the host culture. Tom, who had success in creating a social network, changed from an instrumental motivation to an integrative and intrinsic motivation throughout the rest of his stay abroad.

The data show that the learners' continued motivation was influenced by their success, or lack thereof, in incorporating themselves into social networks. As stated earlier, I posit that the interaction with native speakers that took place in the social networks fostered opportunities for negotiation (see McMeekin, this volume), attention to gaps in feedback, and restructuring in the interlanguage. In other words, there is a conduit between motivation and language acquisition in the SA context, which is interaction in social networks.

The learners in this study went abroad with the intention of gaining a rewarding experience. Once there, all the learners invariably went through all or some of Bennett's (1986) six stages of acculturation. Throughout the program, however, all but Jennifer showed progression, some more than others, toward a state of ethnocentrism (or acculturation) in which the learners acknowledged the possibility of differences between the two cultures. The difference in learner progress through these states of cultural awareness is linked to their experiences, motivation, personalities and abilities to handle difficult new situations. The

learners, Sam and Jennifer, who remained at the state in which they perceived the hegemony of their culture over the new host culture maintained a negative attitude toward the host culture. This attitude invariably influenced with whom they chose to interact, most likely an American. The maintenance of social networks with native speakers of the host culture may be more difficult if the learner does not wish to or know how to foster a new social relationship. The negligence of or care for social relationships by the learner is caused by many factors, but in the SA context, the learner's cultural awareness or acculturation plays an important role.

From the data in this study we have also learned that students are sometimes rebuffed by a new group of acquaintances. Some learners give up while others persevere, trying and trying again, learning strategies to align themselves with people of a different culture in order to be more easily accepted into a social network of friends. The data show that the learners who incorporated themselves into social networks were the ones who aligned themselves to the new culture through volunteering at a local church, traveling long distances to visit with friends of friends, and becoming tolerant of cultural annoyances. Being in the SA environment for an extended period of time allowed the learners opportunities to create, foster, and maintain motivation and social networks with the target-culture. This experience allowed the learners to recognize, minimize and finally accept cultural differences, which resulted in an impetus for learning, providing the learners the chance to work their way to understanding and to interaction.

Significance of the Study

While there were learners who tried to incorporate themselves into new social networks, there were others who did not. The learners in this study that showed an 'investment' in learning the L2 and had high motivation were those that had more extended networks, which correlated with gains in linguistic accuracy. Although missed opportunities for interaction and less development in language could be due to the fact that some institutional and environmental factors may increase distance between students and the host culture (Churchill, this volume; Wilkinson, 1998a), other research, including the present, have shown additional possibilities.

The data from this study show that the unwillingness to interact and create social networks with the speakers of the host culture stemmed from motivational and attitudinal deficits maintained by the learner.

This claim has also been shown in previous research (Citron, 1995; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Yashima *et al.*, 2004). Hassall (this volume) makes similar conclusions that motivation is the key to understanding learners' behavior abroad and that those who reject opportunities for interaction lack a sufficiently strong motivation to learn the language.

Milroy (1987b) instructed field workers that the way to collect reliable conversational data was through their incorporation into second order zone social networks. Integration into social networks also proved to be valuable in this study for the learners' developments of linguistic and oral communication skills since multiplex relationships facilitated participation in more extended conversations. Interacting within these social situations allowed the learner to practice certain L2 linguistic aspects in a more thorough manner, speaking on topics and in functions beyond everyday speech.

Social networks with native speakers allow the SA learner expanded opportunities for interaction. The input that the learner is exposed to in such interactions at first is often beyond their comprehension, leading the learners to negotiate for meaning (see McMeekin, this volume) by asking clarification questions. Through this interaction the learners may also notice gaps in their production by comparing it to what their native counterpart is saying, as was similarly noted by Gass and Varonis (1994). Not only do the learners notice gaps and improve linguistic accuracy but they also may apply more advanced communicative skills to their developing interlanguage through scaffolding strategies (Donato, 1994; Lantolf & Appel, 1994).

In this study, the learners who maintained extended social networks and who practiced linguistic elements not otherwise allowed them, are evidence that informal, out-of-class contact can greatly enhance acquisition.

The conclusions of this study, therefore, not only present more data among the contradictory evidence that informal, out-of-class contact may or may not enhance acquisition (Freed, 1995a), but also have made considerable inroads into illustrating the complex relationship between motivation, acculturation and the development of social networks that ultimately provide opportunities for exposure to the target language and extended interactions that may be the driving force behind language acquisition in the SA context. Through an examination of four cases and building on previous work on study abroad, we have furthered our understanding as to some of the sources of differential development of the social networks necessary to enhancing language learning.

In terms of implications for programs, it is important that SA organizations carefully place students in host families and develop tutoring programs (Campbell, 1996; Law, 2003) and be realistic about the goals that they may promise to the learners to recruit them. It is also important to inform the programs of the other elements that need to be fostered during a stay abroad. For one, programs could benefit from ways to successfully create social networks, such as: including a required volunteer program while abroad (Twombly, 1995); incorporating as part of the curriculum internships with local businesses or universities; or, including independent projects that require the L2 learner to interview various native speakers on distinct topics throughout their stay abroad.

Notes

1. The other ACTFL proficiency levels outlined by Byrnes and Canale (1987) – Novice Low, Novice Mid, Novice High, Advanced Plus, and Superior – were not applicable to the learners in this study.
2. See Isabelli-García (2003) for a more elaborate discussion on speech functions.

Chapter 10

Language Learning Strategies in the Study Abroad Context

REBECCA ADAMS

Introduction

Study abroad is one of the most praised, if least understood, institutions in modern higher education. Freed (1995a) explains that there has been an assumption held by students, teachers, parents and administrators that students who study abroad learn language better than those who study in the classroom or those who are immersed in the second language without receiving formal instruction. On the basis of this assumption, a large and ever increasing number of American undergraduate and post-graduate students are enrolling in semester and year abroad programs. This assumption, however, has never been convincingly supported by empirical research. Miller and Ginsberg (1995) characterize learner and facilitator beliefs about the benefits of study abroad and language learning in the study abroad context as 'folklinguistic', noting that they often do not correlate and sometimes even contradict current understanding of language acquisition. Collentine and Freed (2004) note that such beliefs concerning the benefits of study abroad may still exist because the institution itself has not been sufficiently studied. Up to the mid-1990s, according to Freed (1995a), only 8% of researchers had conducted systematic pre- and post-testing of study abroad program participants. While interest in the role of context in language acquisition has increased in recent years, many empirical questions about the nature of language learning in study abroad remain unaddressed (Collentine & Freed, 2004).

Study abroad has been shown to impact learners psychologically, culturally and linguistically. In terms of psychological impact, study abroad experiences enhance motivation and confidence (Bachner & Zeutschel,