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Reconceptualizing Study Abroad: American and Japanese Students' Subjective Construction of Identity Through Language Learning Abroad

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RECONCEPTUALIZING STUDY ABROAD:

AMERICAN AND JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SUBJECTIVE CONSTRUCTION

OF IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE LEARNING ABROAD

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Tomoko Oda Nuske

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2017

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Title: Reconceptualizing Study Aboard: American and Japanese University Students'
         Subjective Construction of Identity Through Language Learning Abroad

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Study abroad is an under-researched domain of language learning. Moreover, most investigations of this phenomenon adopt traditional structuralist approaches, wherein outcomes of study abroad are assessed solely in terms of proficiency gains as measured through conventional exams. The present study builds upon an emerging body of poststructuralist research that foregrounds connections between language study abroad and the reconstruction of learners' identities (e.g., Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2010). More specifically, it utilizes Kramsch's (2009) notion of *subjectivity* to argue that language learning is a phenomenon that affects the entire human being (Hanauer, 2012) while bringing focus to how learners themselves define and evaluate the successfulness of their study abroad experiences.

The study adopted a longitudinal mixed-method approach encompassing interviews, narrative essay writing, and poetry writing tasks to investigate how perceptions of self and language learning evolved among Americans studying Japanese in Japan (n=9) and Japanese studying English in the United States (n=10). The specific research questions were:

1. How do students' subjective understandings of language learning and study abroad experiences involve views of the self?

2. In collecting data on personal experience in different genres (narrative interview, narrative essay writing, and poetry writing), what are the values and qualities of each of the data elicitation methods used?

Individuals who most consistently provided all three data types (4 Americans; 3 Japanese) were selected for qualitative case studies. Results demonstrated that their understandings of their experiences abroad changed according to idiosyncratic dynamics, yet they all eventually viewed their experiences abroad as significant life transitions into adulthood. Some derived great meaning from moments when they were able to use the target language in authentic situations outside the classroom, while others abandoned language learning and determined other goals for their study abroad. Quantitative analysis of the entire dataset made use of a computational linguistic approach to systematically measure the degrees of expressivity present in the corpus of texts in each genre.

The study concludes by recommending the establishment of a system of routine mentoring sessions or conferences wherein study abroad learners are provided with more opportunities to contemplate the meanings of their ongoing language learning experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I reflect on a journey that has occupied the past seven years of my life, I find myself overwhelmed with gratitude to mentors, peers, family, and friends who have made the completion of my dissertation possible. I fear that it will not be possible to properly thank everyone who helped me along the way. Indeed, if I were to start making a list of all of the people who provided encouragement, feedback, or sympathy, I doubt that it would ever end! Nonetheless, I would like to share the following words of appreciation for six individuals in particular. First, I thank my committee members not only for their expert guidance but also for their continual patience, understanding, and support throughout the long and periodically arduous process of writing my dissertation. I cannot count the number of times that my chair, Dr. David I. Hanauer, provided incredibly thoughtful advice and bolstered my motivation when I was on the verge of giving into to despair. My work would have been far less rigorous if I had not received so many perceptive questions and suggestions from Dr. Sharon Deckert. I am also immensely thankful for special efforts that she made on my behalf in order for me to be able to complete my dissertation and persist through some very trying experiences in my life. Dr. Stuart Chandler has been one of my most steadfast supporters since the time that I began my studies at IUP in 2006. I simply could have not become the teacher, scholar, and researcher that I am today without the benefit of his compassionate mentoring. Additionally, I am indebted to my peer, Jun Akiyoshi, who graciously assisted with various preparations related to my final defense and document submission. I also want to express my most profound gratitude to two people: my mother, Tayoko Oda, who has been my guiding light throughout entire my life, and my husband, Kyle Nuske. They are the most special treasures in my life. I could have not attained my ambition to complete this study without their great support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

During seven years of experience teaching English as a second language and Japanese as a foreign language at a university located in the Northeastern United States, I repeatedly welcomed international students who came to the United States to acquire English skills in preparation for enrollment in full-time American university programs. I also sent off American college students to Japan for study abroad. Time after time, I observed students' behavior, attitudes and emotions toward language learning fluctuate. Regardless of which language they were learning, most seemed enthusiastic at the beginning of their studies. However, as time went by, their performances altered in one way or another. Whereas some kept engaging in their schoolwork with passionate devotion and developing active social lives, others spent most of their time sitting back in the classroom, socializing with international students who had the same or similar cultural and language backgrounds, or contacting their families and friends back home. In the end, they lost their interest in continuous learning. These observations had raised a question of what propelled them to change their behavior so dramatically. It seemed that they were not motivated simply by the prospect of increasing their linguistic proficiency, as measured by tests or other abstract and decontextualized measures, leaving me to ponder what could possibly lay beneath the perceptible phenomena. This question extended to my curiosity about how psychological aspects of the language learning phenomenon influence behaviors in particular ways.

According to Kramsch (2009), some learners' desire for acquiring new language skills does not solely link to their usage of language as an instrumental means of communication, but

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rather they pursue "a way of generating an identity for themselves, of finding personal significance" (p. 15). Hanauer (2010) and Villalobos-Buehner (2009) reinforced Kramsch's point by describing how learners strive to find or negotiate possibilities of selfhood through learning experiences. Hanauer (2012) further averred that language learning is a "significant, potentially life changing event" (p. 105). In light of these remarks, it can be argued that individuals' unique meanings of language learning arise from more latent, insightful and personal aspects. If so, their understandings of what it means to learn language might vary greatly.

Applied linguistic scholars specializing in identity theories have been striving to flesh out how individuals' development of personal or idiosyncratic perceptions of language learning affects the redefinition of their senses of self, and vice versa. For example, some learners might "find in a foreign language a new mode of expression that enable them to escape from the confines of their grammar and culture" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 14). Sounds, rhythms, or tones in foreign languages that they are learning might be associated with a sense of freedom from traditions, norms, and conventions in societies that they grew up with (Ogulnick, 1998). In other cases, learning a new language might evoke learners' imagination of belonging to *imagined communities*, or groups they find desirable (Kinginger, 2004; Murphy, Jin, & Li-Chi, 2005; Norton, 2001). Therefore, learning language can bring another image of self (Kramsch, 2009) or create new identity options (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Villalobos-Buehner, 2009). Similarly, Kristeva (1980) identified *desire* as a foundation of learners' subjective perspectives on language learning because it touches the core of who they are and who they wish to become. In this sense, as Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) noted, subjective views (emotions, feelings, expectations, aspirations and so forth) of language learning are inextricably entwined with one's sense of self and create new practices of self-representation.

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As such, learners' emotionality and subjectivity can have a greater effect on the meanings that they associate with learning language than objective entities such as test-score outcomes. Because of its psychological nature, individuals' understandings of this concept can be fluid and fragmentary as they shift throughout their ongoing learning experiences. However, how would learners' perceptions change if they learn their second languages in host countries away from their home cultures? More volatile shifts in emotionality or subjectivity would perhaps take place because learners might encounter struggles with constraints on language proficiency and cultural knowledge. Depending upon their ways of interpreting life events that they experience, they might feel ambivalent about language learning and sojourning abroad. In other words, their expectations, desires and vulnerably could alter in tandem with their shifting senses of self.

To inquire into more subjective and insightful dimensions of language learning and study abroad, the current study drew on Kramsch's (2009) notion of *subjectivity*—humans' abilities to develop their senses of self through recognition of their emotions, feelings, memories, imagination and desire. This notion sheds light upon how learners' subjective understandings of their life experiences were interrelated with their views of what it means to learn language abroad. Rather than merely focusing on the influence of social structures, which has been the trend in research on identity in applied linguistics (Hanauer, 2010; Kramsch, 2009), this study highlighted more psychological aspects of identity construction in second language acquisition (SLA) and explored how identities were inwardly generated. In addition to this inquiry, the study examined the qualities and values of data elicited in three genres: narrative interviews, narrative essays and poetry about life stories. Data was provided by nine American college students who studied Japanese and ten Japanese learners of English at a Northeastern American university. The aim of this investigation was to compare features of each elicited data type and explore how

these research instruments can unveil the individualized perspectives underlying learners' experiences.

Statement of Problems

Amidst the social and economic globalization in the twenty-first century, the number of students who study abroad has doubled over the past 20 years (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2004, p. 22). In spite of such social and educational demand, the current research on language learning abroad is still relatively dominated by one particular model of research—structuralism, which concentrates on learners' outcomes as measured by linguistic proficiency tests (Freed, 1995b; Kinginger, 2008, 2009, 2010; Pellegrino, 2005; Regan, Haward, & Lemee, 2009). This model of research tends to conceive of SLA as a universal and generalizable psycholinguistic product. There is a need for more poststructuralist models of research, which account for ongoing or unique developments in individuals' experiences, such as their struggles with language learning and cultural adjustments. As briefly mentioned earlier, identity theory seems to yield more insights about SLA with respect to changes in learners' perceptions of self. However, there has been a limited amount of study abroad research related to identity reconstruction through language learning, although identity theories have been of broad and current interest in the SLA field on the whole.

However, research on identity in language learning itself has several issues. First, much of this research has characterized L2 learner's construction of identities as being primarily influenced by external factors such as socially structured power. This view can limit understandings of SLA merely to the sociological level because it leads us to conceive of individuals as passive entities controlled by society. Identity can be also constructed by individuals' own agency through SLA (Becker, 1970; Blumer, 1967; Cohen, Manion, &

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Marrison, 2011; Garfinkel, 1967; Woods, 1983) because, according to Lave and Wegner (1991) and May (2001), identity is not merely conditioned solely by social interactions and social structures, but it also conditions social interactions and social structures. As such, there must have some space for individual choice in identity constructions (Giddens, 1991).

While Lacan (1977) called for further research that explored psychological perspectives, increasing numbers of identity scholars have brought out new theoretical constructs such as motivations (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009) and imagined communities (Kanno, 2003; Norton, 2001), and yet it seems these research studies did not look beyond sociocultural dimensions because they have tended to understand identity concerns based upon fixed social-power related categories such as race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, social class, sexual orientation and so forth (Block, 2007b). However, Kramsch's (2009) notion of subjectivity was able to break this trend and emphasize individual agency because it stresses how individuals creatively use and interpret language; it is distinct from identity theory, which focuses on larger social perceptions (Kinginger, personal communication, March 14, 2012).

Furthermore, there has been a scarce amount of study abroad research that examines the experiences of learners from two different cultural and linguistic backgrounds within a single study. As such, the present study investigated American college students studying abroad in Japan and Japanese students sojourning in the United States. However, in keeping with the position that language learning is individualized and idiosyncratic, I pursued an understanding of each participant as a unique person rather than a passive manifestation of social identity categories. This framework notwithstanding, another challenge still remained. Because this research necessitated the elicitation of one's innermost feelings and thoughts, how could I know to what extent the participants truly addressed them?

As there is no way of physically measuring the degree or depth of sincerity and candor evinced in participants' remarks, the current study conducted an additional analysis to compare the values and qualities of data elicited from three research instruments: narrative interviews, narrative essays, poetry. By demonstrating features of data elicited in these different genres, this investigation aimed to establish an effective data collection methodology for capturing psychological aspects of SLA.

Research Questions

All of the abovementioned issues guided my inquiry, which examined the two groups' subjectivities regarding their language learning experiences abroad in order to capture their latent and insightful thoughts and feelings about selfhood. More specifically, my research was directed by the following questions:

1. How do students' subjective understandings of language learning and study abroad experiences involve views of the self?

2. In collecting data on personal experience in different genres (narrative interview, narrative essay writing, and poetry writing), what are the values and qualities of each of the data elicitation methods used?

Significance of the Study

By delving further into understandings of the process of SLA from psychological viewpoints, the goal is to enhance teachers' reconsideration of how each individual's language learning process is unique. As most educators know from experience, students seem unmotivated and their performances in class are deemed insufficient at times. We are apt to judge or assess the development of their language learning based simply upon abstract and contrived measures such as tests, and our determinations of whether they are meeting expectations are often made

solely on observable classroom attitudes. However, even those who appear to be performing negligently might still have hope to "have a good return" on their learning efforts (Norton, 2001, p. 166).

What if language teachers could better understand how L2 learners deal with their emotions in course of their SLA? A myriad of confusion, frustration, anxiety, or a sense of isolation could be involved if they are deemed illegitimate because of the constraints on their language abilities. Alternatively, some might have positive experiences that broaden their acknowledgement of human and cultural diversity in the world. Whether positive or negative, such experiences can teach learners something beyond instrumental linguistic knowledge. By dealing with difficulties and struggles through sojourning abroad experiences, they might discover something new in themselves, such as what they could become in the future or how they wished to continue their life path. To support their life learning in tandem with language learning, what could we, educators, do in class? If language learning is a phenomenon that is not limited to the intellect and affects the entire human being, as Hanauer (2012) argued, I wanted to unveil the emotional experiences of each individual.

I hope that this study will help further develop teacher sensitivity towards the views of students in order to better understand their needs and provide them with more support that can link their potential and hopes for future. Nonetheless, echoing Block (2007b), I acknowledge that this study does not envisage the wholesale replacement of dominant views of language. I agree that the fields of language education and SLA surely need to consider the concept of linguistic competence. My intention for this study therefore is to take a critical view of an overly limited view of language learning in study abroad contexts and reconsider what teachers genuinely know

about such learning. It is hoped that this study will suggest new directions for future language

education efforts as well as SLA and applied linguistics scholarship.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The present chapter primarily has two aims: (a) to raise issues related to the prolonged dominance of structuralist theories of SLA in research on language learning abroad; and (b) to critically review poststructuralist approaches, with particular emphasis on identity studies in SLA, to establish a rationale for the value of employing Kramsch's notion of subjectivity.

This chapter begins with a critical overview of literature on SLA in study abroad contexts to discuss issues arising from the predominant models of research, which focus on learners' outcomes (e.g., scores on linguistic proficiency exams). Because of its emphasis on the development of linguistic knowledge, this type of research tends to lay aside considerations of other dimensions of SLA, including the sociocultural, ideological, socio-economical, socio-historical, and psychological. If such factors are not taken into account, understandings of the phenomena underlying individuals' transitional and developmental progressions will be limited. Though it is not said that structuralist research in this field totally abandons considerations of the abovementioned influences, poststructuralist research can expound on them more descriptively and idiosyncratically due to its capacity for more multidimensional investigations. As Richardson and St. Pierre (2008) noted, poststructuralism holds that "language does not 'reflect' social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality" (p. 476). Furthermore, language:

> is how social organization and power is constructed and contested and the place where one's sense of self—one's subjectivity—is constructed…Understanding language as competing discourses—competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world—makes language a site of exploration and struggle. (p. 476)

Although poststructuralist theories have gained prevalence in the SLA field at large, they do not seem to have had much influence on the subfield of research on language learning in study abroad contexts. Movement toward a poststructuralist turn has been slow despite an emerging tendency for scholars to emphasize subjective elements of identity construction. The persistence of traditional and arguably antiquated structuralist approaches could be due to the limited amount of research conducted on study abroad.

In sum, poststructuralist research can delve into language learning phenomenon rather than as a universal and generalizable psycholinguistic product. Within poststructuralist approaches, the present study concentrates on identity theory; however, identity theory also has limitations. Because the concept of identity is too intricate and multifarious to be defined with a single simple description, identity theories in SLA have been discussed by raising various focused issues, and yet a great number of identity studies in SLA have tended to stress the omnipotence of social structure (Block, 2007b; Hanauer, 2010) rather than psychological dimensions that also highlights human subjects' agency in language learning phenomena. Therefore, this chapter includes a critical review of previous studies in order to establish the significance of investigations emphasizing psychological aspects in identity and language learning research. It also argues for the utility of Kramsch's (2009) notion of subjectivity, which originates from the work of Vygotsky (1978) and will become the main theoretical framework for the present study. Subjectivity discloses how learners' emotions, feelings, memories, imagination and desire interplay with their development of senses of self. I will reveal how learners' diverse perceptions relate to their construction of identities, which are among the central purposes of the current study.

This chapter is organized according to the following structure: the first three sections illustrate study abroad tendencies. The first section briefly addresses worldwide tendencies and the following two sections focus on specific regions: the United States and Japan. Each section includes demographic information, current student characteristics, and social perceptions of language learning abroad. These reviews reveal that perceptions of study abroad in social discourses are putative, biased, and structuralist. The next section will present an overview of the research on language learning abroad, including research on American and Japanese contexts. It also addresses negative influences of structuralist perspectives on current foreign and second language teaching approaches because doing so will suggest critical alternatives more suited to the investigation of individual learners' unique learning processes. The subsequent review focuses on current research on identity and language learning. Special emphasis is placed on establishing difficulties with defining the concept of identity and explicating related notions such as imagination and sense of belonging. The chapter concludes with terse and consistent definitions of key terms (i.e. identity, subjectivity, and view of self) that encapsulate previous discussion and guide the remainder of the study.

Current Study Abroad Trends

Worldwide Tendencies

At the turn of the twenty-first century, social and economic globalization has stressed cross-cultural interactions. This phenomenon has driven the rapid growth in the number of students enrolled in educational institutions outside their home countries. According to OECD (2004), international student mobility has doubled over the past 20 years (p. 22). In recent years, the most popular destinations for international students are countries in which English is widely spoken as a first language such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and

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New Zealand. Approximately half of all international students study in these countries. Within the population of international students, about 70% of Asian students choose the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia for the purpose of learning English (OECD, 2004, p. 12). The United States, which is one of the most popular destinations, enrolled 723,200 international students in 2010, an increase of 20% compared to 2001 (Institute for International Education [IEE], 2011).

Study abroad students can be categorized into three groups as far as the type and amount of academic credit they earn in postsecondary education is concerned: degree students, exchange students, and non-degree students (Japan-United States Education Commission [JUSEC], 2005). The first category includes students who pursue foreign degrees or qualifications by attending full-time university programs. The second category, exchange students, refers to those who do not pursue degrees or qualifications in host countries. Instead, the credits they obtain by attending courses at foreign institutions are transferred to universities in their home countries. The transfer of credits is made possible by academic partnerships between the home institutes and the foreign institutions, which are called "exchange programs." The last category indicates students who attend educational programs at foreign institutions without pursuing foreign degrees or qualifications or receiving any transfer credits. Most of these students cease attending academic programs at their home institutions and resume them when they come back to their home countries (JUSEC, 2005). Among these categories, the present study principally involves exchange students, the second group referenced above.

In regard to the social perceptions and images of language learning abroad that are permeated among the public, media, and political and educational institutions, they are generally putative, biased and structuralist, as consequent sections demonstrate. These perceptions seem to

be shaped by social discourse that privileges native speaker norms. The statement below is a typical example of perceptions of study abroad among the public: *I wanna talk and speak English use it for my study abroad again. My dream is to be English speaker* (Yuko) (as cited in Fryer, 2012, p. 16).

This statement was exhibited in Fryer's (2012) study of a twenty-year old Japanese female learner's perceptions and motivations for language learning abroad. The subject, Yuko, made the statement before departing for her one-year-study abroad in New Zealand. Although Fryer simply interpreted Yuko's statement as reflecting a vision of herself as a speaker of English in the future, this remark can also echo the socially pervasive image of study abroad as an ideal and effective means of acquiring language proficiency. Allen (2010) and Miller and Ginsberg (1995) also noted this socially ingrained perception. The concept of study abroad, which combines formal learning at school with naturalistic exposure in local societies, constructs alluring images of a learning environment in which motivation surges and linguistic skills are enhanced quickly, resulting in common misconceptions among learners. Yuko's statement epitomizes this illusory perception of study abroad as a "short-cut" to becoming a native-like speaker. However, there has been no scientific verification that being exposed to the target language directly enhances learners' linguistic development (Allen, 2010; Gass, 1990) or motivation for language learning (Newfields, 2012).

In addition, numerous scholars argued that study abroad is symbolized as glamorous, graceful, and sophisticated in social discourse, though varying amounts of evidence are provided for these statements. Speaking very broadly about "adolescents and young adults who acquire another language in institutional settings," Kramsch (2009) contended that "those who study foreign languages are generally perceived as being part of the elite and secure in their identity,"

though no support is offered for this statement (p. 4). Similarly, Kinginger (2010) claimed, "according to the dominant discourse, study abroad is most appropriate as a decorative add-on to [student education]" (p. 219). Though Kramsch and Kinginger's statements appear to be unsubstantiated, other scholars have argued similar points on the basis of some empirical data. For instance, Pillar and Takahashi (2006) stated that studying abroad is often seen as cool or fashionable. In their research on five Japanese women who studied abroad in Australia, they found that the women's purpose for language learning was bound with their desire to have romantic relationships with white men and become native-like fluent English speakers. These women's study abroad was arranged by a private company, as is common in Japan. The company's methods of advertising study abroad implied a fantasy image of becoming native-like in one's speech by talking with a specific race. This social discourse formed the myth or illusion that study abroad could fulfill their desire. Pillar and Takahashi (2006) argued that learners' "motivation, or the 'desire to learn'…is a complex multifaceted construction that is both internal and external to language learners, and is not linked to success in a straightforward fashion" (p. 59).

Policy documents and program administrators also often refer to idealistic goals for study abroad including the enhancement of learners' linguistic skills and their self-transformation and internationalization. According to a staff member of an academic exchange program at an American university, the general goals of study abroad programs in postsecondary education are for students to learn different languages and cultures in order to internationalize and become global citizens (personal communication, February 22, 2011). In a similar way, policy documents of the Council on International Educational Exchange stated (2012) students' study abroad experiences help them to "gain understanding, acquire knowledge, and develop skills for living

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in a globally interdependent and culturally diverse world" ("History"). However, there are several reasons to be skeptical about the ways these policy documents advertise study abroad programs. These sources have an interest in depicting study abroad in a solely positive manner for the purpose of recruiting students and laying aside variations in individual students' experiences, which could involve negative components such as struggles, difficulties, and distress.

While it is argued that public, media, and political perceptions of study abroad present illusory images, perceptions of study abroad in educational contexts have often emphasized intellectual and linguistic development. For instance, it is observed that the term success in study abroad is defined as a manageable and instrumental manner by measuring outcomes on standardized exams. This means of assessment evaluates learners' language proficiency simply in terms of conventional metrics of correctness such as grammatical rules, structures, vocabulary, and so forth. As such, other capabilities necessary to acquire a new language (e.g., intercultural competences, metal flexibility of adaptation to different cultures, learning perseverance) are disregarded. Additionally, learners' successfulness is often judged based solely upon their performances in the classroom, including scores on quizzes and exams or the degree to which they exhibit behaviors or attitudes that the teacher considers appropriate. A common element of those definitions is that learners' success is assessed solely within observable institutional contexts (Kinginger, 2010). Overall, all of the preceding remarks connote that the words *study abroad* contain unconventional implications, which are socially embedded unwritten messages and images.

Having provided brief overviews of worldwide demographic information and prominent social perceptions of language learning abroad, I now turn my attention to the specific contexts

of the United States and Japan. I also address similarities and differences in these countries'

study abroad tendencies.

The United States

The number of American students who study abroad has been increasing considerably for

several decades. For instance, according to *Open Doors Data* of the IIE (2011), the number of

American students who study abroad increased by 43% between the academic years of 2000 and

2010 (see Figure 1). Simultaneously, the number of American students who study abroad in

Japan increased by 20% from 2005 to 2010 (see Figure 2). Although American college or

university students who went to Japan from 2005 to 2010 constitute only 2.1% of the total study

abroad students during this timeframe, this figure demonstrates that the number of American

students studying abroad in Japan still greatly increased.

Figure 1. Number of American Study Abroad students. X line presents year and Y number of American college students who studies in foreign countries. The data were derived from the *Open Doors Data* of the IIE (2011).

Figure 2. Number of American Study Abroad students in Japan. X line presents year and Y number of American college students who studies in foreign countries. The data were derived from the *Open Doors Data* of the IIE (2011).

With respect to the duration of study abroad, the *Open Doors Data* of the IIE (2011) indicated that the average rate of students who were enrolled in study abroad programs for an academic year or calendar year from 2001 to 2010 was only about 5.8%. The vast majority of students studied abroad for a short period, such as a summer term, one semester, eight weeks or less. Regarding students' fields of studies, 43% of students who studied abroad in the 2009-2010 academic year were social sciences or business management majors (IIE, 2011).

Concerning the characteristics of American study abroad participants, about 87% of them between 2000 and 2010 were undergraduates. Most of them were in their late teens to early 20s (IIE, 2011). Eighty-two percent were Caucasian and about 65% were females (IIE, 2011). Study abroad students are generally from middle-class families (Block, 2007b, p. 6). Although some home or host educational institutions offer students partial grants, it is still difficult for them to obtain full-paid scholarships. In light of this circumstance, there are a limited number of students who are financially able to study abroad.

Several studies have presented two main hypotheses about the social perceptions or images of study abroad in the United States: (a) study abroad is conceived as a *grand tour*—a

frivolous and pleasurable activity rather than a serious learning experience (Gore, 2005; Kinginger, 2009); and (b) study abroad is devalued in American higher education due to the larger marginalization of foreign language learning (Bernhardt, 1998; Lantolf & Sunderman, 2001; Pavlenko, 2002). These hypotheses, however, are in need of further investigation due to the methodological limitations of the studies and resultant questions about the applicability of their findings, as will be discussed later.

The hypothesis that study abroad is perceived as a grand tour was derived from Gore's (2005) analysis of the history of study abroad from the 1970s to the present. As defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (1973), grand tour refers to "a tour of the principal cities and places of Europe, formerly supposed to be necessary to complete the education of young men of position" (as cited in Gore, 2005, p. 27). In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the tradition of the grand tour began with British male patricians who stayed in Europe for general educational and cultural edification as well as leisure and libertinism (as cited in Gore, 2005, pp. 27-28; see also Stowe, 1994). In Gore's view, study abroad originated from and was synonymous with the concept of the grand tour during this period in time. However, Gore (2005) additionally clarified that, "through all these years, many study abroad experiences may not have matched the prevailing definition of the Grand Tour, but that has not affected the growing power of this belief to define study abroad" (p. 28). To support her claim that the concept of the grand tour has continued to dominate common perceptions of study abroad in higher education, she related the findings of her analysis, as described below.

Gore's (2005) analysis mostly involved a literature review of policy documents and reports published by educational organizations (e.g., the American Council on Education [ACE]), periodicals written for audiences of education experts (e.g., the Chronicle of Higher Education),

and newspapers written for a mainstream audience (e.g., the Wall Street Journal). Her review included Maza's (1971) negative perspective on study abroad, "many students, though presumed to be studying abroad, 'are actually there on travel programs' and reaping only 'superficial knowledge'" (as cited Gore, 2005, p. 29). Additionally, Gore referenced other more recent resources from the ACE such as Lambert's (1989) report and Briggs and Burn's (1985) *Study Abroad: A European and an American perspective, organization and impact of study abroad*. While these authors acknowledged study abroad in contemporary economic, political, social, and institutional contexts is very different from that of two centuries ago, they observed that perceptions of study abroad originating in the eighteenth century have continued to be held today, particularly in regard to students' motivation for study abroad. In this regard, Lambert "recognized a common opinion that study abroad is frivolous travel, made for personal cultural experience rather than serious academic accomplishments" (as cited in Gore, 2005, p. 30).

Furthermore, Gore referenced excerpted periodical and newspaper reports, such as the Chronicle of Higher Education and Wall Street Journal, from the ACE (2001). In the Chronicle of Higher Education, Feinberg's (2002) *What Students Don't Learn Abroad* presented American college students' reflections on their study abroad experiences in South Africa. According to Feinberg, when students discussed their study abroad experiences, they often referenced pleasurable experiences and made comments suggesting, "they had experienced no change in media-received definitions of overseas locations" (as cited in Gore, 2005, p. 31). In this regard, Feinberg argued that these students' reflections typically lacked references to academic challenges or new cultural insights achieved by interacting with local people in the host community. Moreover, Gore reviewed a 2003 Wall Street Journal newspaper article that claimed American colleges and universities are adding "cultural entertainment features" into their study

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abroad programs in order to attract more students; the article quoted a student who compared her study abroad to a "five star vacation" (Gore, 2005, p. 31).

From her analyses, Gore (2005) concluded, "study abroad is portrayed as a personal experience designed not to gain purposeful knowledge as much as gain social standing and enjoy private pleasure" (p. 32). There are, however, some methodological limitations in her analysis. Although Gore scrutinized a broad span of historical policy documents, reports, periodicals and newspapers, her analysis is mostly dependent on secondary sources or sometimes on others' interpretations of historical sources. Gore's claims about social perceptions of study abroad as a frivolous and pleasurable activity would be more persuasive if she had analyzed a more extensive range of sources such as empirical studies that had interviewed or surveyed students who experienced study abroad and/or program administrators.

Kinginger (2010) also conceived of study abroad as a grand tour. Building on the work of Gore, Kinginger speculated on a connection between the feminization of study abroad, as reflected in the above-mentioned statistic that demonstrated nearly two-thirds of all study abroad students were females (IIE, 2011), and the continuing association of:

overseas education with lack of academic rigor and professional purpose. Study abroad, according to the dominant discourse [of higher education] is most appropriate as a decorative add-on to the education of elite women. The purported academic weakness of study abroad is further associated with underlying prejudicial attitudes in which higher education of true quality is only available in the United States, and in which the liberal arts curriculum is disassociated from vocational goals. (Kinginger, 2010, pp. 218-219)

Even though study abroad enrollment is increasing among American students (IIE, 2011) and universities are more eager to promote study abroad to attract students (Feinberg, 2002, as cited in Gore, p. 31), Kinginger (2010) contended that there is continued skepticism about its potential to be a substantive learning experience. Although Kinginger's observation might be cogent, this claim seems heavily reliant on Gore's work. Hence, it would have been more credible if she had substantially critiqued or built upon Gore's points by offering critical commentary or incorporating other resources such as empirical research on social perceptions of study abroad in higher education.

Another hypothesis about the social perceptions or images of study abroad in the United States holds that the devaluation of study abroad in the United States was derived from the marginalization of foreign language learning in American higher education (Bernhardt, 1998; Lantolf & Sunderman, 2001; Pavlenko, 2002). Based on a review of relevant articles in The Modern Language Journal over eight decades, Lantolf and Sunderman indicated that foreign language programs have been frequently targeted for elimination because of budget restraints. Similarly, Skorton and Altschuler (2012) indicated that, while 67.5% of higher education institutions in the United States required foreign language study in the academic years of 1994 and 1995, this figure dropped to 50.7% in the academic years of 2009 and 2010.

Pavlenko's (2002) historiography of the emergence of American English language ideology indicated that the marginalization of foreign language learning in American higher education is construed as part of the larger social move toward monolingualism. According to Pavlenko, this social move was engendered by anti-German hysteria and anti-immigrant xenophobia during World War I and II (p. 163). Furthermore, she described monolingualism as an American representation of ideological purity. In other words, the notion that monolingual

proficiency in English signifies true citizenship is a dominant belief in American culture (Pavlenko, 2002). Gore (2005) echoed Pavlenko's view by remarking that the constraint on Americans' tolerance of multilingualism has exerted a profound influence on the value of foreign language learning in American higher education. In her view, this influence is extended to the value of study abroad programs.

Despite the criticisms of Pavlenko (2002) and Gore (2005), there have been some moves toward the support of study abroad programs in the history of American higher education. For instance, in the 1950s, the American Council on Education called for the reappraisal of the value of foreign language education and stated that study abroad programs would play a role in the evolution of higher education by promoting tolerance of linguistic, racial, ethnic and religious diversity (Gore, 2005, p. 3). The council stressed the need for the integration of international education into existing curricula at colleges and universities. Another primary move took place in 2005. The Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Commission established a goal of sending one million undergraduate students abroad in order to improve their global understanding and intercultural awareness. In this regard, Gore (2005) critically observed that, while the value of study abroad has undergone a positive reappraisal in policy statements of educational institutions, this change has not yet translated into an action agenda in American higher education. According to Gore, postsecondary institutions' actions do not match calls for the integration of international education into existing curricula. Hence, the development of study abroad programs has remained an idealistic principle only. Kinginger (2008) furthered Gore's observation by noting that American students' preference for short-term study abroad, as reflected in the *Open Doors Data* (IIE, 2011), may limit their abilities to achieve substantial improvements in their intercultural awareness and their second language proficiency.

Gore and Kinginger's remarks seem reasonable; again, however, they were not expansive enough to provide a critique of these institutional policies. Their observations are largely hypothetical. Kramsch (2009) made a critical point about Gore and Kinginger's overgeneralized views of study abroad students by claiming, "whether [students] sojourned abroad, emigrated to a foreign country…or simply experienced the language in the confines of a classroom, they often describe the experience as one that engages their emotions, their bodies, and the most intimate aspects of themselves" (pp. 1-2). Furthermore, Kramsch (2009) emphasized, "the language-learning experience itself is neither successful nor unsuccessful. It can be lived more or less meaning fully and can be more or less transformative, no matter what level of proficiency has been attained" (p. 4).

In light of Kramsch's point and the findings of the review of American social perceptions of study abroad in this section, it becomes clear that the perceptions (i.e., study abroad as the grand tour and the marginalization of foreign language learning) are frequently reliant on assumptions and over-generations. While several scholars asserted that low value is often placed on foreign language learning (Lantolf & Sunderman, 2001) and referenced the cultural belief that national identity is tied to being a monolingual English speaker (Pavlenko, 2002), there is a need to further investigate to what extent, if any, these concepts are relevant to individuals' unique beliefs and understandings. In other words, questions can be raised about whether individuals' perceptions and experiences of study abroad are truly affected by these assumptions. In my view, there is cause to doubt these researchers' claims due to the methodological limitations of their research. Without a sufficient poststructuralist view of understanding individuals' language learning abroad, these assumptions are not fully underpinned, leading to a risk of oversimplified hypotheses.

Additionally, one can reasonably conclude that there are controversies over the support of study abroad programs in the history of American higher education. There has been a social quandary between American ideologies of monolingualism, higher education's ideal of internationalization, and continued skepticism among educational professionals about the potential of study abroad to be a substantive learning experience. Accordingly, there is a gap between the aims of developing study abroad programs and the actions that are actually implemented in educational practices. When considered in tandem with the emergence of current issues of foreign language curricula in American higher education, this finding raises a consideration of how existing study abroad programs can be developed by exploring potential classroom applications. This consideration will also guide the implementations of the present research, which aim to play a role in bridging this gap.

Japan

In contrast to the Open Doors Data that demonstrates an increase in the total number of American study abroad, the number of Japanese study abroad students decreased by 55% between the academic years of 2000 and 2011 according to the *Open Doors Data* of the IIE (2011) (see Figure 3). About 60% of Japanese students studied in English-speaking countries[1], such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and New Zealand. Among these English-speaking countries, the most popular destination for Japanese students was the United States (Japanese Student Services Organization [JASSO], 2012) (See Figure 4).

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[1] There are several definitions of the term "English-speaking countries" since there are countries in which English is used as the first language, such as Nigeria and Singapore. However, in this study, this term refers to popular study abroad destinations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand.

Nearly half (49.5%) of students were enrolled in undergraduate programs at American universities, 21.8% were in graduate programs, and 20.1% were in exchange or non-degree programs during the 2010-2011 academic year (IIE, 2010, as cited in JUSEC, 2005). A recent considerable change is that the number of exchange students or non-degree students has increased by 11% since 2007. This figure suggests that Japanese students tend to prefer a short-term study abroad without pursuing foreign degrees (IIE, 2010, as cited in JUSEC, 2005).

The ages of Japanese study abroad students vary from late teens to 30s, a wider range than American study abroad participants. Like American students, there are still a limited number of Japanese students who can obtain full paid scholarships or waivers from Japanese governments, organizations, or universities who support study abroad programs. In this sense, one can reasonably conclude that most self-pay students are living at a comfortable socio-economic level.

Figure 3. Number of Japanese Students abroad in the U.S. X line presents year and Y number of Japanese college students who studied abroad in the U.S. The data were derived from the *Open Doors Data* of IIE (2011).
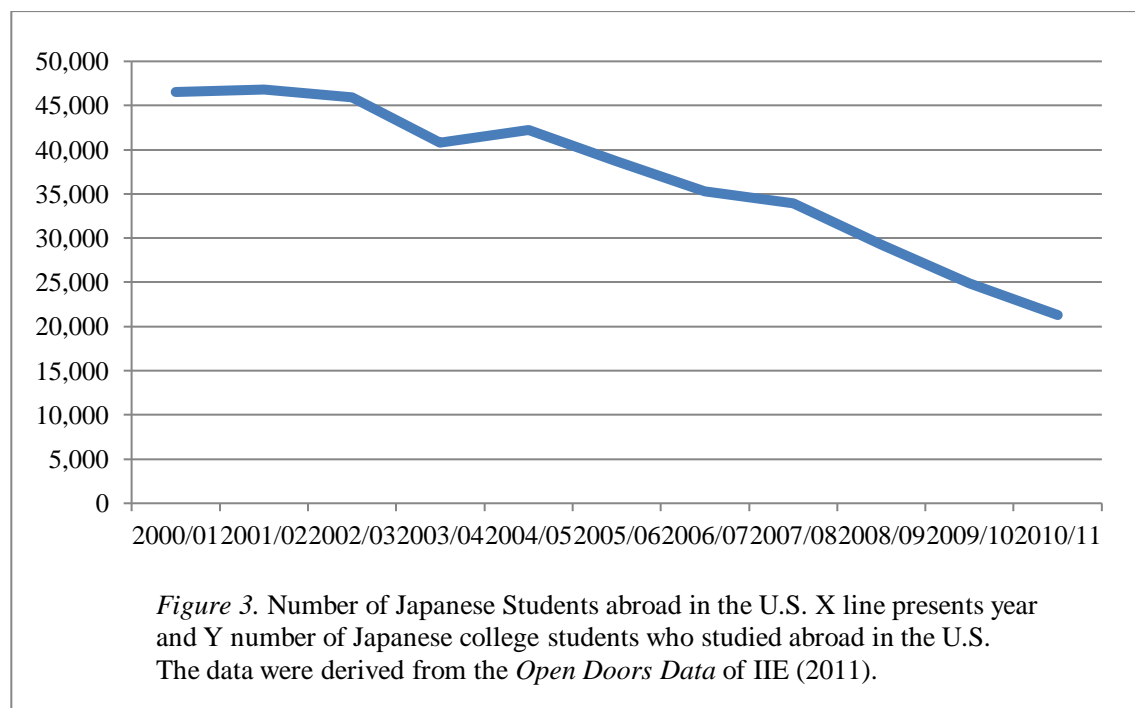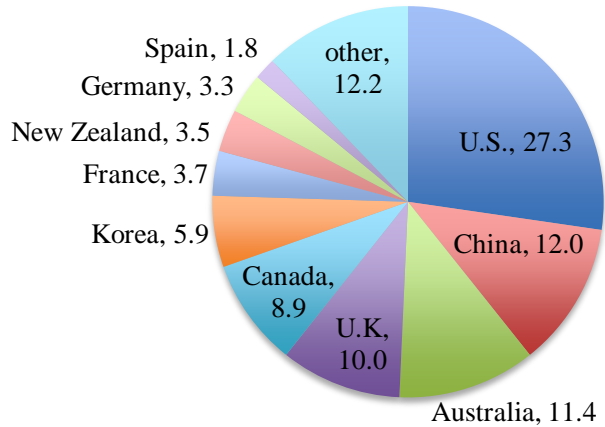
Figure 4. Popular destinations of Study Abroad among Japanese sudents. The average of percentage between 2004 and 2009. The data were derived from JASSO (2012).

In contrast to the tendency that foreign language programs are undervalued in American higher education, as indicated by Skorton and Altschuler's (2012) statistics that demonstrate a seventeen percent drop in required foreign language courses from 1994-1995 to 2009-2010, Japanese education conceives of foreign languages, and particularly English, as critical subjects. Kinginger (2009) described English language education as "synonymous with foreign language learning" in Japan (p. 21). One of the most striking moves toward English language curricula in Japanese education occurred when the former Prime Minister Obuchi defined English as a second official language in the policy document *Profile of Prime Minister Kenzo Obuchi* in 2000 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2000: see also Prime Minister's Communication on Japan's Goals in the Twenty-First Century, 2000). Under the pressure of social and economic globalization, English was considered to play a vital role in Japan's ability to become internationalized and compete successfully in the global economy. This language policy attempted to promote the significance of English language curricula in current Japanese education.

Several studies remarked on or investigated social perceptions of English learning in Japan. For instance, Kubota (2011) argued that, for some individuals, English learning is motivated by the perceptions that English proficiency will increase one's earning power. According to Kubota (2011), this perception has been shaped by two social assumptions: first, "English language competency is essential for a new economy built upon skilled work, and second that developing English skills strengthens a nation's economic competitiveness and increases individual economic returns" (p. 248). In Seargeant's (2008) research related to Japanese ideology and language policy, he demonstrated that tests of English language proficiency are used to determine access to prestigious universities (p. 131). Similar to Seargeant, Feinberg (1993) contended that entrance into prestigious universities in turn determines the status of the company one can expect to work for after graduation (p. 197).

When job-hunting, Japanese students typically give great consideration to the status of prospective employers. Japanese companies generally hire students fresh out of school based on the status of their universities rather than their professional skills. These students usually become permanent employees whose positions are generally guaranteed throughout their working lives. Their payment automatically increases as their working years go on (Japan Technical Information Service, 2006, pp. 191-192). In this sense, passing an exam to enter a prestigious university and being employed at a high-status company can literally determine the course of students' future careers.

As such, English has become a key element for many Japanese students because English language proficiency is one of the qualifications that will allow them to access not only prestigious universities but also high status Japanese companies. As social and economic globalization has been stressed in the contemporary era, a growing number of Japanese

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companies (including those which do not make practical use of English at work) require student applicants and employees to demonstrate English abilities, often in the form of standardized test scores. Additionally, companies may prefer student applicants who have study abroad experiences, and thus have an image of being internationalized. Some companies prefer to hire Japanese students who have high English language proficiency. Hence, study abroad in English-speaking countries is considered highly valuable in Japanese education and society.

Despite these social and educational demands, a divergent phenomenon has been occurring, especially over the last decade. As exhibited by the demographics of Figure 2.1, the number of Japanese study abroad students in the United States is declining. This phenomenon has also occurred among students who studied in other countries. According to the JASSO (2012), the number of Japanese study abroad students decreased by 45% between the academic years of 2005 and 2010. There are several factors involved in this decline, including Japan's economic recession and students' demotivation toward English learning (Tsumura, 2010, 2011). In regard to the former factor, the Japanese economy has diminished since the second half of 1990s. Without a significant recovery, the employment rate for undergraduate students dropped by 50-60% between 2000 and 2005 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2012). This severe economic depression has prevented students from obtaining opportunities to study abroad. Simultaneously, the number of Japanese students who can obtain full paid scholarships or waivers from Japanese governments, organizations, or universities has become even more limited than before this economic depression (McNeill, 2011).

Regarding another factor for the decrease in the number of Japanese students who study abroad, it is noteworthy to consider Tsumura's (2010) research on factors of Japanese students' demotivation for English learning. He conducted surveys among 506 Japanese students at six

universities in Japan, and the findings of his research revealed that 68.6% of the students disliked learning English, were resistant to learn the language, or refused to learn it (pp. 69-70). According to Tsumura (2010), these students experienced difficulties with comprehension and grammar in their classes. They also felt overwhelmed with a huge amount of vocabulary that they were supposed to memorize in order to pass exams. In other words, some students struggled to find relevant or specific purposes for their English learning. Furthermore, due to the economic recession, Japanese companies have recently reduced the numbers of employees who obtain or sustain permanent positions. A growing number of students are offered contract positions which do not have enough social security and stability. In this sense, studying English does not determine their abilities to succeed in their education and future careers.

Overall, the factors of the declines in the number of Japanese study abroad students are not only related to Japan's economic recession but also students' demotivation toward English learning have prevented Japanese students from obtaining opportunities to study abroad. Furthermore, many Japanese students have struggled to find specific and personally rewarding purposes for English learning.

The preceding reviews of demographic information and social perspectives on study abroad in the United States and Japan revealed several similarities and differences in current study abroad tendencies between these countries (See Table 1).

Table 1

Similarities and Differences in Current Study Abroad Tendencies between the U.S. and Japan

Country	U.S.	Japan
Number of students	Increasing	Decreasing
Social value of foreign language learning	Attractive, decorative	English, in particular, socially demanded
Percentage of short-term study abroad students	About 94%	About 20% (2010) students but increasing
Percentage of students who seek foreign degrees	Mostly non-degree or exchange students	80% of students pursue foreign degrees
Age range	Late teens to 20s	Late teens to 30s
Student families' socio-economic situation	Middle or upper class	Middle or upper class

Of particular note is that scholarly interpretations of students' attitudes toward study abroad are limited to the effects of structures of education systems, policies, socio-culturally ingrained ideologies, or social attitudes toward language learning abroad. However, students' attitudes toward study abroad are not simply affected by external social aspects, as mentioned above, but also by the ways students interpret these aspects. For instance, in Japan, English language learning is emphasized in national policy, and language skills are socially demanded; nevertheless, students seem to struggle to perceive the relevance of learning a foreign language. In other words, it is enlightening to consider how individuals perceive study abroad and how they make their own decisions for continued language learning.

A common element of worldwide tendencies of study abroad, including those in the United States and Japan, is that there are several issues with structuralist views of language learning. This view has been deeply engrained in social and educational discourses, and, by extension, second or foreign language teaching practices. As such, learners' success is still determined

simply by the question of how extensively they are able to approximate native-centric standards. By and large, these models of language remain an unwritten and unspoken consensus among administrators and teachers. Many of them have unquestioningly accepted dominant ideological discourses without doubting the parochial perceptions of language teaching.

Another common element of study abroad tendencies is a lack of fundamental understanding of what language learning is among students, educational institutions, governmental agencies, and societies at large. It seems that scholarly understandings of study abroad heavily rely on the existing social discourse and the dominance of structuralist perspectives. Additionally, it is acknowledged that globalization has changed the conditions for study abroad in several ways and that the relationship between language learning and study abroad is highly complex.

Having examined social perceptions of study abroad, I now turn my attention to a review of recent research on study abroad and language learning. This literature review reveals what theorists and researchers in this domain have established and what aspects of second and foreign language acquisition in study abroad contexts are in need of further investigation. As in the previous sections, this review aims to demonstrate shortcomings of structuralist approaches and explore critical alternatives.

<div align="center">

Overview of Research on Language Learning Abroad

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History of Research on SLA in Study Abroad Contexts

Historically, research on study abroad has not been considered as an independent field, but rather as a subfield of language learning research that is conducted in the larger domains of SLA, applied linguistics, or language education (Kinginger, 2008, 2009). One of the primary areas of research on study abroad in these domains is the learning of English as a second

language (Regan, Haward, & Lemee, 2009) among students who pursue foreign degrees. Most of this research investigates how these students, who are often unaware of appropriate discourse rules and expectations, attempt to overcome their difficulties or struggles and succeed in their academic work (Grabe, 2002, p. 8). By comparison, there is limited research on the educational experiences of English learners such as exchange students who study abroad for a short period.

However, there still exists research on language learning other than English in study abroad contexts. Yet, there are primarily two problematic limitations to this research: (a) the range of languages studied; and (b) the ways in which the researchers conducted their studies and interpreted their findings. In terms of the former, this research has historically focused on the linguistic development of native speakers of English (e.g., Americans, Britons, Canadians, or Australians) in European languages such as French, German, Spanish, or Russian (Dewey, 2007). Regarding the latter, this research is dominated by structuralist discourse that focuses on the linguistic development of study abroad participants (Freed, 1995b; Kinginger, 2009, 2010; Pellegrino, 2005; Regan, Haward, & Lemee, 2005).

An early example of this structuralist discourse was initiated by Carroll's (1967) quantitative research, which investigated 2,782 college seniors majoring in French, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian. Carroll explored the relationship between the length of study abroad and the development of linguistic competences (i.e., listening, reading, speaking, and writing), as measured by multiple conventional tests. He found that the proficiency rating was strongly correlated with the length of study abroad. Subsequent to Carroll's study, a plethora of study abroad researchers in the 1980s and 1990s conducted statistical studies to investigate study abroad experiences and changes in linguistic competences (Willis, Doble, Sankarayya, & Smithers, 1997; Dyson, 1988; Moehle & Raupach, 1983; Opper, Teichler, & Carlson, 1990;

Meara, 1994). Interestingly, the results in all these studies indicated that linguistic improvement had a positive correlation with the length of time spent in the study abroad setting.

Additionally, numerous studies measured changes in learners' oral proficiency and fluency with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), including O'Conner (1988) and Magnan (1986) (French); Veguez (1984), Liskin-Gasparro (1984), and Foltz (1991) (Spanish); and Milleret (1990) (Portuguese). Again, all of these studies indicated an increase in study abroad participants' oral proficiency test scores.

Some studies utilized subjective evaluations instead of conventional tests to assess changes in language proficiency, including surveys on learners' self-reported improvement in speaking, listening, reading and writing (Meara, 1995); native speakers' evaluation of learners' speaking skills (Yager, 1998); and assessment of speaking skills by experienced English teachers (Lennon, 1995). These studies also reported that most participants demonstrated at least some growth in language skills.

While much of the research on language learning abroad defined L2 learners' study abroad success exclusively by quantitative measures of linguistic improvement, some researchers questioned the structuralist models of this body of research. For instance, Magnan (1986) investigated 40 American university students who had different levels of speaking proficiency and studied abroad in France for various lengths of time. She found that there was no relevant connection between the length of time spent abroad and the learners' proficiency scores. This study raised skepticism about the existing assumptions regarding advantages of time spent abroad for developing linguistic proficiency.

Other researchers also acknowledged various aspects of study abroad in addition to

linguistic proficiency. For instance, Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey (2004) compared the acquisition of oral proficiency in three different groups: (a) students who learned French in an intensive domestic immersion program; (b) those who studied abroad in France; and (c) those who learned in formal classrooms in their home county. One of the study's most notable findings was that the immersion group made significant gains in speech fluidity. Overall, the study concluded that a language learning context does not relate to linguistic improvement; rather, "it is the nature of the interactions, the quality of the experiences and the efforts made to use the L2" (p. 298). Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey noted that the immersion group reported using and practicing French outside of class more frequently than the study abroad group, suggesting that finding opportunities for personally meaningful conversations in the target language had a greater effect than widespread exposure to it.

Similarly, Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsburgs (1995) explored how individual characteristics (i.e., age, gender, citizenship, and country of birth) and learning variables (levels of formal education) were correlated with linguistic gain. They found that there were no straightforward answers, and even a "corpus of empirically well-grounded phenomena on adult language acquisition" can lead to results that are "sometimes puzzling and subject to multiple interpretations" (p. 61); for this reason, they called for more research that investigates ongoing phenomena from ethnographic perspectives in order to explore "what actually happens…in the learning process" (p. 62), or, in other words, the unique learning processes that individuals undergo through study abroad experiences.

Furthermore, Freed, So, and Lazor (2003) compared oral and written fluency in French between learners who studied abroad and those who remained at home. The authors found no significant difference in writing fluency between the two groups. These unexpected and

provocative findings challenged the overgeneralized assumption that learning language abroad has a positive effect on linguistic improvement.

In light of the complexities of language learning in study abroad contexts, much of the recent research on study abroad has explored the relationship between linguistic outcomes and various sociolinguistic and psychological factors. Some research studies utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods in different contexts. One of the central and most intriguing questions raised in this body of research was "if there really is no relationship between general academic prowess and language learning abroad, what capabilities are needed to further students' success?" (Kinginger, 2009, p. 48) For instance, Allen & Harron (2003) investigated the relationship between oral and listening skills and affective motivation and language anxiety; Isabelli-Garcia (2006) explored how oral proficiency development linked to motivation, attitude and behavior toward the establishment of social networks; and Freed, Seglowitz and Dewey (2004) compared the linguistic competences and cognitive lexical processes of learners in different contexts (i.e., at home and study abroad). Other studies investigated linguistic features such as grammatical indicators of politeness and sociolinguistic or pragmatic competences (Barron, 2006; Cook, 2006; Cohen & Shively, 2007). Matthew (2000) explored how gender and language-level issues are related to the development of listening and speaking skills; and Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey (2004) studied language use outside the classroom and the development of oral fluency.

Although these recent studies scrutinized various linguistic and effective factors by utilizing multiple scales, there are two main problems with these studies. First, they are limited to European languages. Second, these studies have the presumption that a successful study abroad equates to achieving high scores on proficiency tests and/or becoming more native-like in one's

speech. Even though some SLA researchers (VanPatten, 1985; Kramsch, 1987) made a critical point that study abroad research tends to demonstrate a strong bias towards structuralist models of understanding language learning, this tendency seems hard to change. This tendency is demonstrated in research on students who study abroad in Japan and Japanese students who study abroad in the United States.

Research on Learning Japanese Abroad

As discussed above, the majority of the research on study abroad has historically focused on European language learning among those who are from English speaking countries. Hence, there has been limited research in regard to Asian language learning, and the number of studies that have investigated Japanese language learning is even more limited (Dewey, 2007, p.255). Additionally, there are methodological limitations to the research on study abroad in Japanese contexts. Similar to the research on study abroad in European language contexts, this research has largely measured linguistic development with structuralist scales. Table 2 presents a sampling of research on Japanese language learning during study abroad.

Table 2

Research on Japanese Language Learning During Study Abroad

Author (year)	Participants	Length of study abroad	Concepts	Research methodology
Marriott (1993)	11	1 year	Sociolinguistic competence	Discourse analysis
Hashimoto (1993)	1	1 year	Sociolinguistic competence	Discourse analysis
Huebner (1995)	10 study abroad and 12 immersion	9 weeks	Improvement of listening and reading comprehension and speaking skills	Quantitative methods: Japanese language proficiency tests (JLPT), the ACTFL OPI, and qualitative methods: observations, interview, and diary entries
Dewey (2004)	10 study abroad and 12 immersion	9 weeks	Improvement of reading comprehension	Quantitative methods: one-on-one testing and internet-based testing, and qualitative methods: observations, interview, and diaries
Iwasaki (2005, 2007)	5	1 year	Linguistic improvement and students' perceptions of study abroad	Quantitative methods: JLPT and the ACTFL OPI, and qualitative methods: questionnaires and interviews

As Table 2 presents, Huebner (1995) and Dewey (2002, 2004) explored the improvement of

listening comprehension, reading comprehension, or speaking skills in different language

learning settings, such as study abroad contexts and domestic intensive language programs[2] in

the United States. Iwasaki (2005, 2007) investigated linguistic improvement and students'

perceptions of study abroad. Both Huebner and Iwasaki found that study abroad experiences had

advantages for the improvement of language proficiency. However, in Huebner's study, the

[2] Dewey (2004) used the term "immersion" to describe intensive language programs. He defined immersion as "settings where students study 'at home,' in programs that require many more hours per day of classroom instruction than are typical with normal academic-year formal classroom settings" (p. 304).

study abroad group performed only slightly better than the domestic immersion group in listening comprehension and speaking skills. Furthermore, Dewey (2002, 2004), who compared these groups in regard to reading comprehension, found that immersion students performed better than study abroad students, particularly in terms of the speed of understanding text.

Although the research on Japanese contexts was conducted in a similar way to that on European language contexts, there was a slight difference between the two domains. Sociolinguistic aspects were introduced in some research on Japanese contexts earlier than in the research on European contexts. For instance, Marriott (1993) analyzed interviews with students in order to investigate their abilities to use polite and honorific forms in situationally appropriate ways. Marriott found that these students failed to match native speaker's understanding of appropriate use of these forms. In addition, Hashimoto (1993) investigated an Australian student's sociolinguistic competence in a homestay setting by analyzing five different conversations between the student and homestay family members. This study also focused on how the student became aware of appropriate linguistic forms in different situations. Iwasaki (2008) called for more attention to the understanding of language learning from social and psychological perspectives and conducted a partial reanalysis of the data from her studies in 2005 and 2007 by using these viewpoints. However, she still concentrated on the notion of grammatical correctness when evaluating students' use of polite or honorific forms. Therefore, language learning in these sociolinguistic studies was judged based on monolingual and native-centered norms[3]. If these norms or criteria are imposed on students, successful language

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[3] One exception is Siegal (1995), who examined how a female L2 Japanese learner's subjectivity played a role in the acquisition of sociolinguistic competency. By analyzing the learner's conversations with a professor, Siegal demonstrated the interaction of learner identity, social position, and the process of SLA. Siegal described how psychological factors affected the learner's understanding of language use in the new environment.

achievement is judged solely in terms of a correct or incorrect dichotomy based on the ability to reproduce native-like speech.

Using native-centric tests or assessments as the sole determinant of successful or unsuccessful study abroad is problematic because there are many meaningful forms of language learning that cannot be measured by their correct or incorrect dichotomies. Ogulnick's (1998) autobiographical study indicated language learning is more than the acquisition of a new linguistic system. After studying abroad for several years in Japan, she realized that "subtle forms of communication—intonation, hesitations, silence, facial expressions, ambiguous stock expressions—[are] salient" (p. 113). One of her difficulties was to use "yes" or "no" to answer questions appropriately in Japanese. Ogulnick stated that a negative answer is often viewed as inappropriate because Japanese socio-cultural norms require ambiguous speaking, particularly among younger people or females, who are expected to behave submissively. This example demonstrates a significant form of contextual and socio-cultural language learning—that is, how the speaker is expected to act and speak depending upon where he/she is and with whom he/she is talking—that would be difficult to evaluate through conventional tests or assessments.

Furthermore, Brown (1980), who conceived of the second language learning process as a social phenomenon, argued that "every bone and fiber of your being is affected in some way as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language and into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting" (p. 1). Hanauer (2012) built upon this perspective by stating, "learning language involves an interaction with everything that makes up the experience and understanding of the person who is learning the language including issues of identity and self perception" (p. 108). From these remarks, there are grounds for skepticism about the validity of judging successful language achievement solely in terms of a correct or

incorrect dichotomy based on the ability to reproduce native-like speech.

Research Related to Japanese students in English-speaking Countries

As mentioned earlier, the primary domain of research on SLA in study abroad contexts is the learning of English as a second or foreign language, particularly among students who pursue foreign degrees or qualifications. There is an extremely limited amount of research on Japanese exchange and non-degree students who study abroad for a short period and who do not pursue foreign degrees. But, this is not to say that there has been complete absence of this research beforehand. The following Table 3 presents a sampling of these studies.

Table 3

Research on English Language Learning by Japanese Students During Study Abroad

Author (year)	Participants	Length of study abroad	Concepts	Research methodology
Space-Brown (1993)	7	1 year	Sociolinguistic competence and linguistic competence	Quantitative method: host families' five-scale holistic assessments of linguistic ability and communication styles, and qualitative method: interviews with host families
Matsumura (2001)	97 study abroad and 102 in Japan	8 months	Improvement of pragmatic competence by focusing on changing understandings of social status in a new culture	Quantitative method: multiple-choice questionnaires (every 3 months)
Sasaki (2007)	7 study abroad and 6 in Japan	4-8 months	Effects of study abroad experiences on writing proficiency and attitudes toward writing	Quantitative method: holistic assessments of short essays and qualitative methods: video recording and interviews about writing strategies and degrees of confidence
Wood (2007)	4	6 months	Improvement of speaking fluency	Quantitative method: assessments of audio-recorded speech regarding formulaic sequences, strings, and frames of words with specialized functions

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Similar to the research on study abroad in Japanese contexts, sociolinguistic aspects were introduced in this research domain earlier than the research on European contexts. For example, Space-Brown (1993) explored factors of Japanese high school students' communication problems with Australian host families. The host families assessed students' linguistic abilities and communication styles (e.g., how the student initiated or developed conversations) with a five-scale holistic measurement. Space-Brown found that the students' problems in communicating with Australians stemmed from the inability to adjust to a new culture and sociolinguistic norms as well as linguistic inadequacy. Furthermore, Matsumura (2001) investigated pragmatic competence, specifically, how participants' perceptions of their social status changed during study abroad. A quantitative analysis of participants' survey answers found that Japanese undergraduate students in Canada eventually understood how the language is appropriately used depending upon with whom they talked in a new culture. A common feature of these studies is that these competences were evaluated based on native-centered norms.

Another characteristic of this research domain is that outcomes-oriented studies are predominant. For instance, Sasaki (2004, 2007) investigated the effects of study abroad experiences on students' writing fluency and attitudes toward writing (e.g., strategies, confidence, and motivation) by comparing Japanese undergraduate students who studied abroad in Canada or the United States to those who remained in Japan. Students' argumentative essays were assessed with five criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Sasaki concluded that both of the groups' writing skills improved; however, study abroad students wrote longer, more rapidly and with more confidence than the students who remained in Japan. Similarly, Wood (2007) quantitatively measured four Japanese undergraduate students' improvement of speaking fluency during study abroad in Canada and found that all students'

levels of fluency increased. Again, these outcome-oriented studies used native-centered norms to evaluate students' language learning and did not sufficiently depict how individuals' learning processes are influenced by personal and psychological factors.

Overall, throughout the review of research on Japanese learners of English in study abroad contexts, three main limitations were identified. The first limitation is that the research in this domain is very scarce. The second limitation is that language learning was judged based on monolingual and native-centered norms. Therefore, most studies pursued the advantages of study abroad for linguistic improvements. The third common limitation is that these studies primarily utilized quantitative measuring scales for their evaluations. In response to this structuralist-centered understanding of language learning, Sasaki (2007) suggested more fully applying poststructuralist theories, which help to understand individuals' processes of SLA, to future research rather than simply investigating language accuracy. In this regard, he specifically recommended applying Norton's (2000) notion of identity—"[learners'] sense of who they are and how they related to the social world" (p. 11)—to SLA research in study abroad contexts.

Summing up the history of research on language learning in study abroad contexts, it is acknowledged that the current state of research on language learning abroad is marginalized within the research field of SLA. In particular, there has been a limited amount of research on exchange and non-credit students who stay abroad for a short period of time and who do not pursue foreign degrees or certificate. Hence, there is a predominant focus on English learning among degree students within research on SLA in study abroad contexts. Furthermore, research on Japanese language learning among American college students and English learning among Japanese college students is also extremely limited.

Additionally, research on language learning abroad has not been expansive enough to adapt varied methodological approaches. Structuralist models of research remain dominant. For instance, the early research on study abroad tended to concentrate on the impact of study abroad experiences on general linguistic improvement in order to explicate effects of the learning environments and/or the length of time spent abroad by using test scores as the sole criterion for evaluation (Freed, 1995a). Within and alongside such biased tendencies, several researchers contested the perceptions of language learning in the early research on study abroad by investigating the relationships between specific domains of linguistic ability (e.g., writing fluency, speaking skills, and reading comprehension) and several different aspects, such as various sociolinguistic factors (e.g., age, gender, and citizenship); psychological factors (e.g.,anxiety, motivation, and attitudes); and other factors (e.g., language-level issues). Some of these researchers used mixed methods in order to describe individual, social and psychological factors, but they often did not conduct very thorough qualitative analyses. Even though there were numerous structuralists, who noticed that the complexities of language learning cannot be illuminated by structuralist theories and called for more attention to individuals' understandings of their language learning experiences (Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; Dewey, 2007; Freed, 1995a; Freed, So, & Lazar, 2003; Kinginger, 2008, 2009, 2010), there are still a limited number of poststructuralist studies.

Prior to moving on to the next discussions about the rationales for poststructuralist research on language learning abroad, it is important to raise issues of the influence of structuralism on current foreign and second language teaching approaches. This consideration suggests how the findings of the present study can be applied to classroom-based language

teaching and the development of study abroad programs in particular contexts, which are an extension goal of the present study.

In regard to the influences of structuralism on teaching approaches, Hanauer (2012) made the point that current language teaching tends to be directed by "the imposition of abstracted standards, the requirement for particular teaching methods, and evaluation tied to external standardized tests" (p. 105). Kramsch (2009) made a similar point by stating, "students are taught a standardized linguistic system with which they are expected to approximate a monolingual native speaker and reader" (p. 3). Furthermore, Kramsch (2009) observed that current methods of language teaching are focused on categorizing students rather than exploring their unique learning experiences:

> While teachers are busy teaching [students] to communicate accurately, fluently, and appropriately, students are inventing for themselves other ways of being in their bodies and their imaginations. Success in language learning is an artifact of schooling, of the need by institutions to demarcate those who know from those who don't… (p. 4)

Furthermore, Kramsch (2009) claimed, as cited earlier, "the language-learning experience itself is neither successful nor unsuccessful. It can be lived more or less meaningfully and can be more or less transformative, no matter what level of proficiency has been attained" (p. 4). Hanauer (2012) further reinforced Kramsch's point by describing the current tenets of second and foreign language teaching as de-humanizing in that they focus on linguistic structure and mechanisms and do not fully consider individuals' psychological processes of language learning. In other words, they neglect to consider learners' living, thinking, experiencing, and feeling as the center of understanding the language learning process. Similarly, Kramsch (2009) argued that language learning is associated with human abilities to feel in the body, heart, and mind. In her view, these

abilities relate to recognizing one's sense of self with emotions, feelings, memories, and desires. Kramsch (2009) used the term *subjectivity* to describe how sense of self plays a vital role in the construction of identities. Hanauer advocated Kramsch's view of language learning by emphasizing that considering learners' subjectivities is not merely a methodological choice but a moral necessity because to ignore subjectivities is to deny learners' individuality as humans.

Overall, Hanauer and Kramsch's critiques of the current tenets of second and foreign language teaching evoke the fundamental question of what language learning is. This consideration suggests that considering learners' subjectivities is necessary in order for researchers to conduct ethical examinations of human behavior. The notion of subjectivity can capture the values, perspectives, and struggles that influence individuals' language learning and examine human behavior in ethical manners. This approach can help to consider the concept of "successfulness" in language learning or study abroad in terms of learners' psychologically subjective processes. Similarly, there is a need for further efforts to raise teachers and administrators' awareness of how dominant ideological discourses that are derived from structuralism implicitly convey limited definitions of success to their students. Furthermore, they should contemplate how these privileged academic discourses exert an influence on students' attitudes toward and goals for language learning. Thus, careful consideration should be given to teaching practices, and theorists should moreover investigate how poststructuralist theories of language can be used to investigate individuals' psychological processes.

Taking problems of structuralism in research on language learning abroad and their negative influences on current foreign and second language teaching into account, it has become clear that more poststructuralist research is needed. In contrast to structuralism, poststructuralist models of research conceive of SLA as an ongoing social phenomenon and seek to examine

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social, contextual, and interactional dimensions of SLA. One of the noteworthy focuses in these models of research is how L2 learners use contextually appropriate language while communicating within particular discourses and with particular interlocutors (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Mendoza-Denton, 2001; Mori, 2007). Some poststructuralists use theories of identity and language learning as their research approaches (Abram & Hogg, 1998; Hogg & Tunner, 1987; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Tajfel, 1981). These researchers explore how their sense of self varies when they use language in a variety of ways (Block, 2003, 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Swain & Deters, 2007).

Theories of identity and language learning are suited to the present study because the purpose of the present study is to explore how L2 learners' diverse perceptions relate to their construction of identities and how their concepts of self change over time. To this purpose, I focus on how individuals' subjective perceptions of study abroad experiences affect their processes of second language acquisition in the course of social interactions in host communities. More specifically, I explore their ways of understanding their experiences and emotions; their ways of understanding how they are perceived by others in their host communities; and their perceptions of how they will be in the future. This approach can help to understand second language learning from sociological, psychological and poststructuralist perspectives.

Current Issues in Research on Identity and Language Learning Abroad

Definitions of the Concept of Identity

One of the issues in respect to identity in language learning study is simply understanding the concept because it is too intricate and multifarious to be defined with a single, simple description. Due to the highly complex nature of the concept, it has not yet been fully defined (Hanauer, 2010). However, as previously discussed, a great number of identity studies in SLA

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have tended to stress the omnipotence of social structure. For instance, Bakhtin (1986) stated that identity is a process of "becoming" as people gain control over their projection of self by developing an awareness of social discourse conventions. Bringing a different perspective to the concept of identity, Bourdieu (1977) made the influential claim that, in addition to linguistic features, identity involves nonverbal behavior such as dress and gestures and the socially constructed authority to speak. Similarly, Block (2007a) described the theory of identity by stating that people "[adopt] different subject positions … on a moment-to-moment and day-to-day basis" depending on communicative contexts (p. 865). These arguments commonly assert that social discourse is the most significant factor that affects the construction of identity.

However, several researchers made a critical observation that these claims demonstrate a form of determinism (Block 2003, 2007a; Hanauer, 2010; Norton & McKay, 2011). For example, Hanauer (2010) argued "the construction of identity within social discourse limits individual agency to environmental influences determined through the frames of social discourse" (p. 36). Identity formation cannot be understood solely in terms of structuring social discourse; rather, it exists in the option of negotiating, countering, and modifying social discursive positions in the actual performance of identity" (p. 56), that is, individual agency. Furthermore, Block (2007a) synthesized Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens's (1991) views of identity as follows: "Individuals do not carve out an identity from the inside out or from the outside in, as it were; rather, their environments impose constraints whilst they act on those environments, continuously altering and recreating them" (p. 866). Similarly, other proponents such as Lacan (1977) and Bendle (2002) contended that researchers should capture the interplay of individual and social factors by integrating psychoanalytical aspects into their concepts of identity.

Another critique is that identity theorists tend to interpret power issues in terms of fixed

categories such as race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, social class, sexual orientation and so forth. In this regard, Benwell and Stoke (2006) and Mendoza-Denton (2001) contended that these categorical analyses fail to consider that identity is fluid, multidimensional, fragmentary, contingent and, crucially, constructed in discourse rather than a stable fixed entity. Block's (2007b) critique was that scholars have neglected individuals' agency and uniqueness because they merely focus on social distinctions and "generally [have] nothing to say about inner self or the psyche of individuals" (p. 42). Kramsch (2009) also stressed that individual personality traits and the idiosyncrasies of particular contexts should not be disregarded. This more nuanced concept of identity can reveal how individuals' decisions to speak or remain silent are calculated risks based on subjective perceptions and understandings of positionality rather than facets of fixed identity categories (Pellegrino, 2005). Of the definitions of identity surveyed throughout this literature review, that offered by Hanauer (2010)—"identity is not personal but rather representation and present within discourse itself… the actual performance of identity in response to different historical and social contingencies constructs multiple and conflicting aspects of self" (pp. 56-57)—is the most pertinent. Through this definition, the concept of identity can be understood as a fluid combination of individuals' interpretations of experiences across time and space.

Another critical review of literature on identity and language learning issues found a limited amount of research that sufficiently accounts for the psychological complexities and agentive components of individual human experience. However, this is not to say that such considerations were completely absent. Some studies demonstrated a cogent grasp of concepts such as imagination and learner's perceived senses of belonging. By building upon Hanauer's aforementioned notion of identity, the aim of the following discussions is to specify a concrete

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definition that encapsulates prior discussions of this crucial concept.

Issues of Research on Imagination

According to Wenger (1998), imagination is an essential element to understand the process of second language acquisition both from sociological and psychological perspectives. This is because imagination:

> ...can make a big difference for our experiences of identity and the potential for learning inherent in our activities. This brings to mind the story about the two stonecutters who are asked what they are doing. One responds: 'I am cutting this stone in a perfectly square shape.' The other responds: 'I am building a cathedral.'… At the level of engagement, they may well be doing exactly the same thing. But it does suggest that their experiences of what they are doing and their sense of self in doing it are rather different. This difference is a function of imagination. As a result, they may be learning very different things from the same activities. (p. 176)

Influenced by the theory, several identity researchers have applied this concept in various ways. Pellegrino (2005) utilized a similar concept of imagination by describing an "ideal" self and investigating a series of internal struggles between an individual's imaginary "ideal" self and "real" self. In her view, when using a target language, individuals perform and work to create images of the self that they ideally wish others to perceive them to be. She argued that L2 speakers negotiate different perceptions of themselves between ideal self and real self in order to win a sense of acceptance, belonging, or legitimacy from the target language community. This approach, however, is based upon the problematic assumptions that imaginary "ideal" self can be a different formulation from "real" self through which L2 learners physically experience language learning. There is cause for skepticism about this distinction because poststructuralism

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emphasizes inherently subjective nature of experience, as stated by Richardson and St. Pierre (2008), language is the intricately intertwined with "one's sense of self—one's subjectivity" (p. 476). Hence, L2 students' images of themselves, regardless of whether their experiences are physical, exist in terms of individuals' reflections on emotions (i.e., How do they feel about themselves in particular contexts?). In this sense, L2 learners' perceptions of themselves are innately subjective and cannot be described with the concept of objectively "real" perspectives. Although the concepts guiding Pellegrino's study are in need of further refinement, this study still demonstrated that imagination is a significant element in the construction of identity.

Other identity scholars have explored the aspects of imagination by drawing on Anderson's (1983) notion of imagined communities (Blackledge, 2004; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Kanno, 2003, 2008; Kinginger, 2004; Murphy, Jin, & Li-Chi, 2005; Norton, 2001; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007); again, much of this research operates on the premise that imagined experiences can be distinguished from actual experiences. Additionally, the concept of imagined communities in these studies refers to a group to which learners believe they currently do or do not belong or to which they do or do not desire to belong. Therefore, it can be considered as subcategory or a limited form of imagination. Norton (2001) defined the concept of imagined communities as senses of affiliation that transcend distances of time and space through which one creates images of the world and sees connections. In other words, individuals perceive present certainties or desired outcomes related to their senses of group belonging through imagination. In this sense, the concept of imagined communities bears similarities to discourse in that both address "how particular symbolic links, associations, and meanings are discursively created" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 17). Overall, common issues with the notion of

imagined communities as it is utilized in these studies are an emphasis on influences of social

structured power and a relative absence of considerations of individual agency.

Issues in Investigations Regarding Learners' Senses of Belonging

There is another paradigm that intended to understand an ongoing phenomena of

SLA—senses of belongings among L2 learners. Several researchers argued that one's sense of

belonging affects engagement in or motivation toward participation in language learning (Norton,

2001; Ushieda & Dornyei, 2009). The theory about the relationship between identity and a sense

of affiliation is often discussed by utilizing Wenger's (1998) notion of "modes of belonging." In

his view, "modes of belonging" are interrelated with L2 learners' emotions and perceptions of

their experiences. These individuals' subjectivities are comprised of their interpretations of their

experiences in social practices and, more specifically, the degrees to which they perceive

themselves as full-fledged members of communities to which they wish to belong. Typically,

newcomers undergo a period of apprenticeship or inauguration during which they gradually

adopt a community's valued practices and behaviors, a process that Wegner (1998) described as

legitimate peripheral participation (p. 167). For language learners abroad, *legitimate peripheral*

participation would involve not only developing second language proficiency but also gaining

awareness of the implicit social rules and customs that guide principles of interaction. This

concept of *peripherality* refers to flawed or incomplete approximations of community members'

customs. These behaviors fall in a gray area between participation and non-participation and

suggest that these concepts cannot be considered as totally distinct. Hence, subjectivity is

constructed by individuals' interpretations of their modes of belonging—that is, the extent to

which their feelings of full participation, marginality or peripherality affect their perceptions of

themselves as legitimate or illegitimate community members. In this sense, L2 learners'

subjectivity is a site of struggle over legitimacy in a particular community. Additionally, modes of belonging change from moment to moment and are ongoing phenomena depending upon different times and contexts.

This notion of Wenger's depicted the importance of exploring L2 learners' modes of belonging; however, it is also important to keep in mind that Wenger's theory might not be applicable to all L2 study abroad students. They might not define themselves merely within the dichotomy between winning and losing a sense of belonging, acceptance or legitimacy. In other words, L2 learners' senses of belonging might vary depending upon their personal agendas and how they want to achieve their own goals (Hanauer, 2011, p. 210). In this sense, Hanauer (2011) made the point all L2 learners might not have community belonging as a goal.

According to Hanauer (2011), the sense of belonging and legitimacy can be fluid and flexible. Additionally, the level of attachment and belonging might vary depending upon individuals. In his view, some might have their own autonomous identity that rises above the host communities or their national contexts—*non-place identity.* The non-place utilizes a functional identity that is detached from any historical identity such as national identity. In other words, "personal identity, attachment and belonging [are considered] as private matters," (Hanauer, 2011, p. 216). As such, it is not always necessary for individuals to position themselves as belonging to communities; rather, they may construct non-place identities through their senses, feelings, or imagination and then continually re-create them through their characteristics, beliefs, values and senses of who they are (Hanauer, 2011, p. 204). In other words, language learners may not aspire to become fully legitimate community members in their host community, as Wenger's (1998) theory would hold, but instead selectively incorporate

certain viewpoints, customs, and practices from that community into their current persona to create a new identity transcending national allegiance.

Thus, the notion of non-place identity can widen understandings of how L2 learners define themselves while abroad. This understanding is important particularly in the contemporary era that involves people's frequent mobility across countries and extensive technological developments in communication. As mentioned earlier, the number of study abroad students has dramatically increased over the past decade. Along with such social change, people's sense of belonging might change. Oda's study (2008), which investigated how Japanese females' sense of self changed during their study abroad, can exemplify the concept of non-place identity. One of the participants, Kumi, who pursued a foreign degree in the United States, declared that her identity widely changed, even when she returned to Japan, she felt that she was no longer the same Japanese entity that she was during her earlier times in her home country:

> I don't really feel that I am a really Japanese; rather I feel that I am between an American and a Japanese. Now I am feeling like 'Where I am?' or 'Where do I belong to?' I don't belong to anywhere, something like that. I am always a traveler where I am between different cultures. I am feeling like I am always in the airplane. (Oda, 2008, p. 94)

In the course of her study abroad experience, Kumi manifested a different sense of being in a liminal space beyond fixed identity options such as a Japanese or an "other" in her host country.

Having discussed current issues in research on identity and language language, it has become clear that integrating Kramsch's (2009) notion of subjectivity with Hanauer's (2011) concept of non-place identity can bring important new dimensions to the overall concept of identity. However, the concept of subjectivity has not been yet adequately established. To this purpose, a critical review of the literature regarding conceptions of subjectivity is needed. In

doing so, the concepts of identity and subjectivity will be differentiated. Moreover, terse definitions will be provided. In addition to these definitions, another key term, view of self, will be explained in the end of this section.

Literature Review on the Concept of Subjectivity

As discussed earlier in this Chapter II, it has been acknowledged that words have multiple meanings. In addition to their conventional definitions, words carry connotations that have been comprised of social perceptions and images. They are permeated among the public, media, politics, education, or individuals' subjective understandings and perceptions, and interpretations towards concepts. The words "study aboard" contains multiple implications, such as enhancing language learning faster and more completely, or becoming elite or native-like speakers who have abilities to use target languages within standards of grammaticality and customs of appropriate use. In regard, Barthes (1957) contended that words also embed *myth*. These modes of power go beyond literal dictionary definitions and convey implicit messages. These messages are circulated in the language of everyday life and have become the underpinnings of concepts that people commonly believe. Bourdieu's (1982) notion of symbolic power can be seen as an extension of Barthes's notion of myth. However, Bourdieu placed more emphasis on ideologically ingrained dispositions as reflected in language. In his view, implicit references that are intricately entwined with ideology are embedded in language. Moreover, ideology encompasses invisible rules such as socio-cultural norms or ritual customs. These rules are determined by factors such as politics, culture, gender, race, socio-economics, nationality, or ceremonial ritual factors such as how to dress. Because these rules that govern how people should behave, dress, talk, or gesture are ingrained since early childhood, they take the form of a social consensus which grounds the notion of common sense (Bourdieu, 1982, p.106).

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Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power represented that these ideological entities have been socio-culturally structured and confer authority.

Vygotsky (1978) also theorized that language posses two functions: *reference* and *meaning*. Reference refers to a fixed lexical label, that is, a literal dictionary definition. Meaning is a non-linguistic sign, which is seemingly similar to Barthes's notion of myth and Bourdieu's symbolic power. However, there is a concern to be taken into account: their theories tend to stress merely the omnipotence of social structure, which can position individuals as socioculturally passive entities. The key difference from the notions of Barthes and Bourdieu is that Vygotsky stressed how language is subjectively read or interpreted by individuals in response to larger social perceptions. In other words, Vygotsky's (1982) notion of meaning considers language to be psychological process inseparable from the changes in emotion and perception that individual experience in the course of their socialization. Hence, he conceived of individuals as agentive. In this sense, Vygotsky's notion of meaning denotes metaphors or images that are created and perceived by human's senses through their social interaction experiences (Kramsh, 2000).

Furthermore, Kramsch (2009) has developed Vygotsky's notion of language and established a theory of *subjectivity* by calling more attention to individuals' "perceptions and emotions, awareness of one's body, feelings of loss or enhanced power, together with imagined identities, projected selves, idealizations, or stereotypes of the other" (p. 5). Because this notion can draw upon more insightful and psychological dimensions without neglecting socially structured power influences on learners' SLA, it has become clear that it should be applied to achieve the current research goal.

Kramsch's (2009) notion of subjectivity can be differentiated from the traditional concept of identity. While the latter predominantly focuses on politically or socially structured power issues, Kramsch's notion of subjectivity stressed how individuals creatively use and interpret language in response to larger social perceptions (Kinginger, personal communication). This notion drew on Vygotsky's (1978) view that language is a psychological process related to changes in emotion or perception that individuals experience in the course of their own socialization.

Other scholars understand identity as a psychological process related to individuals' emotions or perceptions as well. For instance, Weedon (1997) noted that identity is formed and reformed by "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation in the world" (p. 32). Furthermore, Block (2007b) established the connection between the traditional concept of identity and the notion of subjectivity as follows:

> Identity is neither contained solely inside the individual nor does it depend exclusively on how others define the individual. Rather, one needs to consider both self-generated subject positionings as well as subject positionings that are imposed on individuals by others. (p. 27)

This remark clarifies how L2 learners' process of identity construction involves two interconnected concepts: (a) self-generated subject positioning—their ways of understanding their own experiences and emotions; and (b) imposed subject positioning—their ways of understanding how they are perceived by others. In other words, their ways of understanding their selfhood are comprised of these concepts. In this sense, investigating how they view themselves and their positionality over time while abroad in both interpersonal and intrapersonal

senses can lead to more insightful understandings of psychological dimensions of SLA in study abroad contexts.

Concluding Definitions of Key Terms

In order to synthesize the critical review conducted throughout this chapter, working definitions of three fundamental terms—*identity*, *view of self* and *subjectivity*—are provided. The aims are to establish the core meanings that will be utilized throughout subsequent chapters and to clarify similarities and differences among them.

Identity. As noted above, providing a terse definition for a concept as complex and controversial as *identity* is a daunting task. Nonetheless, identity can be defined as an ongoing, fluid, fragile, and partially contradictory *performance* of an individual self that is shaped by internal perceptions and external stimuli. As such, the present study regards identity as something that is negotiated and reinvented from moment to moment rather than a fixed, stable, or essential entity. As with the other two key terms discussed in this section, identity is continually fashioned in the interplay of social discourses and individual agency (Block 2007a; Hanauer, 2010; Kramsch, 2009). Social aspects encompass habits of speech, demeanor, gesture, dress, and so on, which are inscribed as cultural, national, spiritual, or familial values and may vary according to other variables such as socioeconomic class (Bourdieu, 1991). Individual aspects consist of a given person's agentive, idiosyncratic, and personality-driven desires to embrace, reject, or modify the discourses she or he encounters in the social world. Hence, a tenet of the present study is that identity cannot be definitively described, but meaningful understandings of identity can be inferred from individuals' descriptions of past experiences and prompted reflections on them.

View of self. In the present text, *view of self* is used interchangeably with *self-positioning*. Whereas identity refers to a continual phenomenon, view of self denotes a situated emotional understanding as it exists at a discrete point in time; it illuminates individuals' perceptions of who they are in the present moment and how this perceived state compares with who they were in the past and what they seek to become in the future. View of self also involves both personal and social components as encountered and enacted in immediate experience. More specifically, it arises as individuals attempt to put forth particular representations of themselves through words, gestures, and actions (or lack thereof) during interactions with others. However, others do not always respond favorably to these efforts, leading individuals to realize that those around them sometimes perceive and position them in ways contrary to their wishes. Thus, positive or negative views of the self often have a profound influence on future behaviors and attitudes, including persistence, attrition, or the search for alternative paths to fulfillment.

Subjectivity. Subjectivity is similar to the two terms defined above in that it also influences negotiations between structuring social discourses and individuals' agentive will. However, it differs from them in that it is primarily concerned with individuals' creative use of language to construct their understandings of themselves and their experiences. In this way, subjectivity is in keeping with the poststructualist principle that language does not signify an objective external reality but rather is constitutive of each individual's reality.

As previously explained, the present study utilizes Kramsch's (2009) particular definition of subjectivity as its theoretical framework. Building upon the work of Vygotsky (1978), Kramsch holds that humans' subjectivity is rooted in their natural capacity for metaphor and imagination, which they use to generate and interpret language in response to larger social perceptions. Through this process, they personalize socially constructed meanings by infusing

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them with their own emotions, embodied desires, perceived positions within power hierarchies, and desired affiliations. For example, as an individual references a given notion such as study abroad in her utterances, she will almost certainly invoke both literal definitions of the notion and implicit social assumptions surrounding it (e.g., study abroad enables individuals to become more fashionable and elite). Yet, at the same time, she will appropriate social discourses by imbuing them with highly personalized meanings (e.g., by positing that study abroad is a means of escaping a sense of alienation felt in one's own culture).

Closing Remarks

The critical review in this section suggests that research on identity and language learning needs more investigations that incorporate not only sociological but also psychological perspectives. Additionally, throughout the discussions about the difficulty of defining the concept of identity, an issue was raised: Current identity research has relatively disregarded understandings of individuals' identities as agentive and creative, rather than socially and culturally conditioned. By establishing rationales for eliciting more interpersonal views of self, as well as intrapersonal perceptions, this chapter argued for the significance of investigating L2 learners' subjective perceptions of study abroad experiences in order to capture the relationship between SLA and identity in study abroad contexts.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

One purpose of the present study is to yield a portrait of L2 learners' subjective and emotional perceptions of their study abroad experiences and examine how these understandings influence their conceptions of selfhood and definitions of language learning over time. Another purpose is to investigate the content types and textual features that were elicited when participants described noteworthy experiences in three different genres. As such, three data collection instruments were utilized to elicit subjects' perceptions; narrative interviews, narrative writing, and poetry writing. The present study focuses on two groups: Japanese exchange students who studied English in the United States and American college students who studied Japanese in Japan. The following research questions guide the present inquiry:

3. How do students' subjective understandings of language learning and study abroad experiences involve views of the self?

4. In collecting data on personal experience in different genres (narrative interview, narrative essay writing, and poetry writing), what are the values and qualities of each of the data elicitation methods used?

The rationale for the second question is that using the three different genres as data collection tools might elicit different findings. These differences may lead to different interpretations of the phenomena. Therefore, it is important to discuss the different qualities of data obtained through these various narrative methods in order to achieve reliable interpretations of findings.

This chapter begins with the theoretical framework and discusses the types of information I needed to collect from participants. I then move on to the rationales for the use of narratives

(i.e., narrative interview and narrative writing) and poetry writing as research methods. I also address the characteristics of each method in order to discuss what kinds of data it tends to elicit. This discussion not only elucidates differences among these methods but also establishes the justifications for their triangulation as data collection tools. Subsequently, I raise considerations about potential influences of my researcher positionality on the processes of data collection because doing so will suggest strategies for reducing these constraining influences. Concerning the research design, I explain the characteristics of the focal participants and the stages of the research process, including data collection procedures and data analysis methods. This chapter concludes with ethical considerations and actions taken to preclude the possibility of negative consequences for the participants of this study.

Theoretical Framework

In the previous chapter, I established that the notion of subjectivity (Kramsch, 2009) is integral to constructions of identities in the processes of second language learning. With the foregoing remarks in mind, the present study primarily focuses on and analyzes four aspects: L2 learners' ways of understanding of the self, study abroad, language learning, and future goals. To this purpose, during data collection, the research participants were asked to describe the following aspects: (a) their perceived positions in relation to others in their home and host environments; (b) their views on experiences with study abroad and language learning; and (c) their perceptions of themselves and their futures. The reason for raising these aspects as primary focuses is explained by Kelly's (1969) theory that people generally construe and understand events or experiences by rehearsing situations and creatively making predictions about the future. Additionally, she noted that this theory enables researchers to simultaneously understand "the ways individuals perceive their environment, the way they interpret what they perceive in terms

of their existing mental structure, and the way in which, as a consequence, they behave toward it" (as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 496). Applying Kelly's theory to this study's data collection protocol, I aim to reveal participants' perceptions of their identities and their relation to the social world during study abroad by utilizing two types of narratives (i.e., narrative interview and narrative writing) and poetry writing as research methods. The rationales for the use of these research methods are described below.

Rationales for the Research Methods and Their Potential Shortcomings

Why Use Narratives?

Narratives are often defined as life stories or autobiographical texts which are elicited and expressed in written genres such as diaries, journals and poems as well as oral genres such as interviews (Chase, 2008). In Bateson's (1994) view, narratives refer to "our experiences [that] are recorded and transformed in story form" (as cited in Clandenin and Connelly, 2000, p. 8). Furthermore, narrative is considered as a type of memory since stories about people's experiences are "no longer present but past" (Pinnegar, 2007). There are several different ways in which narratives can be utilized as methodological tools, and these tools have certain common features.

First, narratives are personal and social entities (Clandenin & Connelly, 2000; Cooley, 1964; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). According to Holstein and Gubrium (2000), when people tell or write stories about their own experiences, they form a "looking-glass self" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 27). Looking-glass self involves "the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification" (Cooley, 1964, p.184). As noted by Holstein, Gubrium (2000) and Cooley (1964), people's understandings of events or experiences in the past are shaped by their

construal of how they were positioned in the social world at those moments and how they interpret their own feelings about the events or experiences through subsequent reflections. Their notions elucidate how narratives entail not only personal but also social aspects.

Second, narrative involves experience and has *continuity.* Clandenin and Connelly (2000), who conceived of experience as a key element (p. 3) in narratives, drew on Dewey's (n.d.) observation of how experience and continuity are interrelated:

One criterion of experience is *continuity*, namely, the notion that experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum—the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future—each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future. (as cited in Clandenin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2)

In this view, people construe experiences by rehearsing situations and creatively making predictions about the future (Kelly, 1969). They understand their feelings through their perceptions of themselves and their environments. In some cases, their present attitudes or behaviors are affected by their perceptions of past experiences. In this regard, Kelly (1969) proposed that people should be viewed as "actively engaged in making sense of and extending their experience of the world" (as cited in Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011, p. 496). From these remarks, it is acknowledged that narrative "[brings] the past events (i.e., occurrences involving other people) into the present and [projects] the present into the future" (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2001, p. 171); in other words, it is an act that occurs across time and space.

Third, narratives involve narrators' subjective perceptions about their own experiences. Denzin (1992) remarked that narratives introduce "the centrality of emotions in lived experience" (as cited in Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 578). Echoing this view, Miller (2005) noted that

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narratives address the subjective experience of narrators as they interpret the events and conditions of their everyday lives. These remarks depict a distinction between narratives and descriptions of past events. The latter seek to establish reflections *of* events by describing the world as it is known, while the former are reflections *on* events (Denzin, 2000, as cited in Riessman, 2008, p. 188; see also Coulter & Smith 2009). Essentially, narratives involve the creation of narrators' reflections that entail their subjective feelings and emotions about previous experiences but do not attempt to establish objective truth (Denzin, 2000).

In summary, narratives can evoke narrators' consciousness of themselves and others in the social world. Additionally, they enable narrators to build a bridge between past and future by making sense of and extending their experiences of the world. Furthermore, narratives can help narrators to draw out their subjective perceptions including emotions and imagination, rather than to simply describe events that they encounter in their everyday lives. As such, narrative is suited to the present study because it can allow researchers to access participants' subjective perceptions. As previously stated, the present study utilizes two narrative methods—narrative interview and narrative writing—as research instruments. In addition to these methods, poetry writing is employed because this method can depict individuals' experiences in ways that narratives cannot. The following section describes the rationales for incorporating poetry writing into the research design in more detail.

Why Is Poetry Writing Also Needed?

The literature review in the previous chapter also revealed a similarity in the research methodologies employed by identity researchers. Most of these studies used interviews, writing tasks such as learning journals or diary entries, or a combination of both. However, they are not alone in using these research methods; most other studies related to identity, subjectivity, or

imagined communities in study abroad contexts utilized them (e.g., Murphey, Jin, & Li-Chi, 2005; Pellegrino, 2005). In order to further develop poststructuralist approaches to research on language learning abroad, there is a need for additional effective methodologies that can illuminate learners' subjective and emotional understandings of their experiences. In this regard, poetry writing has emerged as a legitimate research method (Hanauer, 2010).

In Hanauer's (2010) study, undergraduate students who learned English as a second language wrote poems about their study abroad experiences in the United States. The aim of the study was to examine whether poetry writing can elicit insightful descriptions of L2 students' lived experiences. In the study, students wrote poems about specific incidents in their lives that captured moments of interaction they felt were significant (Hanauer, 2010, p. 149). The poems included their feelings and emotional responses in relation to the incidents or moments. The following thematic categories of experience encountered by the students emerged from the data set: "self-position and the emotional response to language; emotional responses to academic classrooms; contact with American students; negotiating American culture; and homesickness" (Hanauer, 2010, p. 100). Through these experiences, the students commonly had feelings of disappointment, frustration, embarrassment, depression, isolation, or anxiety through negotiation of differences. Furthermore, these students produced "a series of (lyric) poems capturing specific, significant moments of life" through "extended, reflective, [and] deliberative consideration of autobiographical information" (p. 83). Accordingly, "the poem as a source of data…offers the qualitative researcher insight into the presented, thoughtful and crafted perspective of the writer on personal experiences, thoughts and feelings" (Hanauer, 2010, p. 83). In this sense, the use of poetry writing as a research method can allow the researcher to access the participants' subjective understandings of their experiences. As stated by Hanauer (2010), "What poetry can

offer is the ability to present concise, focused, emotionally informed, image-directed descriptions of moments of life that can engage readers and generate empathy and understanding of the 'other' without the usual objectification and erasure of participants" (p. 94). These remarks revealed the benefits of utilizing poetry writing as a research method.

Both of the research methods described above are similar in their potential to elicit insights about the feelings and emotions that participants associate with their experiences. Though all three of these methods have similarities, there are certain differences among them. As discussed in the following sections, each of these tools typically elicits a different type of data.

Rationales for Narrative Interviews as a Research Method and Its Issues

Narrative interview differs from traditional interview protocols. Traditional interviews tend to be seen as "a tool or resource for collecting information from interviewees" (Talmy, 2011, p. 25). From this perspective, interviews function as "sites for excavation of information held by respondents" (Talmy, 2011, p. 28). In contrast to the "product-oriented" theory of the traditional interview protocol, narrative interview can be "process-oriented" (Talmy, 2011, p. 25). Through interactions between the researcher and the interviewee, this research instrument encourages the interviewee to construct and reconstruct her/his perceptual experiences, organize and reorganize her/his thoughts or memories, and "segment and purpose-build the very event of life" (Bruner, 1987, p. 15). As such, "the interviewee is transformed from a 'passive vessel of answers' to someone who 'not only holds facts and details of experience, but, in the very process of offering them up for response, constructively adds to, takes away from, and transforms [them]'" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, as cited in Talmy, 2011, p. 28). This process allows the participants to project possible trajectories and interpretations (Jefferson, 1978; Sacks, 1992). Hence, the narrative

interview protocol elicits 'retrospective and prospective' aspects (Schiffrin, 2006, p. 335, as cited in Prior, 2011, p. 64).

Furthermore, narrative interview can be a collaborative activity (Coulter & Smith, 2009; Ellis & Berger, 2003; Freeman, 2007, Prior, 2011). It possibly provides the researcher with "the lens of collaborative interpretations with participants" (O'Brien, 1990, as cited in Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 578). This feature allows the researcher to re-describe the participant's experiences retrospectively (Freeman, 2007) by sharing his/her experiences with the participant (Ellis & Berger, 2003) or giving "collaborative feedback to one another on the interview process" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p. 46). From these remarks, it becomes apparent that conducting a successful narrative interview is largely dependent on the researcher's ability to achieve a sense of rapport with the participant.

There is, however, a need to consider the negative aspects in narrative interview as a research instrument. There are primarily two potential drawbacks. First, narrative interviews do not necessarily reflect deep understanding due to the complexity involved in the process of constructing stories. Bach (1998) used the example of telling stories about photos that we have taken to illustrate this complexity. Talking about the photos may seem to be a simple process of creating stories and expressing feelings about the moments they capture. However, Bach (1998) stated that narrators are actually engaging in a complex process of describing "not only … the moment [the photo] was taken but possibly the other moments in which we have viewed it, the others we have viewed it with, and the moments that led to the moment" (as cited in Pinnegar, 2007, p. 248). In other words, the process of describing past memories involves revisiting particular moments, understanding them, and exploring their meanings from personal and social perspectives (Pinnegar, 2007). Because of this inherent complexity of narratives, narrators may

struggle to express deep understandings of their memories when representing them in story form within a short time in an interactive interview setting. The depth of individuals' narratives may also depend upon their levels of familiarity and comfort with their audiences. In some cases, they might simplify the nature and significance of their experiences in order to make them easily understandable for their interlocutors.

Second, there are several factors that may prevent the researcher from developing the sense of rapport with participants that is necessary for a successful narrative interview. For instance, Ellis and Berger (2003) pointed out that socio-cultural hierarches between researchers and participants (e.g., social status and age or gender differences) may affect an emerging reciprocity between them since this particular type of discourse is contextually constructed. These social differences can influence interviewees' attitudes, feelings, and thoughts expressed (Ellis & Berger, 2003, p. 157). In addition to the concern of social-cultural hierarches, respondents' feelings and emotions at the moment of the interviewing can affect their responses to the interviewer. Moreover, it is important to consider the research participants' personal feelings about the researcher, which may be affected by a perceived difference in status or idiosyncratic factors such as a clash of personalities. As such, narrative interview projects rest on "mutual respect" (Stucky, 1995, as cited in Adams, 2008, p. 186); hence, the researcher might struggle to draw out the participant's feelings and emotions in depth, whereas the researcher cannot intrude on participants' private realms of experiences that they do not want to share. Furthermore, the researcher encounters an ethical dilemma of distinguishing between intimate topics and topics which can be personally discrediting or shrouded in secrecy (Lee, 1993).

In light of all these features of narrative interview, McLean and Thorne (2006) suggested employing a mix of oral and written narratives in various genres in order to encourage

participants to consider the significance of certain memories on multiple occasions from different perspectives. Taking McLean and Thorne's suggestion into account, the present study provided both interviewing and writing tasks for the research participants in order to aid the formulation of their responses. Narrative writing as a research method may elicit data that is similar but not exactly the same as data elicited through narrative interview. The following section describes the characteristics of narrative writing in order to discuss what kinds of data this method typically elicits.

Rationales for the Use of Narrative Writing and Its Potential Shortcomings

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) raised concerns about methodologies that use narrative interview as the sole research instrument. Narratives have a highly complex nature in that they are retroactive clarifications of events with respect to the outcome that follows from the events (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 27). In other words, "the outcome of the narrative is unknown until it occurs" (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2001, p. 161). Considering this complexity, some aspects of the interviewee's narratives might be left uncovered or underdeveloped in an interview setting due to the interviewee's obligation to produce immediate responses and potential restrictions on achieving mutual respect with the interviewer (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 94). Given this, a narrative writing approach might play a role in compensating for this deficit, as described below.

Ivanic's (1997) theory of writer identity can explain the rationale for the use of narrative writing as an additional research instrument for my study's data collection protocol. This theory illustrates both the process that occurs when narratives are written and the type of data narrative writing tasks elicit. She proposes that writer identity is constructed from four different levels or categories: *autographic self, discoursal self, self as author*, and *possibilities for self-hood*. Although I do not present all categories as essential aspects of this study's narrative writing

protocol, I address the first two categories—autographic self and discoursal self—which are highly relevant to narrative writing.

Ivanic (1997) indicated that the autobiographic self "is associated with a writer's sense of their roots, …and that this identity they bring with them to writing is itself socially constructed and constantly changing as a consequence of their developing life-history" (p. 24). As this notion does not treat identity as a fixed entity, the written discourse manifests the writer's identity as fluid and fragmentary. In this sense, a written text elicits the performance of identity at the moment of writing. A writer's discoursal self is "the impression—often multiple, sometimes contradictory—which they consciously or unconsciously convey of themselves in a particular written context" (Ivanic, 1997, p. 25). In other words, a written text embraces values, beliefs and socially structured power in a particular social context (Ivanic, 1997) as well as writers' uniqueness, such as their personalities and ways of representing themselves. Hence, a written text elicits how the writer is situated and interpreted in an act of autobiographic identity performance (Hanauer, 2010, p. 58).

In summary, narrative writing allows for "an exploration of the ways in which individuals construct, emphasize, present and highlight specific aspects of [writers'] life stories exposing their own position in relation to events" (Hanauer, 2010, p. 57). Although this process might also take place in narrative interview, the most significant difference from the narrative interview protocol is that writing evokes in-depth representations of situations while the writer actively chooses how the experience is to be represented in both words and symbols (Burke, 1968). Compared to narrative interview, narrative writing is more likely to require individuals to adhere to grammar, spelling, or conventions of storytelling in order to form a written text (Adams, 2008); hence, "form and linguistic choice cannot be ignored and require specific attention in

discussing assigned meaning to the text" (Pavlenko, 2007 as cited in Hanauer, 2010, p. 61). In this sense, writing allows for growth and change through a reflective and linguistic negotiation of personal thoughts and feelings, as opposed to interviewing, which entails immediate responses. This nature of narrative writing can help the research participant engage in deep understandings of their lived experiences and, by extension, come to greater awareness of the self. Furthermore, narrative writing can supplement narrative interviews, in which the researcher might encounter difficulty drawing out in-depth understandings of the participant's experiences.

These abovementioned discussions suggest a data collection protocol. In light of the Ivanic's (1997) preceding remark that a writer's identity is conceived as being fluid and fragmentary, it is enlightening to apply a longitudinal approach to the present research. By doing so, the research participants' perceptions of themselves and the social world can be explored as a developmental and ongoing process. This approach will elicit how their perceptions change during a particular time period. Moreover, this longitudinal approach can be combined with a collaborative approach such as narrative interview, which involves cooperative interaction between the research and the participant. A methodology that uses collaborative and longitudinal approaches with a mix of oral and written narratives is suited to the present study. Whereas the discussions about the characteristics of narrative interview and narrative writing suggested an effective methodology, there is still a need to consider the concern about potential bias demonstrated by the researcher in interpreting the participants' statements. In this respect, it is important to acknowledge the characteristics of poetry writing as a research method, which will be discussed below.

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Rationales for the Use of Poetry Writing

Hanauer's (2010) theory of poetic identity explains that this identity is parallel to discoursal self and is related to but different from the autobiographic self that Ivanic has defined in her theory of writer identity. Similar to what Ivanic (1997) observed about the elicitation of discoursal self through a writer's identity performance, Hanauer (2010) states:

Poetic identity reflects and is a moment of the performance of the writer's autobiographical self. This includes the life-history, memories, events, and ways of being in the world of the writer that are presented, situated and interpreted through the medium of the poetic text in an act of poetic identity performance. (p. 59)

The theoretical differentiation between the autobiographic self and poetic identity is that, according to Hanauer (2010), the poetic self "is seen as a reflective and linguistically negotiated interpretation of autobiographical information and experience" (p. 59). In other words, poetry writing requires more deliberate linguistic choices than narrative writing concerning what to include and how to present it in a poetic text (Hanauer, 2010, p. 60). In this sense, poetic identity is the result of engaging in careful self-analysis as well as understandings of what is important to the writer as a human being in the world more specifically and uniquely (Hanauer, 2010, p. 9). As such, poetry writing allows the writer to focus on a particular aspect of the writer's perspectives and understanding of the world. This reflective and descriptive writing leads the writer to "the subjective position that most closely suits the understanding of the writer at the moment of writing" (Hanauer, 2010, p. 61).

Furthermore, in requiring the writer to depict her experiences in a creative and emotion-centric form, poetry writing involves a process of defamiliarization. Thus, the writer is estranged from taken-for-granted perspectives and as such is open to the construction of new

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understandings (Hanauer, 2010, p. 22). Hence, poetic identity entails not only reconstructions of writers' thoughts and feelings but also self-discovery because poetry identity can "utilize recognizable subject positions and community affiliations in the process of trying to explore and express personal experience" (Hanauer, 2010, p. 61). In this regard, Richardson (2003) argued that a poetic text elicits the writer's concretized emotions, feelings, and moods—"the most private kind of feelings" (p. 190).

Overall, compared to the autobiographic self in narrative writing, poetic identity involves reflective analyses of a specific aspect of self-discovery that the writer wishes to present in a poetic text. More importantly, a poetic text elicits the "essence" of the research participant's subjective perceptions and emotions in their lived experiences, which plays a role in creating a link between the researcher's interpretation and the participant's intended meaning (Richardson, 2003). Hanauer reconfirmed Richardson's notion and stated that lyric poems can "capture lived moments of experience" (Hanauer, 2010, p.77). As specifically regards language learners, poetry writing helps to shed light upon the "essence" of students' emotions and feelings since it frees writers from demands for the explicated, coherent sentence structure that narrative writing requires.

Another primary distinction between poetry and narrative writing as research methods is that while poems may be situated in a narrative or combined to create poetic representations of narrative (Ely, 2007; Chase, 2008), poems in and of themselves do not necessarily convey narratives; rather, they express discrete moments in time (Hanauer, personal communication, January 23, 2013). Hence, poetry may not always adopt an "explicated, coherent narrative structure" even though it may imply a narrative (Hanauer, 2010, p. 77). As such, it is important to clarify that the present study does not classify poetry writing as a category of narrative.

Considering the characteristics of the three research instruments, adopting a triangulation approach can compensate for their individual limitations. Due to these limitations, a single method of data collection would probably prove to be insufficient. Moreover, reflecting on the same experiences on multiple occasions in various genres invites participants to consider the significance of certain memories from wider perspectives (McLean & Thorne, 2006). Additionally, the present study employs a longitudinal approach; that is, data collection sessions are conducted at numerous times throughout the entirety of participants' study abroad. This approach provides participants with more time and opportunities to express their understandings and interpretations of their own experiences. In turn, they might be given more chances for self-conscious reflections and self-analysis. In sum, this longitudinal and triangulation approach establishes a more rigorous means of data collection to observe the phenomena.

Before closing the discussions about the characteristics of these narrative research instruments, I raise an issue about the application of a triangulation approach to the present study. Some participants who were not accustomed to narrative writing and/or poetry writing showed hesitation or resistance to the given tasks. In this vein, participants might have felt relatively more comfortable and familiar with telling life stories in conversational settings because, unlike the other data collection instruments, it did not strictly require them to follow conventions or rules for linguistic structures in order to form a written text (Adam, 2008). In anticipation of these difficulties, the present study established the following sequence for the data collection procedure: (a) narrative interview, (b) narrative writing, and (c) poetry writing. However, each stage in the sequence was optional, and the researcher clearly informed participants that they could decline to take part in some or all of the steps. My rationale for making data collections tasks voluntary was two-fold: first, this approach was likely to reduce subjects' anxieties and

increase the likelihood that they would maintain their participation throughout the period of data collection. Second, it would enable me to compare and analyze the data types that subjects were most and least willing to provide.

However, as discussed previously, the optimal outcome was for participants to complete all three tasks because a reiteration of their lived experiences in written form can make more visible the reflexive relation between interview talk and contexts (Sacks, 1992). Hence, I as the researcher strove to encourage the participants to do the optional writing tasks by providing support. Participants also could use their first language, their second language (Japanese for American participants and English for Japanese participants) or a combination of both to complete this study's tasks. If they chose their second language, the researcher assisted the participants with the writing process as requested. This writing process involves negotiations of meanings and collaborative writing between the researcher and the participant; thus this approach helps the researcher further understand the participants' inner feelings.

My Positioning as a Researcher

Prior to moving on to the next discussion about the research design, it is important to consider how my positioning as a researcher might constrain participants' development of insightful narratives and how I could reduce this restrictive influence. Because some of my American participants were former students in my Japanese classes, I needed to alter the traditionally hierarchical relationship between teachers and students in order to encourage participants to speak openly. Furthermore, my Japanese exchange students were younger than me; hence, I was obliged to determine ways of reducing cultural constraints on candid communication between age groups. Thus, I had to account for various sociocultural factors that create distance between my participants and myself. Reflecting on these considerations can not

only disclose both negative and positive potential influences of my researcher positionality on the processes of data collection but also suggest strategies for opening avenues of more candid interaction. Hence, in this section, I relate narratives that describe how my positionality as a teacher of Japanese and English, a student advisor at an ESL institute, and a foreign and second language learner have shaped my researcher positionality.

The most important positionings to acknowledge are my identifications as a teacher of English and Japanese, and a student advisor at an ESL institute. While working in these capacities, I realized that my identity as a foreign and second language learner helped me to build trust with my students. At the beginning of each semester, the students who were taking my course for the first time seemed to keep their distance from me, and I felt there was a huge detachment between these students and myself because of the traditional teacher-student hierarchy. To create a comfortable atmosphere for language courses, I employ several strategies. First, I share my struggles and experiences with language learning with the students in my classes. Second, I meet with students outside of the classroom when they need extra support for their studies. Our meetings sometimes involved in-depth conversations about their struggles and difficulties not only in language learning but also their lives.

In regard to constraints on forthright communication between age groups in Japanese culture, I sometimes saw Japanese exchange students who were in their late teens or early twenties demonstrating discomfort, resistance or reluctance to openly share their personal information with those who are older than them. To reduce this constraint on candid communication between Japanese students and me, I spent a significant amount of time communicating with them after they arrived in the United States. By sharing my struggles with adjusting to a new environment and language learning, I emphasized my identification as an

international student who is still learning English rather than as an instructor or student advisor. Additionally, I offered them support as needed. For instance, when I worked as a student advisor, I kept regular office hours, which allowed students to drop by when they wanted to talk with me. Furthermore, when I was teaching Japanese, I asked them to come to my Japanese class in order to help my American students with their studies. The more I obtained opportunities to meet and communicate with them, the more they become open to sharing their concerns about their new lives.

My identity as an L2 learner allowed my students to create a sense of affinity with me. By sharing my language learning experience and communicating with them, their impression of me has gradually changed from a sort of authoritative teacher into something unique between an instructor and a fellow language learner. Through this process, I built trust with the students who became participants in my study. It is very likely that my identifications as a teacher and/or advisor can have a negative influence on participants' development of insightful narratives; however, my experiences suggest that it is possible to reduce this constraining influence and create an atmosphere in which participants can openly share their lived and emotional experiences.

Research Design

Characteristics of the Subject Population

The data for the current study are collected from two groups: (a) American undergraduate students who studied abroad in Japan, and (b) Japanese undergraduate students who studied abroad in the United States. A total of nine Americans and ten Japanese participants consented to participate in the study. All 19 individuals maintained their participation throughout the entire period of data collection. However, only four Americans and three Japanese were willing to

provide all of the requested data types. These seven individuals were selected as focal participants for the individual case studies presented in Chapter IV on the grounds that the breadth of data they provided would allow for the most thorough and substantive answers to the study's research questions. The holistic analyses presented in Chapter VI are drawn from these same seven individuals, whereas the quantitative analysis provided in Chapter V encompass the entire corpus of data collected from the 19 total participants. Regarding the American group, they were enrolled at a public university in the Northeastern United States and studied abroad at two universities in central Japan. Concerning the Japanese group, participants were from two universities located in central Japan and studied abroad at an ESL institute affiliated with the abovementioned public American university. This American university and these two Japanese universities had a partnership and offered a language exchange program. The students who participated in this program stayed in the host countries as exchange students, and the credits that they obtained by attending courses at the host institutions were transferred to universities in their home countries. While studying abroad, they regularly received intensive language instruction. The period of their study abroad was a semester (four months) or an academic year.

In regard to the participants' learning experiences and language proficiency levels, both American and Japanese participants took target language courses in their home countries before studying abroad. American participants took several Japanese language courses at the elementary or advanced elementary levels, which were approximately equivalent to levels 5 and 3 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, respectively. The range of Japanese students' English proficiency was between the intermediate and advanced-intermediate levels, which were approximately equivalent to scores ranging from 300 to 450 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language. The Japanese participants had been studying English since junior high school,

whereas the American participants did not typically begin formal study of Japanese until entering university. Moreover, all of the Japanese subjects were English majors, whereas the American subjects could only study Japanese as an elective because a Japanese language major was not offered by their university. Collectively, these disparities are a likely explanation for Japanese participants' greater willingness to complete data collection tasks in their second language, as described in greater detail in Chapter V.

The participants' age range is between 19 and 29. Most of the participants are self-pay students, though some American participants obtained partially paid scholarships from their university. In this sense, they are from reasonably high or above-average income families.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection began in the fall semester of 2011 with the approval of the Institutional Review Board and concluded in the fall semester of 2014. The participants and the researcher had regular meetings once every three to four weeks. In the case that the participants could not have meetings with the researcher in person because of geographical distances, they were contacted online (e.g., by email, Facebook, or Skype). Some individuals took part in more sessions than others because they happened to be available more frequently, and one participant asked to conduct two additional sessions with the researcher. It is also important to note that some participants provided more than one sample of a given data type during a single session (e.g., writing two poems, each of which was about a different experience). Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained a signed consent form from each participant. Conversations during each face-to-face and Skype meeting were audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

The aim of the research tasks described below is to provide the participants with a means of reflecting on their experiences of learning language abroad in order to yield a portrait of their

subjective and emotional perceptions of these experiences. The data collection procedures in the

present study is modeled on those employed by Hanauer (2010). Each meeting began with an

interview about a recent, emotionally significant moment or event related to participants' study

abroad experiences. Then, participants were invited to write journal entries about what they

stated in their interviews. After discussing their entries, participants were asked to develop them

into poetry. The participants were provided with the following instructions (also see Appendix

A).

1. Choose a significant moment from your recent language learning experiences.

2. Try to explain to the researcher the significant moment that you have chosen.

3. Try to make your description as vivid and visual as possible.

4. Write a narrative about the event (optional).

5. Choose the aspects that seem to you to be the most powerful from an emotional point
   of view.

6. Write a poem about the emotional point of view about the event (optional). (Hanauer,
   2010, pp. 149-150)

After the participants completed their tasks, the researcher continued the interview by

asking the following questions:

1. What does language learning mean to you?

2. What does study abroad mean to you?

3. What do you think your experiences will be like during the rest of your study abroad?

The researcher sometimes asked additional questions to clarify the meaning of

participants' statements. In addition to these regular tasks, the participants were asked other

questions during the first and last meetings. In the first meeting, the participants were asked

about personal information such as language learning experiences in their home countries, purposes of study abroad, and goals for learning their target languages. In the last meeting, they were asked to reflect on their overall experiences by comparing their current perspectives with the statements they made during previous meetings. Lastly, the researcher utilized member-checking to confirm the validity of her interpretations of participants' statements and experiences to the greatest extent possible. As data collection proceeded, the researcher shared her tentative analyses with the subjects at the conclusion of a given session or the beginning of a subsequent session. If participants' own perspectives differed from those of the researcher, analyses were revised accordingly. Once the complete case studies had been prepared, the researcher invited each participant to review her or his text and provide feedback. Table 4 below demonstrates the data collection methods that were used to obtain the information needed to address the research questions.

Table 4

Data to Be Collected and Collection Methods

Stage	Research prompts	Information needed (corresponding research question)	Data collection methods
Initial stage (Pre or right after arrival)	1. How long have you been learning your target language? 2. Where do you study your target language? (school, tutoring sessions, etc.) 3. What are purposes of your study abroad? 4. What are goals for your language learning?	Participants' language learning experiences, purposes of study abroad, and goals for language learning (1)	narrative interview
	Tell and/or write about your current feelings about your upcoming study abroad as vividly and visually as possible.	Emotions: Descriptions of current feelings/emotions about upcoming study abroad. (1)	narrative interview, narrative writing, and/or poetry writing
	1. How do you perceive yourself in the host country? 2. What do you think you will be like after finishing your study abroad?	Imagination: Perceptions of themselves and the social world during study abroad (1)	
Middle stage (During study abroad)	1. Tell and/or write about a recent, emotionally significant moment or event related to your study abroad as vividly and visually as possible.	Emotions: Descriptions of recent experiences and current emotions about these experiences; how participants understand their own identities and their relation to the social world (1, 2, & 3)	narrative interview, narrative writing, and/or poetry writing
	1. What does language learning mean to you? 2. What does study abroad mean to you? 3. What do you think your experiences will be like during the rest of your study abroad?	Imagination: perceptions of themselves and the social world in the future (1, 2 & 3)	narrative interview
Final stage (right before departure or after returning to their home countries)	1. What was your most pleasurable/hardest moment during study abroad? 2. What did you learn from your study abroad experiences? 3. What does learning language mean to you? 4. What does study abroad mean to you?	Reflections on their overall experiences by comparing their current perspectives with the statements they made during previous meetings (1, 2 & 3)	narrative interview, narrative writing, and/or poetry writing

Findings elucidated not only participants' emotions about particular experiences but also their perceptions of themselves, the social world, and their imagined future study abroad experiences. Additionally, the struggles or conflicts through negotiations of cultural differences that they encountered in the course of social interactions emerged. These findings guided responses to the study's first research question of how participants perceive their identities and their relation to the social world during study abroad. Furthermore, these findings were extended to answer the second research question by investigating how participants' perceptions developed or changed during the entire period of study abroad and how these changes affected their definitions of self and language learning.

In order to investigate the phenomena as an ongoing process, collected data were organized into specific time frames (i.e., the initial stage—the first meeting before or at the very beginning of study abroad; the middle stage—during study abroad; and the final stage—the last meeting after or at the very end of study abroad). The middle stage was also separated into three time spans: early, middle, and late (See Figure 5).
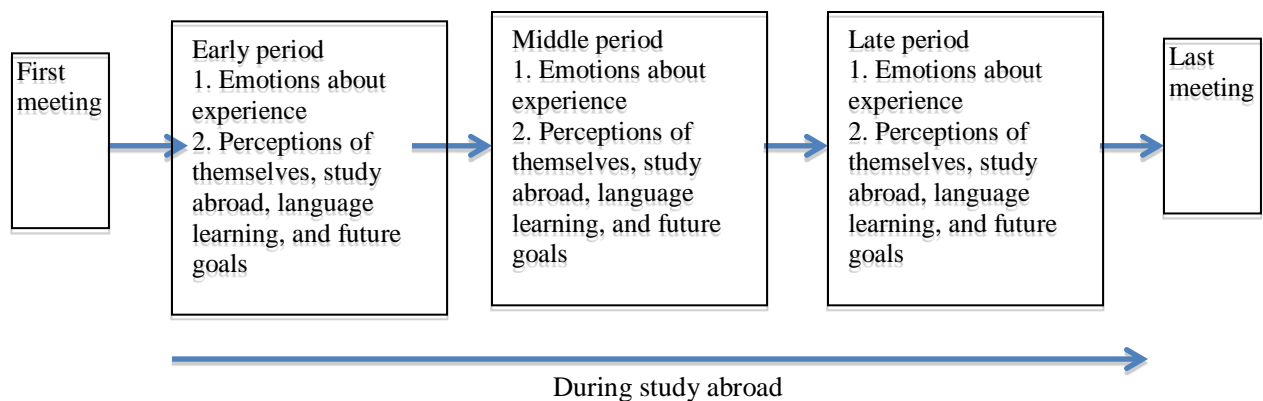
Figure 5. Investigation of how L2 learners' perceptions changed during Study Abroad

Additionally, these collected data were examined according to the research methods (i.e., narrative interview, narrative writing and poetry writing) in order to understand differences in the

data that each method elicits; examinations of these differences will answer the second research question.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

Research Question One

   The methods of data analysis differed depending upon the research questions. Data relevant to the first research question—how do students' subjective understandings of language learning and study abroad experiences involve views of the self?—was analyzed according to the stages outlined below:

   Stage one: Preparing data for analysis. Prior to the data analysis, the collected data were transformed into a written text. First, the data collected in interviews were transcribed. Then, this transcribed text and the other data sets such as narrative writing and poetry writing were translated from Japanese into English as needed. Next, these transcriptions were read through several times in order to broadly understand the phenomenon and ideally to get an overall idea of what patterns might emerge across the data.

   Stage two: Categorical-content analysis. The aim of the categorical-content analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998) was to describe contents regarding the participants vis-à-vis the social world and their perceptions of themselves. More specifically, I focused on the way the participants described themselves in relation to the past (Yan-McLaughlin, 1990) and their emotional responses to relevant events and experiences. A careful reading of the material led to the formation of content categories and their definitions. The categories emerged through the analysis of materials as a whole, which was enhanced by the researcher's personal perspectives and evaluative impressions. In the process of this formation, refinements of the categories or the addition of several subcategories occurred as needed. Overall, this

categorical-content analysis was more impressionistic-interpretive and less quantitative oriented (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). These analyses are presented in Chapter IV.

Stage three: Holistic analysis. Once each individual case study had been completed, I sought to establish collective patterns in the nature and sequence of participants' perceptions of their experiences across the entire dataset. To this end, I drew on Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber's (1998) method of holistic analysis, which uses graph structures with wavy lines to present how participants' perceptions of key concepts (self-positioning, study abroad, language learning, and future goals) changed during study abroad. While this collective analysis could not account for every unique variation in participants' experiences, it nonetheless yielded distinct contours of emotional and attitudinal change as well as correlations between key concepts (These analyses are presented in Chapter VI).

Research Question Two

Regarding the second questions—in collecting data on personal experience in different genres (narrative interview, narrative essay writing, and poetry writing), what are the values and qualities of each of the data elicitation methods used?—both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed.

The quantitative analyses in this section made use of a computational linguistic approach to systematically measure the degrees of expressivity present in the corpus of texts in each genre. Expressivity was defined in the current study as a set of linguistic and rhetorical features that convey individual experience. The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) 2015 software program (Pennebaker, Booth, Boyd, & Francis, 2015) was used to investigate these features. The LIWC tabulates and compares word frequencies across pre-defined categories. From a body of over 90 available output categories, the researcher selected the categories that were most useful

for illuminating psychological phenomena in one's life stories. These categories included Summary Language Variables; Linguistic Dimensions; Personal concerns; and Psychological Processes. (Complete definitions of these categories appear in Chapter V.) Quantification of these textual features in the overall data corpus was achieved by dividing the number of words in a given category from that in the total word count.

The Quantitative analysis focused on how and to what extent subjects' discursive representation of their experiences varied by genre in order to identify prevalent content types elicited by each data collection method. The corpus of seven case studies (four Americans and three Japanese) from Chapter IV was reviewed to find instances in which subjects addressed the same topic across all three data types. Ten topics referenced in narrative interviews, narrative essays, and poems in one or more case studies were identified. Through in-depth explication of multiple examples, the dimensions and aspects of experiences that subjects chose to foreground in interviews, essays, and poems were explicated. The overall goal for this analysis was to establish how subjects tended to depict and interpret significant occurrences in each genre.

Ethical Consideration

The present study has been designed to minimize the likelihood of any negative consequences for participants. For instance, standard procedure for protecting the participants' personal information was followed. Participants were referred to by pseudonyms, and identifying characteristics were changed in order to protect each individual's privacy. I thus have planned that absolute confidentiality can be assured to all participants. Additionally, I have ensured that participants volunteered to participate in this study without feeling any pressure. To do so, when recruiting participants, I met each participant in person to explain my study. During these meetings, I described the purpose and the plan of my study as well as the research tasks that

participants were expected to complete for this study. All data collection methods were

conducted only with the informed consent of the participants (See Appendixes B-D). I explained

that my commitment to preserving the integrity of the ethical considerations was demonstrated

by careful attention to detail in the IRB.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS PART I

This chapter will be divided into seven parts, each of which presents an individual

participant case study in order to answer the first research question: *How do students' subjective*

understandings of language learning abroad experiences involve views of the self? As

established in Chapter 2, one's understandings of objects, abstract concepts, and experiences are

inextricably entwined with one's ways of viewing the self. In this regard, Kramsch (2009) noted

that these understandings involve words (or linguistic symbols), which are comprehended in

conventional ways (such as dictionary definitions) on the one hand; they are redefined based

upon their subjectivities through emotions, feelings, memories, desires and imagination on the

other. According to Kramsch, the latter process is interrelated with the development of the self.

Using this notion as a guiding principle, the overall objective of this chapter is to elucidate how

each learner's understandings of language learning and study abroad were altered in the course

of their identity reconstruction. Intriguingly, this manner of analysis also allowed for expounding

upon psychological dimensions of their sojourning abroad experiences as well as how their

subjective definitions were personal and life-related. The experiences of the following college

students (four Americans in Japan and three Japanese in the United States) illustrate this

transformation.

Case Study 1: Sophie

From Pre-Departure to Her Arrival in Japan: Opening a New Chapter

Sophie, an American Caucasian female student in her early twenties, was always excited

whenever she talked about Japan. She stated that her interest in Japanese culture had grown

exponentially since she was in the fifth grade and her friends showed her their *Pokemon* cards (a

line of trading cards based on popular cartoon characters): "All things [related to Japanese culture] since then I have been interested in" (interview, August 3, 2012). Her fascination with the culture, and particularly *manga* comics and *anime* cartoons, grew to the point that living in Japan became her dream when she was sixteen. She longed to learn the language formally, but her high school did not offer any Japanese classes. As such, she was excited about obtaining a chance to learn the language at university. After taking courses for two years, her dream finally came true—she was accepted to a study abroad program in Japan for a nine-month period during the final year of her undergraduate career. Along with her excitement about her first sojourn and trip abroad, she also expressed feelings of fear in her first poem, which was written before she left for Japan.

> Standing at the end
>
> A sheer cliff below, fog and blinding light ahead
>
> My life ends here
>
> My life begins here
>
> I cannot see where I will fly
>
> Or where I will fall
>
> My greatest desire
>
> Brings my greatest fear
>
> (August 3, 2012)

As can be seen from her metaphoric description of standing at the end of a sheer cliff, her fear of uncertainty is more emphasized than her excitement. Upon reading her poem, I imagined her as a fledgling who was ready for her initial flight to leave the nest, but the thick fog hindered her from seeing ahead. The fog signifies that her hope was faint, but she tried to firmly hold onto her

greatest desire. The poem also describes her state as being confused and disoriented in the transition from adolescent to adult, as Sophie explained in her narrative essay: "[this opportunity] will finally force me to figure out how to take care of myself as an adult. …I don't think I could do it if I continued to live here" (August 3, 2012). She was crying while writing the poem and essay because she was not able to hide her fear. However, why was her excitement largely cancelled out by fear?

The answers to this question were associated with the illegitimated sense of self that she had felt in her home culture: "I never felt like I fit in well with mainstream American society" (interview, August 3, 2012). This enduring sense of self was derived from her memories of being in the second grade, when she viewed herself as "shy and pathetic" (interview, November 11, 2012). Since then, she had preferred solitary activities such as reading to socializing with others: "I've never really liked going out to talk to people" (interview, January 4, 2013). Although she had been gradually rebuilding her ideal character as proud, confident, independent, free, and unique by developing a close circle of friends (essay, October 11, 2012), the sense of alienation had never been completely removed: "I always thought that eventually I would leave home and find somewhere there were other people like me and I could be normal for once, and ever since high school, I thought that place would be Japan" (essay, November 11, 2012).

Sophie's wish to "be normal" was reflected in the essay below, which she wrote on the airplane to Japan. She once again described her expectations that her journey would facilitate a dramatic reinvention of self. However, instead of repeating the cliff metaphor from her poem, she used a new figurative comparison: going abroad was like pushing the "reset button" on the Sega Genesis video game console (one of the function buttons which erases all of the progress that players have made). The metaphor signifies an erasure of her entire past to redefine herself.

The reset button was the one that she was warned never to touch by her cousin when she was young. Ironically, his warning stimulated her irresistible curiosity, and she pushed it. After her huge regret and embarrassment, she was sure she would never press it again; however, this button had still been a mysterious and enticing entity to her:

> Recently, I have decided to once again try my luck with the button, only this time there's no backing out. I have to keep going…. There is nothing else I can do. I've spent the last 21 years building my character. … My finger hovered above the button as I flew across the ocean. After an endless day, I landed, and it was done. (essay, October 11, 2012)

Pushing the reset button represents, as Taylor (2013) put it, "[transitioning] from one phase to another" by saying good-bye to the old identity that one had formed (para. 3). In this sense, Sophie conceived of study abroad as the threshold of the old and the new, holding her hope of being led to a place where she could obtain affiliation or genuine connection with others to allay her sense of "not fitting in."

Although Sophie had not yet established her specific and overarching goals for language learning abroad, she had believed that this opportunity would open new possibilities to find a more fulfilling future: "For me, learning Japanese is like finding the key to a treasure chest" (interview, March 11, 2013). However, she was in tandem under a compulsion because she had believed that there was no way other than sojourning abroad to bring her wishes to fruition or move forward from the childhood phase of her life: "I think it will finally force me to figure out how to take care of myself as an adult. It is a step I am ready to take, but I don't think I could do it if I continued to live here" (essay, August 3, 2012). Her conviction thus resembled Taylor's (2013) assertion that "the new part of ourselves cannot be born within the confines of the shell our old self needed to survive" (para. 3). Therefore, study abroad was an inevitable life path for

her. She to some extent pushed herself away from her home to which she was attached. The way that she subjectively viewed her own positionality caused more fear than excitement. Her anxiety was also expressed in her essay: "I am also afraid that I might fail" and "If I fail, it will be devastating" (August 3, 2012).

With a myriad of complex feelings, Sophie arrived in Japan. As opposed to the anxiety she felt before her departure, she suffused with surreal and fantasized images of the new land for a while. The essay, titled *Watashi wa Nihonjin desu!!* [I am Japanese], epitomized this feeling:

America was only a distant thought, and every day I was excited to pretend to be Japanese. On sunny days, if I hid my face under my umbrella I looked just like all the other girls walking to school (October 11, 2012).

The act of hiding her face under the umbrella and pretending to be Japanese echoed her desire to find an environment in which she could fit in with those around her: "I was excited to finally start becoming Japanese" (interview, November 11, 2013). With fervent hope to find new possibilities for selfhood in this new environment, Sophie now opened a new chapter of life, holding the key to open a treasure chest.

The First Half of Her Study Abroad: Vulnerability and Despair

The place Sophie landed after leaping from the *cliff* was very different than the one she had imagined. As if her illusions were dispelled, she underwent dismal, disorienting, and disheartening experiences. During the interview that took place three months later, she described her first few months:

I felt like I was seven years old again wishing that I was normal so I could be popular and have cool friends. It felt like all the work I had done to make myself a strong, independent woman that I liked had all been for nothing, and I was back to being shy,

pathetic little kid who couldn't do anything other than cry everyday. …I hated myself. …

I didn't see why anyone else should like me either. (interview, November, 11, 2012)

This statement denotes a change in Sophie's subjective position as she struggled to deal with the discrepancies between her expectations and experiences. In spite of her hope that Japan would be the place where she could cultivate a sense of deep connection with others and her surroundings, she encountered loneliness and isolation: "The people and places I know now were not there. … I didn't think of home. I don't think I really thought of anything" (essay, October 11, 2013). The strong and independent identity that she had built up in the United States with effort was now questioned: "Everything, everything is gone" (interview, January 4, 2013). This sense of vacancy made her flash back to her childhood memories and go back to the drawing board in terms of determining a fulfilling sense of self. She was confused and disoriented by this ambiguous positionality:

> After being here for a little longer, it became clear that my personality and interests are just as much on the fringe here as they are back home in America. Now I've accepted that it is likely that I will be weird no matter where I go. It's a bit of a pain sometimes, but really I think I prefer it this way. (interview, November 11, 2012)

Feeling disappointed that her hopes for living in Japan did not seem likely to be realized, she perceived herself as being "on the fringe" both in her home country and abroad. She strived to accept her state of being disconnected or excluded; however, as her use of the phrase "a bit of a pain" indicated, she could not fully tolerate this state. In this regard, Brown (2010) described this mental state as *vulnerability,* which instigates fear and shame because one feels as if one is not worthy of meaningful connections. However, Burks and Robbins (2011) conceived of the state as a temporary blip during which one is actually going through self-exploration, or as they put it,

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"[to figure] out who one really is (or is not)" (p. 349). Golomb (1995) expressed a similar perspective by noting that painful and dispiriting experiences are inevitable in the course of discovering oneself. As such, Sophie's experiences in the new cultural environment triggered pain, but it also propelled her to reconsider who she was even though the result was not the one she had been longing for. In this sense, she underwent the process through which identities are inwardly generated while experiencing disillusionment at discovering reality to be different from her expectations.

It is noteworthy to remark here what was underlying Sophie's vulnerability. There were primarily two factors. The first factor was her difficulty making friends:

> I realized that it's really hard for me to be myself and be comfortable around people I
> don't know. ... I find that I had trouble trusting them. There is.., they say like, "Oh, your
> Japanese is really good. Oh, that is true." I know it's not. So I feel like that they're just
> lying to make me feel good. I've never liked that. I've never liked when people did that.
> (interview, January 4, 2013)

As time went by, Sophie's discomfort with Japanese people's ways of interacting with her had increased because she felt they occurred on a superficial level. In addition, she felt deep unease about Japanese people's propensity for gathering in groups: "I don't understand why Japanese people are always in groups, in large groups" (interview, January 4, 2013). As previously remarked, she preferred solitary activities or spending time with a close circle of friends in the United States. Thus, being in a large group was stressful and unfulfilling for Sophie (interview, January 4, 2013). Her remarks reaffirm Kramsch's (2009) contention that one's idiosyncratic preferences and memories of past experiences influence one's subjective understanding of social

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positionality. In other words, her refusals signify her views of herself as being distant and disenchanted.

This experience also extended to the process of self-reappraisal. She begun contrasting Japanese communicative customs with her own and those of her friends back home:

"I'm naturally a really honest person. And all of my friends are like that too. And the way that the Japanese people tend to they don't really not to show their true selves" (interview, January 4, 2012). This statement indicates the ramification of redefining herself. She characterized American communicative practices positively and those of Japanese people negatively. She embraced this state of being American rather than leaving it behind in the course of becoming Japanese. Such a shift was ironic because her feelings of alienation in American society had played a key role in fostering her motivation to coming to Japan. Hence, her identity had come to be reconstructed in a manner diametrically opposed to her pre-study abroad intentions. This realization preceded her subsequent statement: "coming here really made me see how American I actually am. It was a bit surprising" (interview, November 11, 2013).

The second factor of her vulnerability stemmed from the disheartening experiences in her formal language class:

It was mostly my Japanese speaking class that would set it off. …and I'm not really used to participating in classes. I usually just prefer to sit in the back and observe, so with that on top of everything else, the speaking class was really intimidating for me. (interview, November 11, 2012)

She went on to explain that, the more reluctant she was to speak Japanese, the more she was exasperated and frustrated. This situation added insult to injury because it also increased her senses of inferiority as a language learner and of isolation in the classroom. Her sense of

separation also extended to situations outside the classroom when she was with her international student peers who possessed higher levels of Japanese language skills. As in class, she did not actively join the conversations between her peers and Japanese people, but rather she observed their interactions:

> Why would I ever bother if they were there? Because they would be able to keep the conversation going much more fluidly because they actually like understand as opposed to me just trying to slog through it and maybe say something. (interview, January 4, 2013)

Considering all of the abovementioned circumstances that Sophie encountered during the first half of her study abroad, her initial goals seemed to be shattered as if she had to some degree resigned herself to the implausibility of achieving them. Yet, she still had her intention to overcome this diminished confidence: "I should be trying to speak in Japanese. I should try. I should practice. It's the only way I'm going to get any better" (interview, January 4, 2013). As such, at this point in her study abroad, she was in a dilemma between her faint hope and increased skepticism about Japanese language learning. Hence, she perceived language learning as vague or uncertain: "It seems like my thoughts about learning Japanese change everyday" (interview, November 11, 2012). Sophie was now feeling adrift from her original motivations, as if she was wandering around in a labyrinth.

The Middle Period: The *Fledgling's* Departure

Sophie's vulnerability and despair occurred not solely in her study abroad context but also in her home country while she was in Japan. During Christmas break, she heard that her parents officially filed their divorce. The next statement written in her essay describes how she spent her Christmas time in Japan under this circumstance:

I was here in my dorm with [my boyfriend] and a few other holiday orphans from

America, trying our best to recreate the holidays we were missing here in a foreign

country under a plastic Christmas tree. (January 4, 2013)

Her phrase, "in a foreign country," implies her exasperation that she could not do anything about

her parents' divorce from the long distance; instead, she merely faced this complete upheaval.

Her use of oxymoronic constructions creates a contrast between the homey atmosphere she

enjoyed in the United States and the counterfeit replica symbolized by "a plastic Christmas tree."

This juxtaposition between her feelings of nostalgia and vacuity called forth further

reminiscences about her past Christmas holidays:

The warm atmosphere filled with light and music that usually marked my holiday

season…It was always just the four of us, my mom, my dad, my sister and me, and we

always said that was how we liked it. For the first time in 14 years that house was dark

and silent. (essay, January 4, 2013).

The expression about the sudden change of her warm home into a gloomy and cold place

intimates her emotional state: overwhelmed by the totality of loss and without the faintest hope.

Her family, home, and childhood life, which were inherent in her identity, had suddenly vanished.

Sophie's disorientation was also portrayed in her poem as follows:

My Parents can go back to their families

But My sister and I are like seeds in the wind

Suddenly our roots have been cut out

She has been blowing around in these winds of uncertainty

But I have been hiding

Observing from under a rock in a foreign country

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I always said that I wasn't ready

To make the transition from Child in one family to Adult in another,

But I don't have a choice anymore

The family that I was a child in

Is gone

The next home I return to will be the one I make

Until then, I will have to face the wind

(January 4, 2013)

The metaphoric description of her and her sister as *seeds in the wind* indicates that Sophie and her sister were exposed to uncertainty without any protection. They were left behind and isolated in their parents' absence, and then they were vulnerable and lonely. The next stanza described her strong family ties as "the roots" that were cut out despite her belief that they would never be severed. The stunted plants were blowing into the air and wandering around seeking to return to their homes. Her claim, "I always said that I wasn't ready" signifies her bitter struggle to accept the reality of her parents' divorce and the deep fear of moving on to a new step of her life—becoming an adult. The sadness of losing her old family life intensified the previous vulnerability she experienced while in Japan. In this sense, the poem elucidates that her ambiguous sense of self had become even more uncertain.

In regard to her subjective understanding of study abroad at this point, as she noted in her essay, "It's finally time to grow now" (January 4, 2013). The statement implies that the experience of her parents' divorce prompted her to realize that the time for the *fledgling's* departure had actually come. After writing this essay and poem during our interview session, Sophie continued to describe her goals for study abroad as unclear, but she started to make a

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serious effort to determine some concrete possibilities for her future life and career. As she reached this turning point in her life, she ceased to perceive learning Japanese as disheartening and began to perceive it as the start of a new beginning:

> I feel like I've finally accomplished my goal, like I'd set it out for myself when I was six years old, like "I wanna learn Japanese!" but, I don't know why I just wanted to learn Japanese. I feel a sense of accomplishment for that, but it's also like, at the same time, I've started working towards new goals with it. (interview, January 4, 2013)

This statement clearly marks the juxtaposition between an ending (the sense of satisfaction she felt as she accomplished a long-standing goal) and a beginning (the establishment of new goals), which in turn raised new possibilities for reinventing herself. Sophie's negotiation of possibilities of selfhood through language learning abroad experiences strongly reaffirms Hanauer's (2011) contention that language learning is a "significant, potentially life changing event" (p. 3).

The Second Half: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

After its departure, the fledgling continued to face a difficult path in life. In the subsequent interview, which took place around a month after her second semester started, Sophie described finding some comfort being in Japan as she grew accustomed to the new environment. She had been building up new friendships with her Australian peers and met a Japanese friend, Makiko, to whom she started feeling close. She also expressed her excitement about a plan for *hanami* (a seasonal custom of viewing cherry blossoms) with her friends. However, her previous vulnerability had not entirely ebbed; rather, her volatile emotionality became even more noticeable. The next statement illustrates her instability regarding language performance in class:

> After I got over feeling depressed a week or two ago, I'm feeling a lot better and more confident in class now then ever before I think….I just got tired of feeling shy and

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embarrassed all the time… I still don't feel like I'm very good at Japanese, and I still get

discouraged frequently, but I also feel like I'm understanding more and more everyday.

… And honestly, I don't know if the feeling will stay. (interview, March 11, 2013)

In this statement, she used incongruous and contradictory terms several times to express that her

increased self-confidence was counterbalanced by a persistent sense of inferiority in language

learning. The phrase "more and more" described how she had obtained a sense of achievement;

while the other phrase "discouraged frequently" exhibits the frustration she felt as her language

proficiency reached a plateau. These expressions demonstrate that her perception of language

learning oscillated between elation and depression. The wider and more unpredictable the

fluctuation became, the more she was perplexed over the meanings learning Japanese held for

her:

It may sound strange…but for some reason, ever since I started I've always felt that

learning Japanese is something that I have to do. It almost feels like it's inevitable that I

will continue trying to learn Japanese for my whole life, and there's nothing I can really

do about it. It's kind of a strange feeling, but it means that even when I'm feeling down,

it feels like I have no choice but to keep going. (interview, March 11, 2013)

The words and phrases "something that I have to do/inevitable/strange /no choice" intimate a

compulsion to revitalize her motivation toward learning. Furthermore, the last phrase "no choice

but to keep going" indicates that her endless journey of Japanese learning had become a nuisance.

It also evoked the exhausting and intolerable nature of her continued uncertainty about her

overreaching goal for the learning experience.

Sophie's struggles to discern the significance of learning Japanese were intensified not

only by her experiences outside the classroom, but also by her difficulties understanding

Japanese society and culture. Collectively, they induced her to embrace her American identity. For example, she was uncomfortable with Japanese people's perceived tendencies to hide their true emotions, which were different from the direct and honest style of communication practiced in her home country. Moreover, the Japanese social structure that emphasizes gender hierarchy prompted her to rediscover more instances of freedom enjoyed by American women, which she associated positively with being American.

> It seems like that the more I learn about Japanese culture the more I realize it's not really a good fit for me. …I don't think I'm ready to settle down yet through. …But now, I have discovered that American culture is a better fit for me than I ever thought it was before. (interview, March 11, 2013)

Sophie's expression "I don't think I'm ready to settle down yet" reveals her bewilderment at the incongruity between her increased sense of being American and her perception of learning Japanese as "treasure chest." Taking one step forward and two steps back, Sophie's struggle seemed endless; however, the end of her study abroad was approaching.

The End: Returning Home After Self-Reinvention

Sophie's last interview took place in Japan several weeks before she would depart for home. It was a bright and sunny early summer day. Sophie often showed exuberant smiles, which gave the impression that she had regained some degree of her confidence. The conversation started with her overall reflections on having stayed in Japan. She stated in a forthright tone:

> I think [Japanese culture] just doesn't quite fit with me, personally. I think I've been here long enough for now. I'm ready to go home (laughing). …Like, I have, I have another

path to set out on. Now that I know what it takes I'm ready to get started on it. (interview,

May 12, 2013)

Her use of the phrases "long enough/ready to go home/ another path/get started" clearly

insinuates that the prolonged vulnerability and volatility that she went through during study

abroad were finally over. Her confident assertion "[Japanese culture] just doesn't quite fit with

me" denotes that her refutation of Japanese culture and society had intensified during her last

few months; however, this repudiation promoted further exploration of selfhood at times:

One of the things living here has taught me is that I'm a lot more American than I thought.

…I think, I just like to… I like the way that I like to live, I like to… I like to work on my

own things, and worry about what's going on in my own life, try not to involve other

people. …I realized that's not who I am. It's not how I want to live. …I mean, because in

my whole life, I've been someone who I've never been afraid to stand out or to be

different from other people. …I've wanted to be a strong person. I wanted to be respected

for who I am. And not have to feel like I needed to hide anything or behave a certain way.

And it's something that's encouraged in American culture. (interview, May 12, 2013)

This statement is characterized by a binary distinction between her feelings of affirmation

towards American culture and renunciation towards Japanese culture, which clearly signifies that

she had gradually but firmly embraced an American sense of self. This sense of self accordingly

influenced her view of the Japanese language, as she put it: "[Learning Japanese] is not where

I'm going to make my career" (interview, May 12, 2013). In fact, she had come to abandon her

faith in learning Japanese and shifted towards "another path"—a decision to carve out a niche for

herself in costume design, which she had long been interested in along with Japanese culture: "I

always kind of thought of doing any sort of art wouldn't really make a good job, but he more I

learn about things and the more I'm exposed to them, the more I see that's it's actually possible"
(May 12, 2013). This statement symbolizes her realization of the answer to the question "what
am I looking for" that she made before her departure for Japan. In this sense, it can be considered
as the breakthrough after a long-drawn-out negotiation to find a way of understanding the self
and the world that she had been involved with in the past and present. In the process, the
juxtaposition between her feelings of love and hate towards American and Japanese cultures had
evoked a great deal of confusion, isolation, loneliness, self-disillusionment, and depression.
However, her newfound understanding eventuated from this predicament, which was a
considerably important part of the process of negotiating possibilities of selfhood and finding
personal significance. It also reveals that the irreducible process of self-redefinition is a part of
the progression of learners' second language acquisition.

The complex nature of identity construction in a second language acquisition will be
illustrated by further examining her study abroad experiences in terms of her perceptions of a
different culture. From the foregoing examinations of her entire study abroad experience, it
seemed that Sophie's perceptions of American and Japanese culture were delineated by the
simple distinction of love and hate at the end of her study abroad. However, our final interview
revealed that her attitudes toward Japanese culture had undergone another change: she had
conceived of cultural differences as acceptable and tolerable because she was at last able to
build-up a close friendship with a Japanese student, Makiko. The next essay describes her
friendship with Makiko:

> I came here only knowing one person. Now I know hundreds more. My friend's list on
> Facebook has tripled in site since the time I've been here, but mostly with people who I
> don't even remember. I don't make friends very easily under best of circumstances, and

having a cultural barrier to work through on top of that made it hard for me to feel very

close with anyone here. I have a few foreign exchange students who at the end of this

experience I can count as real friends, but only one of my new friends is Japanese. (essay,

May 12, 2013)

Her emphasis on having "only one" Japanese friend among "hundreds more" illuminates how

meaningful this friendship was for Sophie, who had suffered from despair and loneliness in her

new environment. Hence, the friendship with Makiko brought her the elation of having a new

friend as well as well surprise at the unexpected connection with someone from the culture that

she had conceived as existing behind an impenetrable boundary. The next statement

demonstrates how her perception of different cultures broadened:

Life [in Japan] is just as good and as just bad as in America. It reminds you that for

whatever reason everything has evolved differently in different places, but it's all evolved

together, it all knows how to work together. (interview, May 12, 2013)

Her use of phrases "just as good and just as bad as" intimates the she had ceased to evaluate the

customs of one culture as being better or worse than those of another and begun to accept each

culture as it is. This view also widened her perceptions of human life as something that is holistic

and universal across cultures. Additionally, these phrases reveal an incongruity between her

increased sense of Americanness and her broadened perception of different cultures. This

contradiction appears to be inexplicable; however, Teule's (2014) notion of "returning home"

can be invoked to show how it exists within a larger process of self-discovery or self-reinvention.

Returning home is recognizing you are whole already. It's recognizing that there is no

need to repair yourself or restore something… It's understanding that you no longer have

to heal yourself but can trust and embrace every inch of who you are. Recognizing that

we are whole already is like making a u-turn. It's like coming back from a long, virtual trip searching for healing and acknowledgement outside of ourselves, realizing that what we were looking for was always right here. (Teule, 2014, para. 2-3)

Applying Teule's notion to Sophie's case, she had a realization that there was no need to change herself by erasing her past as she pushed the reset button; rather she could embrace herself as she was. The next statement regarding her view of self further supports Teule's theory. It was made after reviewing all the essays and poems that were written throughout her study abroad:

I think, uh…, I guess, I guess (pause)…uh, it feels like personally I'm not very different than I was before I came here, my personality…but I feel like perhaps I've grown up. I mean I'm still the same person but I know more about who that person it is. (interview, May 12, 2013)

The expressions "I've grown up" and "I know more about who that person it is" imply a boosted sense of self-esteem. Her major goals of study abroad—experiencing personal growth and finding herself—were attained.

To conclude our final interview, I asked Sophie to define the significance of her study abroad experience. She replied: "I think the…having to rebuild myself in relation to a new environment has perhaps made me stronger and made me more sure of who I am and how I want to live my life" (interview, May 12, 2013). This definition affirms Kramsch's contention that language learners pursue "a way of generating an identity for themselves, of finding personal significance" (2009, p. 15). In this sense, it becomes apparent that the full importance of language learning cannot be understood without considering humanistic aspects of students' lives (Hanauer, 2010, 2012). In Sophie's case, when she opened the *treasure chest,* what she discovered in there was not related to Japanese language learning; nonetheless, she gained the

answer of who she was through this experience abroad.

The ramification of Sophie's experience raises one final question: Was Sophie's study abroad ultimately successful? In light of her behavior and performance in her formal Japanese classes, her teachers might answer negatively. However, she had in fact achieved her personal pre-study abroad goals. In addition, she found a niche for herself.

Now the *fledgling* had found the proper path—to return home. This time, she had become a hawk, soaring in graceful majesty with her strong wings into the cloudless sky.

Closing Remarks on Sophie

The overall contours of Sophie's case reflected the highs and lows of her emotionality, which simultaneously prompted shifts in her perceptions of self. Depending upon how she viewed herself, her subjective definitions of language learning varied at different times (see Table 5). At the pre-study abroad stage, her sense of alienation in her home country fueled an idealistic enthusiasm for learning language abroad, which she felt would enable her to redefine herself and bring about a dynamic life-change. Additionally, she anticipated that learning Japanese would be the key to discovering her future; although she was uncertain about her overarching goals for study abroad.

Table 5

Overall Contours of Sophie's Case

Period	Subjective views of self-positionality	Subjective definitions of study abroad	Subjective definitions of language learning	Future goals
Pre-study abroad	Sense of alienation in her home country; Illusory sense of purpose for study abroad and learning language abroad	Site to grow as an adult, to reinvent oneself, to find a meaningful life direction and a place where she "fits-in well"	The key to a "treasure chest" to redefine herself, to bring about a dynamic life-change, and to discover her future career	No specific overarching goals, but to find a future direction for a fulfilling and meaningful life in Japan
First half of study abroad	Ambiguous identities attributed to her disoriented positionality between her home country and Japan	At a loss of meanings of study abroad	Disheartening; thoughts about learning Japanese changed everyday	Uncertain and vague
Middle of study abroad	Despair and overwhelmed by the totality of loss	Urging her on to a concrete determination of a specific future direction	Sense of pressure: no choice other than learning Japanese that would guide her future life path	No clear goals: "I didn't know really what I was getting into and I didn't know what would do for me."
Second half of study abroad	Volatile emotionality between boosted self-confidence and persistent sense of inferiority	The sole way to pursue new possibilities of selfhood and future	Compulsion and exasperation about a long and endless journey of learning	
End of study abroad	Boosted self-confidence	"to rebuild myself in relation to a new environment has perhaps made me stronger and made me more sure of who I am and how I want to live my life"	no more faith in learning Japanese; shifted towards an intention to pursue her future career in costume design	"[Learning Japanese] is not where I'm going to make my career. I have another path to set out on."

Despite her expectations, a series of negative experiences in the early stage of her study

abroad left her in a disoriented and disheartened subject position. This made her purpose for

learning Japanese more elusive and even evoked her skepticism about finding new possibilities

of selfhood. Moreover, her state of vexation toward Japanese culture aggravated this uncertainty,

and her subjective perception of self became ambiguous.

Her parents' divorce in the middle of her study abroad, however, compelled her to determine some concrete possibilities for her future life and career through learning Japanese. While she was holding the belief of Japanese language as her fate in life, her feelings oscillated between increased self-confidence and a persistent sense of inferiority, which made her struggle to sort out her thoughts of what it meant to learn Japanese during the second half of her study abroad. Because her persistent refutation of Japanese culture and society had intensified even further at the end of her study abroad, she firmly embraced her identity as being American. Simultaneously, she ceased to view learning Japanese as her fate; rather she found possibilities of selfhood in a different field.

Although the ramifications of Sophie's insights about what it means to learn language were fluid and fragmentary throughout her ongoing process of redefining herself, the table above demonstrates that they did unfold in discernable stages. In contrast, Sophie's subjective definitions of study abroad fairly remained consistent throughout her time in Japan as she persevered to find herself for personal growth. This ramification revealed her primary purpose for studying Japanese was not related to any instrumentalist objectives; rather she sought to solve an identity issue through her study abroad experiences and did in fact achieve this goal, albeit in a way that involved learning Japanese to a far lesser degree than what she had originally anticipated.

Case Study 2: Dustin

Pre-Departure: Distinguishing Oneself from Others

Dustin, an American Caucasian male student in his early twenties, was a senior physics major. While he emphasized his identity as a scientist, he was always enthusiastic about learning

the Japanese language. He derived gratification from studying these seemingly disparate subjects because he had believed that learning them in tandem would allow him to establish a special niche to succeed in the science field. Under the pressure of academic competition, he had sought to outperform his peers and therefore distinguish himself by learning Japanese. Thus, his strategy was to integrate the linguistic and cultural knowledge he would gain from foreign language learning into his already solidly grounded knowledge of science in order to succeed. This idea was prompted by his critical view toward the majority of his peers, who relatively neglected to study subjects outside their field, such as the humanities and social sciences: "A lot of my fellow science friends, they get so focused on science and they only know science" (interview, January 4, 2012). Hence, by exceeding what he regarded as their narrow and insular views, he intended to utilize his language skills as a clincher to win the academic competition and achieve his career goal of becoming an engineer who also engaged in international business between Japan and the United States.

Since Dustin was a high school student, he had been slowly cultivating a plan to fulfill this dream, and he made noteworthy achievements in each stage. For example, after he identified Japan as one of the major countries in his intended field, he studied Japanese on his own by using the book entitled "Dummies' Guide to Japanese" for a year before entering college. At university, he completed three years of formal Japanese language courses along with all of the required classes for his major (interview, August 3, 2012). Now that he was accepted to a study abroad program in Japan for a nine-month period during the final year of his undergraduate career, he was ready to move on to his next target, which was to master the Japanese language. The next statement clearly exhibits his perception of language learning as career-oriented. It was made during our first interview several weeks before his departure for Japan:

I want to have at least the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) 2 level. That's my

goal…at least for my intermediate business interactions like, once I get into a master's

degree work, it's gonna be an engineering degree and an international business degree at

the same time. So if I have at least one leg which especially one leg is Japanese which is

another fellow Neuroscience country that I can fully communicate in, it'll be really

helpful. So my goal is maybe to get the JLPT 2 in the next year to two years somewhere

in that timeframe. (interview, August 3, 2012)

This elaborate and sequential plan for his future signifies a sort of credo that the Japanese

language would be vital to his success. It was essential for him to have concrete verification of

his advanced Japanese language proficiency in the form of a standardized test score. Although

his view of learning Japanese was tied solely to external signifiers of prestige, elite status and

career success, his poem and essay about the upcoming trip divulge a slightly different view,

which relates to a more internal sense of self. The poem, which was written in the Japanese

traditional *haiku* form with three lines and a 5-7-5-syllable structure, introduces the central

metaphor of being on stage, which Dustin then elaborated upon in his essay.

Poem

Stage is lit, house full

Murmurs, chatters, and tension

Of heart, set to burst

(August 3, 2012)

Essay

It's a big opening, similar to a slightly unprepared actor on a packed house for opening

night. There is a lot of pressure to do well, mixed with excitement for getting the first chance to perform. There are a lot of people who have supported you up to now, but when you step on stage, it is all up to you to deliver the performance. (August, 3, 2012)

The term *stage* implies the multilayered emotions and meanings associated with study abroad. It signifies his high degree of self-consciousness about how others viewed him, as if he were standing alone in the spotlight. The phrase in the first line of the essay "a slightly unprepared actor" indicates his nervousness, fear, and anxiety. The description of the atmosphere in the poem—the *full house* theater and the audience's *murmur* and *chatters* about whether he would be successful in his first performance—describes his state as being tortured by this highly tense situation. The last sentence of the essay, "it is all up to you to deliver the performance*"* illuminates that his appraisal of his own self-worth depended upon obtaining validation from the audience, which metaphorically represents his peers, and probably his parents, as can be seen in another statement that revealed his intention to meet his parents' expectations by studying abroad: "like my parents… because they are in Michigan, they haven't really seen what I've done. …I really wanna do well and get there, so that I can actually say, 'Hey, I did this. I told you I was doing well'." (interview, August 3, 2012). In this sense, he seemed to conceive of the stage as the site where everything hinged on what he would do: If he did not succeed, his failures would be exposed to the public; if he did, however, he would turn out to be a star. As such, the *stage* represents his view of language learning abroad as the dividing line between victory and defeat. However, why did he view it in this way?

Dustin's view of language learning abroad might be connected to his subjective position as an accomplished student. As a science student, he was undoubtedly positioning himself as highly skilled and successful; but his imagination of what it would be like to study in a foreign

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country might have staggered his self-confidence because he was possibly experiencing some subconscious doubt about his possibilities for success beneath his confident exterior. This doubt may have stemmed from his understanding of what it meant to study abroad, which was shaped by the prevalent discursive myth that studying foreign languages gives one elite status and makes one secure in one's identity (Kinginger, 2010; Kramsch, 2009) or what Kramsch (2009) termed "symbolic form." In other words, Dustin, unlike Sophie, did not have an individualized subjective definition of study abroad, but rather subscribed to the idealized cognitive models available in the community. His uncertainty, hence, can be understood as a ramification of the tension between his surface level conviction in the mythic benefits of study abroad and his lingering subliminal doubts about his abilities to achieve his goals.

In sum, these foregoing quotes reveal that his perception of learning language abroad was defined by complexity and existed at the intersection of his strong self-confidence and the ambiguity that he was beginning to feel. Later during his initial interview, Dustin used the metaphor of peering through a keyhole to imply an expectation of vast changes that lay on the horizon:

> [I see myself as] very much … a small person that has a lot to learn. I feel like, I have a tiny little keyhole that I'm seeing through, and there's a wide world on the other side. I want to … I want to open the door, see what's there, and be totally open to learn. Be there and actually have it come at you. I'd be totally receptive. That's what I want to do. I see myself as just like a very much humble outsider that just sort of wants to be like, 'Just teach me what you will.' (interview, August 3, 2012)

Even within this single interview, his subjective understanding of language learning abroad as a wholly instrumentalist method of achieving status and prestige has already shifted inwardly

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toward a more identity-centric conception. In fact, this perception would continuously change throughout his entire study abroad as his views of self were altered. Furthermore, his initial understanding of study abroad as a means of redefining himself as elite would be undermined during his experience abroad, leading him to be plagued by feelings of mediocrity and question whether he possessed the capacity to achieve his lofty goals.

The First Half: Two Conflicting Identities

Dustin's second interview took place four months later, after his first semester in Japan had finished. He reminisced about those days and described them as a roller coaster: "It's definitely a coaster… in the first [quarter] I was like going up and coming down, and the second [quarter] was bottoming out and coming back up" (interview, January 4, 2013). Around the time he arrived in Japan, he experienced positive and happy feelings by exploring new things; however, these feelings gradually went down and reached a low point a few months later. Because he realized that his initial plan for vocational success—the harmonious integration of his scientific knowledge and Japanese language proficiency—actually led to a perplexing identity conflict:

> I have a lot of qualities of a science major of … someone who's focused on the sciences is very rational and is interested in more technological and technology side of the social spectrum. But also I have this other side of me back home. That's very outgoing, and positive, and likes to go out, and do things and have fun. I realized those are very contrasting, and when I tried to still use that personality when I first arrived here. It's very difficult for me. I am sort of like… 'He fits into this group, but he fits also into that group, we don't know where he will go!' (interview, January 4, 2013)

As Dustin's decision to juxtapose his "qualities of a science major" and "this other side of me" demonstrate, he analyzed himself to elucidate this unsettled identity position. The subsequent

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statement "I realized those are very contrasting" indicates some surprise and shock at the unexpected discovery that he had two incongruous and contradictory dispositions: one was a studious identity rooted in a strong command of scientific subject matter, and the other was an outgoing identity centered on being multilingual and possessing intercultural competence. His statement, "It's very difficult for me," signifies his state as being stressed, confused and uneasy because these dispositions seemed difficult for him to reconcile:

> Umm… I was very much someone who was serious about studies and very focused. But I was stressed in doing it for weeks. I wanted to have a chance to go out and relax, have a good time just escape it for a little while, but the friends I made, they are interested in going dancing and things like that. (interview, January 4, 2013)

Starting with the expression "umm…," he reflected on how he was dividing his time between two contradictory type of friend groups (one group prioritized studying even during free time while the other focused on socializing and leisure activities). He noticed that this identity position was awkward and disoriented, and these dispositions seemed incompatible. Yet, he actually still stove to conceive of this struggle as a necessary challenge to achieve his goal: "And, yes, there's a part of me that wants to know about science, but I want to have other interests as well. I want to be able to bridge that gap that gets built up" (interview, January 4, 2013). Despite his ambition, this optimistic mentality did not last as long as he had hoped because he encountered a crucial moment when he realized his dual identities interfered with socialization. This moment occurred at a Halloween party which both of his different friend groups attended:

> That night both groups were there, and it just a sort of showed that in that moment I was much more in one than the other. I spent so much more time with the study group, which

happened last semester, that I felt guilty for spending that time. It was an odd feeling.

(interview, January 4, 2013)

Being confronted with the co-existence of both groups in the same space led Dustin to an

allegiance conflict. As he felt *guilty* and *odd,* he clearly recognized the incongruity between his

studious and outgoing identities as deterring and problematic at this point. This realization

triggered frustration and a sense of defeat because he believed that cultivating these identities

simultaneously was one of his plans to achieve a successful career, but it seemed beyond his

capability.

There were additional incidences that aggravated his frustration, which was culture shock

that he often encountered. One of these experiences took place on Halloween day. As the

following remark describes, he realized that some behaviors and attitudes that he had conceived

as acceptable in the United States were viewed as awkward or strange in Japanese society:

We were all characters from 'Scooby-Doo.' And I had one of the more embarrassing

characters, and because of that at the time I signed up for it, I was very much like, 'yeah,

I totally have to do this. It'll be fun. It'll be cool and goofy. It's okay to be crazy and rude'

But 'Oh, wait. That's American culture.' (interview, January 4, 2013)

After being encouraged by his American peers to wear his Halloween outfit all day, he went to

school wearing a Scooby-Doo dog costume for fun; however, he found that this American humor

was utterly intolerable in the new culture. Such moments of culture shock undermined Dustin's

pre-study abroad belief that he possessed greater intercultural competence than the typical

American. He had even refuted his American identity before arriving in Japan; as he stated, "I

came here not really accepting that I was an American" (interview, May 11, 2013). Though

Dustin did not make any explicit statements in regard to why he had repudiated his American

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identity, it was still noticeable that his struggles with his limited knowledge of Japanese culture changed his view of self and extended to his attitudes toward social interactions:

Yeah. [I] had to accept that [I'm] American… It's sort of…letting people know that yes, I'm going to try to adapt into the culture but there is also going to be some things that will be difficult for me. Please be aware of them and accept that fact. (interview, January 4, 2013).

While this remark outwardly indicates his wish for patience from others and an acceptance of his failure to understand the new culture, it also signifies that such failure had prompted him to revert to a perception of self that was centered on his Americanness.

Dustin's overall experiences on Halloween day signify the moments that were bound to awaken his sense of suspicion about whether he would be able to attain his ambition, as if he would win a great preeminence by becoming a splendid star on the *stage*. His sense of superiority that he held before study abroad accordingly faded. The next poem, which Dustin wrote around that time, connotes his perceived state of being mediocre. It was considerably different from his first poem, which conveyed his anxiety but also emphasized his energy and optimism on the colorful and marvelous setting of the stage. Quite to the contrary, his second poem illustrates murkiness and dejection:

A flow without stop,

A howling wind, blade on stone

An edge without light

(October 1, 2012)

This poem was also written in haiku form, but whereas the first poem is clearly centered on the metaphor of the stage, this poem presents a highly esoteric series of sensory images and demands

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more extensive interpretation; however, his use of the phrase "blade on stone" in the second line brings to mind *Excalibur*, the mythical sword of King Arthur in a British folktale. According to the legend, Arthur obtained the throne of the king after pulling Excalibur from a stone. The image of "blade on stone," therefore, evokes the concept of triumph. In contrast to Arthur, however, Dustin viewed himself as too feeble to overcome his present struggle as reflected in the first line: "a flow without stop." Hence, this line implies his state as being powerless, disappointed, and at a loss because the sword that he wished to pull out still remained in the stone and "a howling wind" hindered him from filling his wish. Furthermore, his phrase in the last line "without light" stresses his faint hope to win the throne. His attempt to play King Arthur on the stage did not proceed as it had in the folktale.

The alteration of Dustin's views of self aligned with a slight change in his subjective definitions of language learning abroad. Although he still emphasized the significance of verifying his language proficiency via standardized tests during his second interview, he additionally conceived of language learning abroad as a site of understanding selfhood through social interactions in the new environment:

> [Language learning] is both intercultural understanding and personal identity because by learning, (pause) by learning how to interact with others from different areas, you increase your own consciousness about how you naturally interact with people and you increase your own consciousness about how others interact in their settings. And to fill and grow and to also add on to that you've done. (interview, January 4, 2013)

The expressions "you increase your own consciousness" and "to fill and grow and to also add on that you've done" indicate how his view of language learning shifted inwardly toward a more personal and identity-centric conception from his previous view that was solely tied to external

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signifiers of prestige and career success. This change occurred as he experienced his identity conflict. As Dustin took up different subject positions in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to reconcile his allegiance conflict between two different friend groups, he found himself oscillating between senses of affiliation and distance. This in turn led him to perceive his own identity as fluid, fragmentary and vulnerable. The experience also raised his consciousness about who he was. Additionally, his experiences of culture shock changed his subjective view of language learning abroad. He had to apologize to others due to his limited understanding of Japanese culture, which unceasingly deteriorated the self-confidence that Dustin had established since the time he was a high school student. However, these occurrences also drove him to reconsider his identity as being American.

In the last statement of his second interview, he reflected on how he perceived himself at this point of his study abroad: "I'm a lot more humble than I was before" (interview, January 4, 2013). This quote supports the interpretation that his self-image as King Arthur on the stage had already changed to a subordinate position of begging on his knees for forgiveness from the king. This shift in subjective identity position prompted him to contemplate selfhood—who he was, what he could do, and how to act in the social world—for both intrapersonal and interpersonal growth.

The Second Half: Redefinition of Self

The ordeals that Dustin experienced during the first half of his study abroad resulted in lingering effects even after the second half had begun. In fact, he was still struggling to completely abandon the pursuit of a better solution to obtain a congruent position between his studious and outgoing identities. Hence, he strove to persevere with this challenge for a while.

Despite his dogged trial, there would be a clinching event that pushed him toward the studious

identity, which was the international fair that his university hosted.

The purpose of the fair was to promote cultural exchange between the university's

international students and the local Japanese residents. He was extremely keen on performing a

leading role of a consultant who would guide both his international and Japanese peers to a

successful event by mediating different ideas between these two cultural groups. This was

because he thought this role would be also personally beneficial in order to realize his prolonged

pursuit of harmony between his two identities. However, as the preparations for the event

proceeded, he found that this project was actually developed solely under Japanese teachers and

students' leadership; hence, he did not have any power to organize and run the fair, which caused

him to feel stressed and offended:

> It's a very uncomfortable position to be in, as my counterpart's actions do not inspire me
>
> to trust [Japanese teachers and students] … Normally, I enjoy leadership, as it allows me
>
> to really step into my own and command and guide others easily. But I'm kept from that
>
> position, so it is very unrewarding, as compared to my normal role and forte (interview,
>
> March 18, 2013).

Within a myriad of confusion and anger, he struggled to understand who actually inhabited a

leader's role and what his leadership position meant in this context. Furthermore, his consulting

partnership with a Japanese male student made him realize how superficial his leadership role

was. Dustin tried to exchange ideas with him to guide and develop the fair, but the partner

seemed reluctant to discuss the ideas that Dustin brought on behalf of the international students

because the Japanese student prejudged international students as lacking knowledge of the

Japanese societal system and particularly teacher-student relations: "my ideas and advice are not

listened to" (interview, March 18, 2012). Although the Japanese student's presumption caused Dustin's frustration, his emotion can be also attributed at least partially to his incomplete understanding of Japanese culture. In fact, there was a hierarchy of power in Japanese culture that Dustin was not able to identify. In this hierarchy, those who were in superior positions (e.g., administrators and teachers) had predominant authority and did not leave much responsibility to those who in subordinate positions—in this case international students. Although he was willing to fulfill what he perceived as the learner's duties by adopting an active and assertive role in coordinating the fair, he was actually expected to have only a ceremonial function:

> Japanese students/teachers are the stated organizers. The teachers do a lot of work. The students though rely a lot on the foreign exchange student consultant to make decisions and run events. The international students are just entering into the situation now, so my interaction with [teachers] is quite minimal. (interview, March 18, 2013)

This statement demonstrates Dustin's disappointment that his attempt to be a leader was received indifferently or dismissively by Japanese people. This misunderstanding can be attributed to the Japanese cultural principle that strong individualism is transgressive, as reflected in the well-known Japanese saying *deru kugi wa utareru* [the nail that sticks up gets pounded down]. This experience led him to realize that he was in dire straits for building up greater individual autonomy in Japanese culture, which also brought him a sense of nostalgia for the idea of freedom in American culture. Since Dustin had this distressful experience, he had adopted a more cynical view of Japanese society. From his perspective, the so-called "international fair" was not developed through a collaborative process between Japanese and international students; rather the international students were treated as decorations in order to attract as many local residents as possible: "Though it is vexing, … it makes it seem that foreigners are there to be

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utilized rather than interacted with…They are excluded from the local culture" (interview, March 18, 2013). Overall, this experience prompted further doubts about whether he would be able to stake out a niche through learning Japanese culture and language. This doubt led him to return to the question of whether he still should seek out a congruent identity position by studying both science and Japanese.

Around this time, Dustin was in the process of applying to graduate schools in the United States. He had several interviews with professors and obtained some information about how he could continuously build up his science knowledge and skills for his future career. The more he understood how enrollment in a graduate program would possibly be brought to fruition, the more his sense that science was his true vocation grew within him. Therefore, his application procedures became the milestone where he conclusively determined to define himself in terms of his studious identity.

> I'm just sort of, becoming more and more excited about being [at graduate school in the United States]. So I think I'll [probably] come back to wanting to balance stuff with them, [but] right now because of that momentum building up, I want to be [a scientist], it's driving toward that way… right now I have a motive to [be] the one [rather] than two. (interview, May 12, 2013)

The statements "it's driving toward that way" and "I have a motive to [be] the one" demonstrate that Dustin's initial pursuit of dual identities was redirected toward a single one. This change also established his motive for going back to his country and soaking further into his sense of Americaness. As such, his excitement about entering graduate school and the negative impressions of Japanese culture he had accrued had collectively changed his subjective definition of language learning abroad from a serious learning experience into a frivolous and pleasurable

activity: "I am on vacation while taking courses here … it is a holiday for me, rather than serious study" (interview, March 18, 2012). His pre-study abroad view of language learning as an underlying aspect of his future career had been utterly abandoned at this point of his study abroad.

The End: Reflections

The last interview with Dustin took place in Japan about two weeks before he returned to his home country. The major theme in this interview was his reflections on his entire study abroad experiences, particularly his overall views of language learning and study abroad. In regard to the former, he expressed uncertainty about how much he would devote himself to studying Japanese in the future:

> Getting into grad school made me lose a lot of drive to continue my Japanese. I don't know. I'm going to continue it obviously, but I think the issue is that at this point I've been too long away from what I want to do, I love Japanese but my main love is really science. (interview May 12, 2013)

As this quote presents, Dustin's views of learning Japanese had become far more unenthusiastic and negative as compared to his original perspectives. In contrast to this view, his perception of the overall study abroad experience was positive. As portrayed in the poem below, he conceived of it as being meaningful to his personal life. He composed it both in Japanese and English:

> 部品から
>
> 他の道まで
>
> 開けられる

from some part

until another part

it can open

(May 12, 2013)

Inlaid with figurative expressions in the short poetic form of haiku, he was trying to articulate his complex thoughts and feelings about his experience abroad in words, but it seems to be an attempt to express the inexpressible to some degree. Because of the complexity of the poem, the researcher asked him additional explanations about the poem, as the following conversation shows (*R* is the researcher, *D* is Dustin):

R: What did you try to say?

D: Umm… (pause)

R: What were you trying to say?

D: What I'm trying to say is… that there is the part you tend to be, but from there, other things can also happen. There is the part that society will try to plug you into, and there's the part that you choose to play. So it's going from the cog to finding something different to open yourself up to you.

R: You mean, you came here as the cog, but after getting here..

R & D: Other things happened (simultaneously)

R: which led you to a different path.

D: That's it!!

(May 12, 2013)

The "part" or the cog, represents Dustin's pre-study abroad desired self; he imagined that he could become an internationally sophisticated scientist through language learning abroad. This

self-image was more or less shaped by his initial cynicism about his science major peers who, in Dustin's view, had narrow and insular views of studying subjects outside of their field. This cynicism at least partially boosted his motivation to learn Japanese, which extendedly triggered his desire for outperforming his peers in order to distinguish himself. Furthermore, his success in Japanese courses at college drove him to form an idealistic self-image; he believed that he possessed greater intercultural competence than the typical American and therefore refuted his American identity. He arrived in Japan carrying the belief that he would be well suited to Japanese culture; however, the cog in fact did not fit as well as he had expected because of myriad struggles with identity conflict and culture shock. Hence, the cog sought out another place to better fit itself into—a graduate science program in the United States. The last stanza, "it can open" illustrates that his study abroad had reached an unexpected conclusion but also that he was fulfilled by the renewed hope for a new path.

Summarizing his subjective meaning of study abroad, Dustin stated, "I learned a lot about myself" (interview, May 12, 2013). Subsequently, he added another subjective definition that he had formed through his experience of sojourning abroad—the importance of understanding cultural differences. Despite retaining some degree of disappointment about Japan, Dustin perceived other cultures not as simply distinct or divided from his own. Similar to Sophie, he conceived of cultural differences as a site where humans still can find a way to compensate for the gaps:

> I would say, I'm gonna keep open as… I mean, I've learned that besides becoming accepting of who I am as a person, I'm also learning that other cultures are different but you can still attract them. It's not one mind trying to shout desperately to another. It's two people talking. Everyone is actually connecting. There is something there. There are

these underlying things that bridge gaps and this expectation showed me it is possible to bridge the gap between America and Japan. Yeah, it can be done. That's the largest thing I will take away for personal efforts, for professional efforts. (interview, May 12, 2013)

This statement seems to be contradicted by his decision to abandon the pursuit of integration between his intercultural and science knowledge. However, it also suggests that this pursuit had not yet completely vanished. It certainly still remained, albeit in a different way. In other words, his previous illusory and idealistic sense of purpose for study abroad was replaced with a more sensible and practical conception. To explain more fully, the world that Dustin peeked into from a little keyhole before study abroad was a mirage conjured up by his longing; however, the mirage disappeared as he opened the door. What he saw out there was actually himself, who suffered from and struggled with self-disenchantment and self-doubt. However, this experience opened the way for him to pursue his personal significance and guide him to a more viable direction. Furthermore, he had come to see the world at large rather than from an atomistic perspective, and his sense of reciprocity with other cultures grew in the end. Tyler's (1992) notion that language learning abroad is a site of "a quest for a horizon of significance larger than the self" (Kramsch, 2009 p.15) epitomizes Dustin's entire experience abroad.

Closing Remarks on Dustin

The overall contour of Dustin's study abroad experience reflected a drastic change in his feelings and attitudes toward language learning, from great passionate enthusiasm to a near total renunciation. Table 6 recapitulates the dynamics of Dustin's journey.

Table 6

Overall Contours of Dustin's Case

Period	Subjective views of self-positionality	Subjective definitions of study abroad	Subjective definitions of language learning	Future goals
Pre-study abroad	Enthusiasm for attaining eminence in his major field; Refutation of being American	Path to becoming elite, and a site to present a validation of his capabilities to others	Instrumental and mechanical means of achieving his idealistic career goal	To become an engineer who engages in international business between Japan and the U.S.
First half of study abroad	Self-disappointment, lurking self-doubt, a sense of mediocrity, and reverting to his sense of identity as being American	Site of struggles to sort out one's feelings about selfhood, studying and life	Site to improve intercultural understanding although views of it as instrumental means still remained	Striving to keep his initial goal amid a sense of self-doubt that caused turbulence
Second half of study abroad	Embracing his identity as being American by criticizing Japanese culture	Site to dimly discern his future life path by experiencing difficulties with cultural differences	Frivolous and pleasurable activity	Starting application procedures for graduate schools in the U.S.
End of study abroad	Acceptance of self identities as American	Site to open a new page in life, learn about oneself and improve sense of reciprocity with other cultures	Peripheral to his main study and future career but more sensible and practical view of language learning	Find his own niche by deciding to enter graduate school to focus on science

Furthermore, the aforementioned analysis of Dustin's case elucidated why this change occurred. As in Sophia's case, Dustin's sense of self—who he was and what he thought of himself—was sensory and complex because it was tangled up with his imagination, emotions, feelings, memories and desires. Because some of these sensory elements exist in deep recesses of mind and body, humans sometimes cannot be conscious of their existence. Furthermore, they are fleeting and fluctuating entities depending upon time and place. These features made it difficult for Dustin to understand himself. For this reason, he experienced an identity conflict. This conflict unveiled the lurking self-doubt that he subconsciously had before study abroad, and then his initial great passion for learning Japanese declined.

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Another reason for changing his feeling about language learning was that his sense of self constantly changed in his day-to-day life in the foreign environment, which prompted him to incessantly reconstruct his views on studying Japanese. As such, when he observed himself refuting cultural differences and losing his ambition to acquire Japanese during the second half of his study abroad, his subjective meaning of language learning accordingly altered into negativity. However, this change also brought about an alternation of his subjective meaning of study abroad in the end. He conceived of it as a life transforming experience by accepting himself and finding his niche in science.

Overall, the conclusion of Dustin's case bears a striking resemblance to that of Sophie's case; both support Hanauer's (2012) contention that language learning is a "significant, potentially life changing event" (p. 105). Considered collectively, Sophie and Dustin's cases reaffirm the need to challenge pervasive assumptions that language learning is a wholly cognitive process in favor of models that depict it as a series of meaningful life experiences (Hanauer, 2012).

Case Study 3: Connor

Before His First Study Abroad: From Childhood to College

Connor, an American Caucasian male, was in his senior year when the researcher interviewed him for the first time. It took place a month prior to his departure from the United States. During our conversation, he reminisced about his first study abroad, which had taken place two years prior and consisted of a yearlong intensive language program at a university in south-central Japan. Because he felt that this experience had helped him improve his language proficiency, he decided to return. The second study abroad would last four months, and he also intended to explore the possibility of finding a full-time job in Japan after graduating. As such,

he planned to complete the final semester of his university career while abroad in Japan. During his first interview, he also expounded on his life journey—from his childhood, the time he entered college, his first sojourn abroad, until shortly before his second departure to Japan. This progression elucidated how he had reached his decision to return. Since Connor was young, he had felt some sense of alienation in his home culture: "In America, I always felt like out of place a little bit, you know" (interview, November 17, 2012). This perception of self had begun in his childhood and endured throughout his university studies.

Connor grew up in a very small town, which has a population of less than one thousand. It is located in the countryside of Western Pennsylvania, and Connor stated that the people there had no choice but to live in seclusion, as if the town was the whole world: "they want to go [out of the town], but it's impossible [for them]" (interview, November 17, 2012). He was raised only by his mother, who had no supportive close relatives: "We were just two of us. We didn't have any…(pause), so my mom and I were very close" (interview, November 17, 2012). Furthermore, when he was young, he faced grave health difficulties and often could not go to school. His mother took him from clinic to clinic, but none of the doctors could find the cause of his illness. His symptoms continuously intensified. By the time he went to high school, he had reached the point where he was barely able to attend school. At that point, his mother made the decision for Connor to drop out of school. Since then, Connor has called himself a "non-traditional student" (interview, November 17, 2012).

A year later, Connor started working at a local gas station that had a store attached. As he got accustomed to the job, he became familiar with regular customers and enjoyed chatting with them. Interestingly, the more these customers knew Connor, the more willing they were to openly talk about their personal lives in depth:

[They were] like 'Oh, Connor, my life is…blah, blah, blah… I don't like this in my life.'

I was just working at the gas station. It was really funny. It was really hard to believe.

You can come in and anytime somebody was talking to me about their lives. (interview,

November 17, 2012)

Through his job experience, he unexpectedly discovered that he had a special capability to put people at ease. This discovery made him begin to vaguely wonder if he had found his niche in psychological counseling. Meanwhile, one of the regular customers, who was a college professor, advised him insistently: "Go to school, just go! Just go! Because if you don't go to school, you won't know what you're gonna do. If you go, you'll find what you wanna do" (interview, May 30, 2013). His suggestion stimulated Connor's growing aspiration to resume his education. Yet, the fact that it took him seven years to finally decide to enter university to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Psychology suggests a high likelihood that the traumas of his teenage experiences at school had consistently drawn him back from his dream of university life. During our interview, Connor reminisced about the indescribably difficult moment when he attended his first class at college as follows:

And my very first class on my very first day of college was Japanese… And I was so

nervous and so scared. And I wasn't feeling good, because I just, you know, all worked

up, and then I walked into the class, and then [the instructor] started speaking, you know,

a little bit Japanese already she started teaching phrases already. I was like 'What's going

on!' I was freaking out! (interview, November 17, 2012).

As the quote illustrates, Connor's nervousness and anxiety about returning to school had reached a fever pitch. His heart was racing with a mountainous regret about choosing Japanese to fulfill his foreign language requirement. In fact, he had heedlessly and randomly selected this course

amid a myriad of confusion and nervousness when registering for university classes for the first time. He simply wanted to finish one of his degree requirements as quickly as possible:

> We had a language requirement for what…two years... When I got in, 'I've started it now, get over with it, be done with it, forget about it', you know. So I was thinking about it, and like at high school I tried French but I didn't like the teacher… and I've never studied French again, you know… I mean, I don't wanna study Spanish because it's close to French, and Italian, I wanna study it someday in the future, and Russian, 'Booo,' Chinese 'Booo.' I'll just try Japanese. I will be fine. I've been…long time ago I watched some amine, you know, some Japanese movies (interview, November 17, 2012).

His eeny, meeny, miney, mo way of choosing a language course exhibits his views of learning language as an enterprise lacking personal significance. However, this view began to change after he met a Japanese male student named Shoji, who was Connor's conversation partner and helped with his Japanese study outside of the classroom. They immediately became good friends: "We were hanging out like every single day" (interview, November 17, 2012). As Connor spent time with Shoji, he reported that he became fascinated by Shoji's stories about Japanese culture and society. His interest grew to the point that he made a decision to study abroad in Japan.

> Because Shoji and Kumi, my other friend, Kumi said 'You should come to our school,' and I said, 'Okay.' You know, I really at that point I really had no clue what college really was about. I didn't really understand how all these opportunities colleges give you or not, and we were on the way, so I just said, 'Oh, yeah, I'll go,' you know. And then I found that I really could go, and I just like 'Wow! This is really cool! I really should do it and take this opportunity!' I was, it's like, 'Sure! Why not!' (interview, November 17, 2012).

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This quote demonstrates how Connor's close affinity with his Japanese friends enticed him to study abroad. For a non-traditional student who had undergone a prolonged period of struggle to return to school, forming a close bond with friends might have been important. Furthermore, these particular friends were all the more valuable because they came from a different culture far from America. Connor explained that Kumi's encouraging remark, "You should come to our school" evoked his desire to spend time with them again because he was afraid about how much he would miss them after they went back to their home country. Hence, the purpose of his first study abroad was to keep his firm friendship: "Many people … were like 'Wow, I'm going to Japan. This is a lifelong dream come true' or something, you know. And for me, I was just like 'I'm gonna go to Japan to hang out with my friends and see what will happen,' you know" (interview, November 17, 2012). This statement reveals Connor's unique, subjective and individualized meaning of study abroad. Furthermore, his last phrase "see what will happen" implies not only his curiosity about a new and different experience but also his quest for the reason why he had a natural affinity with this particular culture.

While Connor had these subjective definitions of study abroad, he also had an instrumental view. Connor had believed that this opportunity would enhance the feasibility of his plan for finishing his degree:

So, in a way, [studying abroad] gave me a more focused goal, I think, it was…Ah…because I knew [once] I came back to America, and I had a limited amount of time to complete specific classes in order to graduate on time (interview, November 17, 2012).

His concern and anxiety about the successful completion of his academic career revealed that self-doubt still lingered in the back of his mind. However, this career-oriented perception of

study abroad would later shift toward more individualized and personally meaningful ones during his first experience abroad, with the result that his future career plan also changed.

The First Study Abroad: A Life-Changing Experience

Our interview moved on to Connor's first experience abroad. He explicated how his original perceptions of concepts (such as his own self, the world including his home country and Japan, study abroad, learning Japanese, and his future career goals) had been vigorously altered. When asked to describe his overall experience, he responded:

> So, for me it's like…to describe my experience that I had, so much happened to me, it's like…just many life changing experiences that completely changed my whole perspective on life, I just…I don't even know where to begin, you know. (interview, November 17, 2012).

Amid a plethora of inexpressible thoughts in his mind, the word that he finally selected was "life," which is a difficult notion to elucidate due to its exceedingly abstract and figurative nature; however, his concept of "life" came to light as our interview proceeded.

The primary reason for which Connor had this view of study abroad was that he profoundly changed his own views of self while in Japan. During the early period of his first study abroad, he found that he did not suffer from culture shock, as he reported: "For me, it's like…I think it took a long time for me to realize, 'Okay, I am in Japan'" (interview, November 17, 2012). Though he faced language boundaries, he commented, "I don't think I was really terrified of being in the country" (interview, November 17, 2012).

As time went by, Connor deeply immersed himself in the new environment. His next remark exhibits that he began to feel detached from his sense of Americanness:

Many important events in history happened while I was in Japan. For example, the Americans finally got Osama bin Laden, and I remember hearing about it in Japan. … it was such a big deal…for Americans, but for me, I was just like, I…I…I don't know. I just…it made me realize, like, just because I'm American, I feel like I should feel that this is an important event, but because I was not in America, it was not that important. (interview, November 17, 2012)

Life back in the United States had already become a distant thought for Connor. Even when he heard the news about Osama bin Laden, which was highly significant to many Americans, it sounded foreign to him. As reflected in his statement, "I should feel that this is important," he found his subjective position as being peculiar and uneasy, possessing some guilt because he was going against the prototypical folk notions about how Americans should feel and what they should find important; however, he simultaneously gained a sense of freedom from defying these notions. He had also begun to question the assumption that he was obliged to follow cultural and social norms due to national affiliation. In other words, he had moved toward a non-place identity (Hanauer, 2011).

While Connor fully engaged with the new culture, he had established a genuine connection with Japanese people. He recognized it as a core value of his life, which was elusive in his home country. Therefore, when the time arrived to go back to the United States, he was overwhelmed by feelings of distress and dejection: "I felt I was so connected with the people I met [in Japan]. When I had to leave, …I was just like, really…I don't know. I was just really sad, and I was not really looking forward to coming back to America" (interview, November 17, 2012).

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In reviewing the overall contours of Connor's first study abroad experience, a question arises: Why did he soak into Japanese culture so deeply and naturally? This question also touches upon the earlier query as to how his first study abroad experience affected his life. To fully answer these questions, it is necessary to impart a significant experience in a psychology class that Connor took in Japan. It led him to realize why he had held such intimacy with Japanese culture. The class demonstrated the Japanese social tenet of collectivism, which was contrasted to the West's social predisposition toward individualism. As reported by Connor, he learned that Western people tend to embrace individualism, which prioritizes each individual's independent actions and choices, while the East emphasizes collectivism, wherein one is viewed first and foremost as a member of a community or group. In this sense, these social affiliations are considered as primary entities rather than secondary ones, as Western people usually view them (see also Ueno, 2001). Upon hearing this theory, he realized how this Japanese social tenet was similar to the way that he was raised by his mother during his childhood:

So my mom and I became very close. And when I was in Japan, taking the psychology class, I learned about individualism and collectivism. And I've never really thought about that before. And it made me look back upon myself and my life and see how… I believe I'm more of collective individual versus individualism.…So, it really changed my perspective, like, I fit into a more collective culture than so much as an individual culture. In America, I always felt like out of place a little bit, you know. My ideas are concerned with how things are done around me. I just felt that I didn't agree with other people. And then when I got to Japan and learned this and realized this that there is a whole culture of people that think the same way I do, you know. I fit into this culture better than I do in American culture. (interview, November 17, 2012)

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Connor realized how his way of interacting with his mother was different from his approaches to social interaction with others outside of his family in the United States. While he considered his mother's thoughts and opinions first in order to enhance social harmony in interacting with her, others prioritized their own opinions rather than thinking about the feelings of those around them. This difference caused his struggles to understand others' ways of social interaction and triggered his sense of being "out of place" in his country. However, once he was abroad, this self-perceived positionality in the social world shifted toward being accepted and affiliated because, as stated by Connor, he found that Japan was the place where "there is a whole culture of people that think the same way I do." As such, he grew increasingly detached from his sense of Americanness as he came to understand the reason for his feelings of intimacy with Japanese culture through his reminiscences about the trajectory of his childhood. He also determined an intention to define himself in relation to multicultural perspectives rather than the mono-cultural norms that he grew up with. In doing so, he was liberated from the social stigmas that arose from his incompatibility with American social norms. In consequence, he had accepted his identity as it was and seen himself more positively. This view of self led him to be more open and tolerant to different cultures as well.

> It really…it really like…opened my eyes to…ah…there is more out there just than America. …We have separate boundaries in every country, and yet Japan is an island, but…it's just another part of earth, you know… I am just on the other side of the world. But I'm still …I'm still connected. …I mean…It's still, you know, still…still…there are grounds, mountains, oceans, and streets. It's a planet. It's just a little bit different. (interview, November 17, 2012)

Upon discovering that he shared values with other cultures, he perceived the world as united. This individualized and idiosyncratic perception of the world allowed him to focus more on universal human commonalities rather than view cultures and languages as essentially different. For this reason, he was able to deeply immerse himself in the new environment.

All in all, the contours of Connor's first study abroad illuminate how this experience had changed his view of self and life. Making sense of his identity seemed to bring him a newfound sense of legitimacy and even self-worth on the much wider scale of social world. However, why did his views of self affect his perspectives on life so significantly? This question can be answered by applying Kramsch's (2009) comments about memory recognition. According to Kramsch, some general senses and feelings arise from humans' first-hand experiences. Their memories of these experiences become submerged in their minds over time. Hence, they seem not to remember them anymore. However, when the body encounters an experience similar to what occurred before, the subconscious memories are stimulated, and they suddenly resurface. In Connor's case, there is a possibility that the body memories of his past experience were reactivated intermittently in the course of day-to-day events abroad. Hence, his exposure to the new environment provided him with moments to reappraise and analyze his self-perceived positionality as non-traditional or alienated from different viewpoints. This review gave him a whole new perspective on his selfhood and threw his subjective sense of self into relief. In this sense, his view of study abroad as an eye-opening and life-transformative experience is attributable to this process.

Pre-Departure for His Second Study Abroad

Connor came back to his home country. He described how his sense of intimacy with Japanese culture and people kept growing even after he resumed his American university life.

Hence, he was continuously building up new friendships with Japanese exchange students who learned English at an ESL institute associated with his university. While he was fulfilling his duties as an office worker and a language tutor at the institute, he also privately devoted himself to helping them with their adjustment to a new cultural and academic life as well as their study of the English language. These experiences not only served to reconfirm his feeling of affiliation with Japan but also led him to a divergent future goal from becoming a psychologist (interview, November 17, 2012). He wished to be an English teacher in Japan: "Through this experience, it helped me get a better grasp of goals that I want to pursue in life. One of which is to return back to Japan" (essay, November 17, 2012).

A year later, Connor obtained his second opportunity to study in Japan. He felt that his next four-month study abroad could be a significant transitional period, which would possibly determine his path in life after graduating from university. With his hope and desire to achieve his goals, he wrote the following poem to address his feeling about his upcoming departure.

I fell through the sky

Onto on island of mystery

I thought I know what I knew

But I knew nothing about what I know

As I look back into the sky

I see that I know what I didn't know

Is something I already knew

(November 17, 2012)

This poem describes the imaginary moment of arriving in Japan for the second time: from the window in the airplane, he might have seen the land with some excitement. He also notices this

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sensation is slightly different from the last time, as illustrated by his use of "mystery" in the second line. This word indicates some confusion because he was still quite not sure why he held such a fervent conviction that Japan would be the key place to guide him towards a meaningful and fulfilling future life. This confusion is represented through the use of contradictory expressions ("*what I didn't know / Is something I already knew*"), as if he was pondering an unanswerable question. These expressions can be also interpreted on another level when the last two lines are considered in tandem: they suggest that he was dimly aware of the reason but more likely at the subconscious level. In other words, his unrecognizable intuition—a deep spiritual connection to Japanese culture—propelled him to return. Thus, he had a sense of "mystery."

Although he had a clear purpose for finding an occupational opportunity, the desire to expand possibilities for selfhood in his new environment by rising above his national identity as American also seemed to be underlying his decision to study abroad for a second time. This decision possibly stemmed from his past views that he did not belong in the United States. As Ruti (2006) observed:

> The alienated individual is not estranged from a self that she already possesses but rather from her capacity to actively pursue the opportunities for self-expansion afforded by the fact that she is a creature whose being and potentiality can never be summed up by an exhaustive definition of her character. (p. 123)

By leaving a home where Connor had never felt that he fully belonged, he now was ready to reinvent himself in a new place with which he sensed an intimate connection. During his upcoming sojourn, he would encounter a sense of being in-between the two countries. However, he had chosen this challenge.

Whereas Connor had this deep conviction that he would attain a sense of belonging in Japan, he was anxious about how his limited Japanese proficiency would hinder him from immersing into the new cultural society: "I'm not definitely not fluent enough" (interview, November 17, 2012). Thus, language learning vital for him because it would allow him to reawaken his self-discovery by consolidating his sense of affiliation with this new country: "I'm not definitely not fluent enough" (interview, November 17, 2012). He described these as the myriad thoughts and feelings circulating in his mind as the airplane landed in Japan.

The First Half: Struggles with Non-Place Identity Construction

Connor's second life in Japan began with a full sense of coming back "home." As he walked through the immigration and customs sections of the airport, he found himself feeling more comfortable than his first visit. He described the moment at which he realized the Japanese letters on the signs, which seemed so scarily incomprehensible during his last trip, had become familiar and seemed to be welcoming him back. He even asked himself, "Is this still a foreign country?" (interview, February 8, 2013).

However, he went on to explain that this sense of comfort suddenly changed once he stepped into the massive crowds in the downtown area near the airport. He started feeling odd when numerous Japanese people turned and glared at him as if he were an alien from a different planet. This anecdote gives an impression of how his feelings were swaying between senses of being an insider and outsider. He went to bed hoping this uneasiness would fade with the morning sunrise. However, his experience on the first day foreshadowed what the remainder of his second sojourn in Japan would be like.

Connor faced a disappointment as the school year began, as illuminated during his interview: he was unexpectedly placed into the same language proficiency level as he was during

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his previous study in Japan two years ago. He was upset about his placement test outcome, as if all the efforts he had made studying Japanese back home suddenly seemed worthless. He immediately talked with his teachers, retook the replacement test, and then barely achieved the scores necessary to move forward to the next level. His language-learning struggles extended to his life outside of school. He found it difficult to overcome his hesitation to speak:

> It's… I'm unwilling to do it…I don't know [why]. I just get really nervous because I don't want to make mistakes. …So, like, if I don't know vocabulary, and I just don't want to try, you know. I guess, I don't know. …Yeah, I don't think I'm afraid. I mean, just I get nervous. I get really really nervous. I guess. (interview, February 8, 2013)

These remarks signify that his nervousness was triggered by an intense fear of being humiliated because others perceived him as an unskilled or incoherent speaker of Japanese. This tenseness was even more aggravated when he communicated with Japanese friends with whom he had previously socialized at his American university. He explained that he presupposed these Japanese students evaluated or criticized his abilities every time he spoke because he did so when they spoke English in the United States. However, whereas he adjusted his speaking speed based on their verbal and nonverbal reactions, he felt that his Japanese friends did not extend the same courtesy to him (*C* is Connor, *R* is the researcher):

> C: …when I talked with other exchange students, when I was speaking English to Japanese exchange students, or any exchange students, ah…ah…how would I say this…I checked their listening abilities, you know, like, I would, maybe speak a little bit fast at first, and I judged how much they understood by their facial expressions, or if they asked what did you say or something. And then, I slowed myself down. I would be taking my consideration of their listening abilities to keep my speaking slower…like this. Or…So I

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made sure if they understood everything, you know. But, I noticed, when my Japanese

friends are speaking to me, they don't slow down. And even I've noticed a lot of Japan

does that. They don't slow down (*laugh*).

R: Do you feel any different being with them here versus in America?

C: Ah…Ah…(*with a high tone*). I don't know…maybe not, because like…ah…I don't

know…

R: They are judging your language also?

C: You mean when I'm trying to speak the language or general?

R: When you speak Japanese any time.

C: No. It's the same. They are highly critical of me (*laugh*).

(interview, February 8, 2013)

This interview conversation demonstrates how his self-perceived inferiority was rooted in his

assumption that others were judging him as he had judged them. It also denotes a shift in

language power, as the authority that Connor held in the United States was reversed into a

subordinate positionality. The next quote more explicitly illustrates how his frustration led him to

feel distanced from his friends.

Um…Like the other day I met some people, some [Japanese] exchange students who

were at [my school in the United States,] and they were speaking too fast [in Japanese]

and I couldn't keep up with them. I was a kind of sad there. And I…I…I told them "Hey,

guys, you are speaking too fast to me!" They slowed down. You know. "If you want me

to stay in your conversation, please slow down." "Yeah, yeah, we can do that." And then

they didn't do it (*laugh*). They tried to do it first, but then…So I didn't understand even

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words. Ah, so I felt I left out. It's just…it wasn't easy to participate. (interview, February 8, 2013)

Connor's discontent grew to the point that he asked his friends to help him follow along with their conversations, and yet the effectiveness of this approach seemed quite limited. His disappointment in these interactions reveals that this experience fell short of his pre-study abroad expectation that he would be able to develop a close intimacy with Japanese culture.

Connor's sense of distance occurred not solely with his Japanese friends but also with Western international student peers. He was often disheartened by their general lack of effort to understand or adapt to their new cultural environment, which led him to wonder with some skepticism about what their genuine purposes of their study abroad were. Connor depicted their behavior as "*gaijin* smash" (*Gaijin* is the Japanese word for "foreigner"): they seemed to "smash" and break Japanese sociocultural norms or conventions even if their behavior were perceived as inappropriate and reproached in the culture (interview, March 30, 2013). One example was his American roommate's manner of apologizing. In Japanese culture, when one bumps into another, one would say "*Sumimasen*" (Sorry) and bow to the person. Because of the immense importance attached to apologizing in Japanese society, the simple expression "*sumimasen*" and the situations in which it is used are typically taught at the very beginning of Japanese language courses. However, Connor's roommate kept using the English expression without bowing. Connor described his behavior by stating: "He just says 'Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!' It's like dude! [The Japanese] don't know what he's saying. I mean, 'sorry' is a pretty basic English word, but not everyone in Japan knows [it]" (interview, March 30, 2013).

Another example was a *Hanami* (a cultural custom of viewing cherry blossoms in spring) picnic event that Connor joined. He enjoyed having traditional homemade lunch boxes that

Japanese students made for international students under a tree with full-blown flowers. Around the end of the feast, there were several bites left in the boxes. It seemed that everyone wanted the last pieces, but according to Japanese customs, it is not appropriate to take them without asking if there is anyone else who wants to have them. Then, Connor explained this custom to his American friends, but they neglected his advice:

> I explained to other American girls…but [one of them] was like "I'll take it anyway!" I'm like "Well…That's not nice!" But then I was [also] talking about this with this Japanese girl, she obviously wanted more than like the last piece of whatever, so she asked "Did everybody get a piece of this? Is everybody full? Does anybody else want anything?" And then, everybody said like "We're all full." Then she took it. She made sure and asked everybody first before. Whereas I think, whereas the American girl was like, "Whatever, I'll just take it!" you know. (interview, March 20, 2013)

In observing these peers and other foreign students' misbehaviors, Connor could not help but feel exasperated by their unrestrained individualism. They could be considered as demonstrating arrogance, obstinacy and crass insensitivity to the feelings of others because they apparently believed that Japanese people should accommodate their cultural norms rather than vice versa. He expressed this frustration in the following essay:

> What are you doing? There is more going on around you than you can imagine. You are here to witness how another culture lives. Although it is fine to show your culture, you need to put it on the back burner and focus on how they are reacting to you. You may find that what they see is not very good and they are only humoring your attitude towards their life. (March 20, 2013)

Additionally, he expressed these sentiments in the form of a poem:

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In this world there is more to see

more than one can imagine

to close your eyes to react

is the way to close yourself in

(March 20, 2013)

Whereas the essay demonstrates his trenchant critiques, the poem expresses his disapproval in more subtle, symbolic and metaphoric forms. Furthermore, most of the cynical expressions and confrontational language in the essay are removed, and only his sedate and mellifluous tone remains, lulling his acerbity; however, the softened tone of the poem still exhibits equivalent rhetorical efficiency to the essay because it will potentially make the audience more receptive to his message. Moreover, the expressions in the poem emphasize an imaginary moment in which he is talking to these students face-to-face. This rhetorical tactic also allows the reader to understand how he had patiently been observing their behavior and attitudes in a mute appeal, wishing that they would be able to become aware of the importance of cultural understanding.

There was a reason why Connor had a credo that foreign residents need intercultural understanding. As the next quote denotes, he actually did not solely condemn their naiveté and insensitivity; rather, he was afraid that their tactlessness would further reinforce stereotyped images of foreigners as self-indulgent and negligent that had been ingrained in Japanese society. He was also worried if their behavior influenced Japanese society's perception of him as an individual because he was a foreigner from a similar cultural background. Thus, he was not able to consider their behavior and attitudes as mere trivial annoyances or irrelevant matters:

It's like, ah…you know, I don't want to be [these guys], you know. That is…ah…you know…I mean, I am sure that you've seen, when you are in Japan, you see groups of

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foreigners running around… But, at the same time, I'm not that person, there's nothing I

can do about it. So, it's like, small things [related to cultural differences] that I'm paying

attention to, that I think that…puts me on a different level than I think the average person.

I will be afraid that I'm labeled as that person. Yeah. No matter how much…if I were

staying for a very long time, or whatever, but like, no matter how much I would learn

about your culture, I'm still a foreign white guy (interview, March 30, 2013).

As this quote demonstrated, his foreign student peers' misbehaviors added to his sheer frustration

because he had already experienced a sense of marginalization and illegitimacy at times due to

his Western appearance. He felt powerless and had some sense of resignation to these entrenched

perceptions in Japanese society, yet he still found this unsolved situation intolerable.

At this point, Connor's goal of achieving meaningful interactions with Japanese people

had become even more complicated. He described his positionality as an observer who was

impartially watching the situations that were happening around him: "Yeah, I think I'm in the

middle…yeah…very in the middle. Very…very…" (interview, March 30, 2013). Hence, had

striven to react to these experiences impassively rather than emotionally. However, he found

himself maintaining this in-between positionality was not easy, as he wrote in following poem:

I could not prepare

I had no knowledge

Only to wait and see

My judgment had to be safe

For I did not know

I had to wait to see

(February 8, 2013)

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This poem vividly depicts what being in the middle felt like. Most expressions, such as "I could not prepare/ I had no knowledge / for I did not know," signify his perplexity and uncertainty. Despite his uneasiness, however, he also maintained a conviction that this conflict would be solved if he persevered, as expressed through the repeated use of "wait and see" and the statement in the fourth line, "my judgment had to be safe." However, why had he been so indomitable? This mentality could have emanated from a substantial belief that the world was united, which had been established during his first study abroad experience: "I've already taken down the [cultural] wall. After taking away the border, what you can see is that everyone is the same" (interview, March 30, 2013). He had gritted his teeth and carried on his pursuit of growing his intimate connection with Japanese culture further:

> I mean…I…I am…Again, I'm here to see my friends, you know, that is a higher priority on the list, you know. I met really good friends here, and you know, I really missed them. I wanted to come back to see them. Part of me, I'm hesitant as I am speaking the language because I really need to learn the language. But I think that's not my top priority, I think. Right now, anyway. I'll see, again, how the classes go. (interview, February 2013, p. 14)

All in all, Connor's second study abroad experience, involved highly complex mental states. In spite of his expectations, the greater the effort he exerted to tune into to Japanese culture and explore new possibilities across cultural differences, the more he felt disoriented and bewildered. In this sense, the construction of non-place identity involved unutterable anxiety, embarrassment, and uncertainty, as if he was stuck in limbo.

The Second Half: A Seemingly Endless Quagmire

Around three weeks before the semester ended, another interview took place. As our conversation began, Connor described feeling exhausted and worried about his lack of progress: he had not yet received any responses to his job applications, remained hesitant to speak Japanese, and still felt estranged from his international student fellows. In addition, he was exceedingly concerned about whether he could be a successful learner of Japanese in formal classroom settings because he continued to perceive himself as an underperforming student:

> Even in my Japanese class, there are only ten people. You can still see a huge difference. Some people in our class, they are like 'What are you doing here?' And there are other people, they are like 'How did [we] get here?' like me (laugh)…It's really funny, like, the class is like divided [against] itself. Like, the people who are better are at one side of the room, and the group that I'm in [at the other side], we are just like still not quite sure what's going on. So, we work together more. (interview, May 4, 2013)

As this quote describes, the class was divided into two groups: one was labeled as dedicated achievers who looked down on their less successful peers—what Connor deemed the "What are you doing here" group; the other was labeled as backward or self-deprecating underachievers, or the "How did [we] get here" group. Belonging to the latter group prompted self-reproach because it also triggered a sense of retrogression. Because this situation had lasted throughout his study abroad, he was on the brink of abandoning his learning goals: "I've concluded that learning language is just really hard for me" (May 4, 2013). His bewilderment also raised his suspicions about why he was in Japan:

> You know, the first time I did it was like, "Oh! Yeah! Study abroad, Woo-hoo!" Now, it's like, "Okay, study abroad, that's my easiest path," at least, I thought when I went

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back to Japan. You know, but maybe it wasn't the easiest or the best choice but it's the one I took, I guess. (interview, May 4, 2013)

He also expressed this feeling in a poem, which included slightly different emotions as well:

To leap across the ocean is an easy task

to find a path that makes sense is quite the task

the walk through the unknown

will eventually lead to the desired track

(May, 4, 2013)

Similar to his interview comments, the first and second lines in the poem demonstrate his weary resignation to the difficulty of achieving his goal. However, it seems his perseverance had not been completely extinguished, as stated in the last two lines "the walk though the unknown / will eventually lead to the desired track." The term "eventually" in the last line reveals that scant traces of his doggedness remained in spite of his repeated toils. With an unclear future ahead, he was in a myriad of confusion. However, the end of his study abroad was approaching regardless of his circumstances.

The End: Opening a New Path at the Crack of Dawn

Time had been passing without bringing Connor any premonitory signs about his future direction. His apprehension had reached its peak while his patience had been exhausted. However, he stated that, at the instant he was going to throw in the towel, a crucial event happened, as if a new path had opened at the crack of dawn. He was riding the local train and surrounded by people's chatter. As ever, he did not pay any attention to their conversations because he assumed their Japanese speaking would be too fast to understand. However, this time he heard the exchange occurring beside him differently and more clearly: "Oh, ...I understand

those people a little bit! Ah! It's started to make sense! A kind of...Oh, crap! Now I cannot

ignore it" (interview, May 4, 2013). It was an indescribable moment for him, as he was seized by

a sense of awe and a rewarding feeling.

More significantly, since this event, Connor's prolonged concerns started fading away.

Not long afterwards, Connor successfully passed all of his final exams and ended his long

academic career. He felt redeemed as a non-traditional student who had been ambivalent about

his ability to cope with the demands of college and find success: "It's a moment of awesomeness,

it's like so exciting...Finishing college is just like so significant, that is so much significant that I

don't even know how to completely describe it" (interview, May 30, 2013). Completing his

academic career not only brought him self-esteem but also liberated him from the perceived

self-stigma that he had held since he dropped out of high school.

In addition to his academic achievement, Conner had at long last obtained a full-time

teaching position at an *eikaiwa* school.[4] He was cordially excited and relieved about solidifying

his future plan, but without time to bask in the rewards of his success, he had found that his new

life in Japan had already become demanding. As he reported, he had to go to the local city hall in

order to change his immigrant status from student to worker. Unfortunately, he was not able to

find anyone who could accompany him and assist with translation. Hence, he went by himself to

the office, where almost no one spoke English. Holding a Japanese-English dictionary in his

sweaty hands, he started talking to a Japanese officer:

He asked me if I had a "hoken," and I was like, "hoken…hoken...ah, insurance?" he was

like…so, he didn't understand what I was saying, so I was saying, "Okay, insurance,

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[4]*Eikaiwa* (literally "English conversation schools") are private, for-profit language institutes.

insurance! Yeah, yeah, okay, I knew the word. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I don't have a

Japanese insurance. Hahaha, I'm American." (interview, May 30)

Although the conversation with the officer did not move as smoothly as Connor wished, he was

able to communicate in Japanese and successfully completed the procedure for his visa renewal:

It was like, "Wow, I've accomplished something by myself!" And my language is not

proficient, but it's like "I can do it!" you know. ... It made me realize like, to me learning

Japanese is now it's starting to…my life in Japan can now change .... now I can do stuff

on my own, which before I couldn't. [Things are] now looking up and Learning

Japanese... [gives me] more chances. (interview, May 30, 2013)

The expression "I can do it by myself" marked the successful culmination of his long

language learning effort, while the phrase "it's starting" indicates his ambitions for his upcoming

new life. This juxtaposition between the end of one phase and the beginning of another signifies

a milestone in his life:

A plan can be scary

But with curiosity

It is exciting

(poem, May 30, 2013)

Connor additionally wrote his poem in Japanese this time, though he had always declined my

invitations to do so in the past.

計画はこわいかもしれません

でもこうきしんで

楽しみ

(May 30, 2013)

His use of the word *tanoshimi* [楽しみ] connotes the traditional definition of "exciting" but also an amalgamation between the "scary" and the "curious." Moreover, these words evoke the notion of looking toward the future rather than dwelling on the past. Casting off his prolonged perceived positionality as an inferior outcast, he began to view himself as a promising and constructive member of Japanese society. His willingness to write a poem in his second language epitomizes the crucial shift in his positionality.

At the end of this final interview, Connor reflected on his overall experience and redefined what it meant to study abroad by stating: "Oh, yeah, [it] changed my life" (interview, May 30). This reflection also reminded him of what the professor had said to him when he was working at a local gas station before enrolling in college—"Go to school, just go! Just go! Because if you don't go to school, you won't know what you're gonna do. If you go, you'll find why you wanna do" (interview, May 30). He observed that, without the professor's words, he would not have walked along this life path. In sum, all of the component experiences in Connor's case study suggest how learners' study abroad connect to their personal growth, the development of their academic careers, and the reminder of their lives in meaningful ways.

Closing Remarks on Connor

The overall contours of Connor's study abroad experience reflected a transcendental search for selfhood and deep meanings of life. In this trajectory, he resolved the prolonged question of why he had held a sense of alienation in American society since he was young. Stepping outside of his home country allowed him to better understand this positionality by contemplating how closely the way he had been raised by his mother resembled the collectivist

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principles of Japanese culture. His realization not only fostered his profound affiliation with Japan but also prompted him to the view the world in terms of fundamental similarities rather than differences. In this sense, he engaged in what Kramsch (2009) termed the *subjective use of language*, which "removes individuals from their here-and-now responsibilities, allowing for play, irony, distance, and integration of language use into a freer realm of subjective perceptions and meanings" (p. 43). He defined and redefined his identities and gradually re-established his own positionality in a creative way even though he had to go though the disheartening experience of being excluded in both Japanese and American cultures. Table 7 recapitulates Connor's journey.

Table 7

Overall Contours of Connor's Case

Period	Subjective views of self-positionality	Subjective definitions of study abroad	Subjective definitions of language learning	Future goals
Pre-first study abroad	Holding a sense of alienation in American culture because of his upbringing & educational background as a non-traditional student	Enhancing the feasibility of his academic plan; Reaffirming bonds with Japanese friends	Obligatory or instrumental entity to complete college successfully	Achieving academic success in psychology
First study abroad	Reconceiving his selfhood by freeing himself from his fixed American identity	Changing his perceptions of self, the world, and life; Guiding him to a different direction in life	Strengthening his connections with Japanese people and culture	Becoming interested in Asian studies
Pre-second study abroad	Embracing an ambiguous and indefinable positionality via non-place identity	Rekindling his process of meaningful self-discovery; Consolidating his sense of affiliation with Japanese culture; Helping him to find a future life in Japan	Gateway to immerse himself into the new culture	Becoming an English teacher in Japan
First half of 2nd study abroad	Feeling a sense of exclusion both in America and Japanese societies –"stuck in limbo"	Site where one ultimately came to understand fundamental commonalities of human beings rather than cultural differences	Site of having an intense fear of being humiliated	Finding a full time English-teaching position in Japan
Second half of 2nd study abroad	Intensifying his previous feeling	Same as above	Extremely challenging and starting his weary resignation to the implausibility of mastering the language	Same as above
End of study abroad	Building up his confidence to continuously construct his non-place identity in the host country	Significant milestone in his life to find possibilities of selfhood and establish a new life path after graduation	Opening up more possibilities to immerse himself in Japanese society	Obtained a full-time English teaching position in Japan

Of particular note is that the trajectory of Connor's second study abroad explicitly

illustrates one example of how non-place identity is constructed. It elucidates that this type of

identity is capricious by nature and resists fixed or narrow definitions, as he was constantly located in vulnerable positionalities. At the very end of his study abroad, Connor observed that, despite the social tendency to determine our identities based merely upon nationality, "there is no reason to define ourselves" in terms of the place we were born (interview, May 30). This statement denotes that his journey of searching for self will continue on into the future and guide the reminder of his life.

Another intriguing ramification from this case study is that acquiring language proficiency to communicate with local people can play a significant role in the process of non-place identity construction. The moment that Connor realized he could understand the conversations of Japanese people on the train, his perceived illegitimate positionality changed considerably, and he began envisioning possibilities to immerse himself in the new cultural environment. More importantly, though, this change was made possible by Connor's emotional capability to maintain his aspiration to stay in Japan despite his repeated toils, and therefore to sustain a relatively stable subjective definition of language learning. This perseverance led him to a different outcome than Sophie and Dustin, both of whom ultimately abandoned their initial beliefs that Japanese language learning would have a primary influence on their future career plans. The diverse contours of Connor, Sophie, and Dustin's study abroad experiences reaffirm the notion that identity construction can result from idiosyncratic and innermost aspects rather than from structuring social discourses alone. Even though Connor's study abroad concluded differently from those of Sophie and Dustin, his case study also confirms how language learning abroad links to learners' meaningful life experiences.

Case Study 4: Noah

Study abroad does not always guide a language learner to a life path, as it did for Sophia, Dustin and Connor; rather it sometimes throws one's future plan into a confusion that is not resolved for a significant period after the study abroad has concluded. Noah's study abroad typifies this outcome. At this conclusion of his nine-month sojourn in Japan, he was lost in a maze: "I see myself as a person who doesn't quite know where he is going" (interview, August 30, 2013). In fact, around the end of his study abroad, he fell into a debilitating depression that rendered him unable to leave bed or go to school. However, a question arises here—how and why did he reach this consequence? Hence, the trajectory of Noah's sojourn abroad experiences will be illuminated in order to answer this question. At the end of this case study, the ultimate meaning that he attributed to language learning abroad will be elucidated as well.

Pre-Study Abroad

"I will go to Japan!" Noah said to me in an ecstatic voice. He was a junior in his early twenties when he was accepted to a study abroad program. During his first interview, he expressed how he was thrilled about this long-awaited opportunity after learning Japanese for two yaears in high school and another two years in college. His ardor for learning the language had been growing along with his fascination with Japanese history. He had particularly revered American historical figures that played a significant role in founding US-Japan relations, such as Commodore Matthew Perry, who negotiated to open trade with the Japanese after they had spent nearly 300 years in seclusion during the Edo period (between the 17th and the 19th centuries), or Douglas MacArthur and his subordinate general Bonner Frank Fellers, who were involved in the reconstruction of the country and the amendment of the Japanese Constitution after World War II. The more he learned about these figures' commitments, the more his enthusiasm and ardent

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spirit were raised, leading to a romanticized image of a future career where he would devote himself to the development of political and commercial relations between East and West, as his heroes had done (interview, April 27, 2012).

Furthermore, Noah illustrated how this interest linked to his decision to study abroad. He often enjoyed political and historical discussions in school or among friends, leading him to discover that he had a special ability for rhetoric. Desiring to find a career in which he could collectively utilize this talent and his interest in Japanese history and language, he formed a goal of becoming an international lawyer. In this regard, Noah remarked, "My feeling for Japan grew as I studied it and now it's become just as much of a goal as the law career... One of the things was that I was trying to think of a way I could help people [in Asia] because that's really what I wanted to do with my life" (interview, April 27, 2012). To achieve this goal, sojourning in Japan was an essential process for Noah because he thought that he could not become a good lawyer without understanding the new culture. As he stated, "You can't really know the culture unless you've been immersed in it" (interview April 27, 2012). There was a reason that Noah emphasized the absolute necessity of gaining experience abroad. He had been told by his parents since he was young, "You should not talk about something you do not understand" (interview, April 27, 2012). This life lesson taught him that, in order to speak accurately and persuasively as a lawyer, one's words must be rooted in genuine understanding. It also pushed him towards his decision to study abroad:

> Because I don't feel it would be right for me to go into a career focused on talking about Japan and interacting with Japan if I have never been there. I want to be. I don't want to be an outsider. I mean, I still will exist and I won't ever be Japanese, but I don't want to be completely out of it. I don't want to like, be making Western thoughts, my focus. I

want to be able to have an idea of the Japanese mindset. I don't want to enter a field

where I'm going to be interacting with Japanese people and be completely alien.

(interview, April 27, 2012)

With his aspiration to fully immerse himself in the new culture, he hoped to understand a new

way of thinking, or more specifically a different, culturally situated mode of cognition, as stated

in the quote, "I want to be able to have an idea of the Japanese mindset" (interview, April 27,

2012). By doing so, he had wished to put himself in Japanese people's shoes, which would

provide useful knowledge for his future career. To achieve this goal, language learning was

critical: "I feel like to know the language is like a stepping stone to knowing the culture"

(interview, April 27, 2012).

Although Noah had mostly addressed his excitement about the upcoming challenges

during the interview, different feelings of fear mainly emerged in his poem. He used the *haiku*

poetry structure (three-lines with a 5-7-5-syllable pattern).

I am most afraid

But I know I can do it

Constant reminder

(April 27, 2012)

He also wrote a Japanese version.

とてもこわい

でも、できるとかくしんしている

わすれたくない

(April 27, 2012)

His petrified expression—"most afraid" or "とてもこわい"— clearly signifies his high nervous tension. By stating "But I know I can do it," he strained to reduce this pressure and anxiety; however, he recognized that it was not easy to alleviate such feelings. One solution would be to give himself a "constant reminder," as the third line demonstrates.

Noah's anxiety was constantly growing even a week before his departure. Then, he utilized another strategy by taking to heart the Buddhist principle of *Sunyata*, as demonstrated in a blog that he created for this study abroad opportunity:

In Buddhism there is a principle known as Sunyata, or nothingness. It states rather simply that all things are dependent on each other, nothing is truly individualistic and that all definitions are illusory. I feel that in moments of great change we either resist this idea and panic based on the constructs of the change that cause us pain or we can accept it and realize that we are not really changing but are growing to see the world more as it actually is. I'm hoping my tranquility is for this reason and not because I've gone full circle by being so absolutely terrified to reverting to calm. (blog, August 22, 2012).

While he was going through an emotional oscillation between fear and excitement, his departure date finally arrived. He decided to put a sign reading "Nihon Iku" [I will go to Japan] (blog, August 22, 2012) on the suitcases filled with his fervent hope.

The First Half: Going to the Land of Dreams

Noah stated that the place where he arrived was beyond his imagination. He described his trip to Japan as "kind of like a Tardis" (blog, August 29, 2012). A *TARDIS* is a combination spaceship and time machine that appears on the popular British science fiction TV show, "Dr. Who." As if he were the main character, Noah depicted his travels as a journey across time and space. In a blog entry, he observed that the urban areas of Japan appeared to be extremely tightly

packed, to the extent that adding a single further structure to the dense landscape of buildings, schools, houses, and parks seemed impossible. Moreover, old and new were muddled up together. He expressed his fascination with this scenery: "Japan is a small space that's bigger on the inside, that's state of the art and looks like it hasn't changed in generation" (blog, August 29, 2012). He additionally wrote a picturesque description about his first impression:

> Japan seems to be built on Paradoxes, for example at the bottom of the hill is this...
>
> This is a field, an open field and Park
>
> And yet at the top of the hill is this...
>
> This is a metropolitan library that we've taken to calling Gotham City because it looks
>
> like Wayne Manor Stacked onto Arkham...
>
> A State of Art center of Business ...And across the street from that is
>
> A Home with Slate Style roofing that looks like its several hundreds years old
>
> And these sort of things everywhere. You got a campus smaller than [my university] but
>
> that comfortably fits more students, vending machines, outside of temple, HUGE crows
>
> and tiny dogs (ok that one is silly, but it's also true). (blog, August 29, 2012)

Although he did not deliberately write this text as a poem, it possesses several poetic qualities, including rhythmic repetition and artistic contrasts. These techniques connote his bright and hopeful expectations for his study abroad opportunity. The most humorous image is contained in the description of a modern library in the fourth line. He alludes to buildings from the popular American comic book "Batman." Noah depicted the structure as a combination of the hero Bruce Wayne's manor house and Arkham Asylum, where Batman's most dangerous enemies are imprisoned. His description evokes a tremendously futuristic and hideous figure that was stacked beside a relic of the past— "a home with slate style roofing." In later lines, he presents more

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comical oxymoronic combinations, such as "vending machines, outside of temple" and "HUGE crow and tiny dogs," demonstrating that he was soaked in the juxtaposition of realistic and surreal situations.

Noah's romanticized view of Japan intensified when he went to a famous ancient place, Kyoto, about a month after his arrival. Visiting temples and shrines was particularly memorable. The next statement illustrates his experience seeing a Buddhist temple there:

> Entering Kiyomizu-dera...going up the hill in Kyoto was hard for me. By the time I got to the top, I was barely interested in exploring the temple, but that changed when I entered. I had never been in a Buddhist place of worship despite being Buddhist myself, so getting to meditate on the image of Kanon was very precious to me. (interview, October 7, 2012)

As did Noah had feelings of awe and respect towards this temple, he had similar sensations when visiting *Kamigamo Shinto Shrine*. Prior to the sequent examination of Noah's statement, a brief note about the unique indigenous religion of Shintoism is necessary. As opposed to monotheist religions, such as Christianity or Islam, Shintoism is not centered on the worship of a particular deity or holy idol; rather its icons are much more abstract, existing in nature and landscapes, such as water, sun, mountains, trees and so on. Furthermore, Shintoism does not require adherence to rigid rituals as many Christian or Muslim denominations do: from Noah's understanding of the Japanese religion, he noted, "... the main thing you do... is throw a few coins and then just beg for help and hope [for whenever you need]" (interview, August 30, 2013). Because the traditions of Shintoism seemed evasive and superficial, he had had some skepticism about such beliefs, but all of his suspicions disappeared once he entered the shrine:

> It was my first time that I felt I could even comprehend the ideas of Shintoism. The beauty of nature was all around me and felt like it was pressing in on me, watching. It

made me rethink previous assumptions on many things... Before I visited the shrine I essentially wrote it off as a really old system of superstition. There was no dogma, no rules, no rewards, nothing of what made religion make sense to me. Going to the shrine and seeing Japan made me realize that Shinto was based around the feeling you got seeing the grand splendor of nature around you in Japan, that if you pay attention to it, you can almost believe something is looking back, something old and strong. (interview, October 7, 2012)

Visiting these sacred places in person enabled him to see and feel the authenticity of the culture. He additionally expressed that this experience gave him a thrill of anticipation about future discoveries that would occur during the rest of his study abroad.

Thus, Noah was walking on air after a series of stimulating and fulfilling experiences in the early portions of his study abroad. His upbeat and somewhat idealized perspectives on Japanese culture extended to his first impressions of the people: "Well, I find that people in Japan are very kind and helpful. They are very patient in general... They're also very trusting and obedient to rules" (interview, October 7, 2012). Even though he had culture shock, his overall comments on the country around this time period were optimistic. He also found the formal Japanese language that he studied at school considerably differed from the colloquial speech that local people generally used. This discovery intensified his avidity to understand their conversations. The following poem exhibits this feeling:

| 日本語を | Japanese |
| わかれない、でも | Struggle to understand, but |

習いたい   Eager to learn more

(November 17, 2012)   (translated by the researcher)

Noah wrote a haiku poem in Japanese without any hesitation. He was the first participant who composed a second language poem before an English equivalent. Furthermore, his decision to follow the traditional poetry structure reveals his eagerness to understand Japanese people's way of thinking and immerse himself into the culture. This poem also shows the exasperating difficulty of understanding the language, as the second line demonstrates: "Struggle to understand." As such, Noah viewed language learning abroad as part of the process of achieving his overall goal for study around this period of time: "I see myself as a person going through a transition, in learning how to take all the ideas and ways of thinking from culture and adapting and melding them with those of another" (interview, November 17, 2012).

The Middle: Unexpected Emptiness and Loneliness

The following interview took place several days before New Year's Day, after Noah's first semester had ended. He related how he had spent his Christmas in Japan: as the holiday was approaching, most of his fellow international students went back home after the completion of their four-month study abroad. As he sent them off one by one, he realized how enjoyable and comfortable it had been to live with these English-speaking peers. By the time he reached Christmas Day, his dormitory had become vacant. The emptiness brought him loneliness:

Because inside Seminar House, maybe I felt more secure because there were more people

who spoke English and quite similar cultural background as I did. I had like a place to

return to where I didn't feel like I was like outside the norm. But as people began leaving,

I had less people to talk to in English and when I spoke to Japanese students, it's not

entirely the same, and so I began to feel very lonely. And I guess that was the first time where I really felt like I was foreign. (interview, December 28, 2012)

Noah felt confused and vulnerable due to the sudden change of atmosphere. In the course of cultivating his appreciation and understanding of Japanese culture during the previous semester, he had not realized how important it had been for him to maintain contact with those who shared his linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In particular, the quote in the second line, "I had like a place to return to where I didn't feel like I was like outside the norm" demonstrates that he mostly enjoyed being in a caged social community populated by English-speaking students. Thus, once his support community had vanished, he was left to function alone in an authentic Japanese atmosphere. He felt illegitimate or marginalized. This experience indicates physical dwellings do not always link to sojourners' immersion into different cultures, but rather that it is contingent on their senses of belonging, as Chang, Yuan, and Chuang (2013) noted, "physically being abroad may not be the key determinant for desired international competence" (p. 272).

It is observed that Noah's sense of isolation actually attributed to the discomfort that had been mounting since around the end of his first semester. He reported during the interview that the more he saw and learned about what was happening to modern Japan, the more he could not help but experience culture shock. He was particularly scandalized by apparent widespread apathy towards history, society and politics among Japanese younger generations. For example, when he brought up the historical topic of Japanese war crimes during World War I and II, such as the Nanking massacre or forced mass suicides in Okinawa, he was enormously shocked to discover that their mind seemed completely blank regarding these events. This was likely because the Japanese government has suppressed these facts, and many post-war children did not learn about them at school or in society. Noah also found that some Japanese students were

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uncomfortable with discussing these topics and came to realize that they were taboo in mainstream society (interview, December 28, 2012).

In another case, Noah took a class about modern Japanese social issues. One of the topics that he learned about was a deeply rooted prostitution industry that is technically prohibited according to Japanese law but persists unabated due to legal loopholes and a lack of enforcement by police and the judicial system. Since he came to be interested in why this industry could continue, he asked questions to his Japanese friends. However, they seemed uninterested in this issue. He also asked their opinions about other topics that are often discussed in the United States, such as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights, racial or gender discriminations and so forth; however, he received listless reactions (interview, December 28, 2012).

These descriptions indicate how Japanese young people's indifference was inconceivable for Noah, who had enjoyed discussing social, political and historical topics in his home country. He likely believed that, by opening similar discussions with Japanese friends, he would have been able to understand their norms, beliefs, and ways of thinking, which might have helped him achieve his overarching goal of playing a role in bridging the relationship between Asia and the United States. This unexpected discovery evoked not only senses of agitation about the purpose of his study abroad but also deepened his feelings of isolation in a new society: "Regardless of how much Japanese I learn or how much Japanese history I will learn that I'm always just going to be foreign" (interview, December 28, 2012).

Under this circumstance, it was difficult for Noah to be alone outside of his home country, particularly on Christmas Day in the empty dorm. He came to miss his family dreadfully: "Yeah. I do… umm… I missed them a lot around Christmas. I Skyped them when they were opening presents, but it was still… really bittersweet to just being watching behind the computer screen. I

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really wished I could be there with them*"* (interview, December 28, 2012). The next essay and poem were written around that time. They demonstrate Noah's complex feeling about Japan.

> I do not know what to make of Japan. I have always thought a country is defined by its people and its history. But Japanese don't know the history. How to reconcile the nation's people with the history is a constant challenge. I want the youth of Japan to rise up. To me they seem complacent and frivolous, but not for lack of ability. They are strong intelligent people who just need to believe they can influence the world. I like the country. Even when I am lonely, I like it, but with each passing day it becomes more complex and difficult to understand. I want to talk with more Japanese in the coming year to see if they will help me to understand. (essay, December 28, 2012)

As can be seen, Noah did not merely reproach Japanese youths for their perceived ignorance but also had a wish to awaken their abilities and rights to become part of making their own society better. Thus, his culture shock did not simply link to a sense of repudiation or aversion toward the society or people. He rather empathized with Japanese youths' mundane and unworldly perspectives, which he felt were attributable to the whitewashing of social and historical facts. Therefore, his exasperation contained his affinity with the country, as stated in the last sentence: "I like the country. Even when I am lonely, I like it." Thus, the essay suggests his subjective positionality during this period of his study abroad as being at his wits' end trying to find a better way to achieve his study abroad purpose and reveals his uncertainty about his prospects for success.

Noah's feeling of exasperation was portrayed in the poem as well. Even though he was under a discouraging circumstance, he wrote an English haiku poem. Moreover, he translated it into Japanese afterwards without hesitation.

Title: Japan in winter as a foreigner

This Nation is Strange	日本はへん
Beautiful and too stagnant	きれいくて、よどんだ
Its people bring hope	日本人はホープを持って来る
(December 28, 2012)	(translated by Noah)

The expressions in the first and second lines juxtapose affirmative ("beautiful") and critical ("strange"; "too stagnant") descriptions of the culture, though the poem concludes with a sympathetic consideration of the country: "Its people bring hope." This hope reverts back to his wish to awaken Japanese people's potential abilities, which appears in the abovementioned essay.

It is perceptible that Noah's culture shock prompted him to deeply contemplate his future career—what it means to be an international lawyer:

[Before study abroad] I wanted to embrace the love I had for two countries but I guess now it's now less about that... it's weird, trying to figure out my [goal]... Because I feel like now that I know how different another country can be, how important it is to have someone who has at least any, like any understanding of it, because it's easy to get an incorrect view and that is more, I guess, rather than expressing like a love for another country, it's more trying to protect both countries from each other. (interview, December 28, 2012)

The quote in the second line "it's weird, trying to figure out my [goal]" exhibits an intermittent feeling of loss about his future direction, Yet, at the end of the quote, he came to realize the need for tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences and the importance of retaining a neutral position between the two countries to achieve his goals. This contemplation also extended to

redefining his subjective meaning of both language learning and study abroad. While these definitions still continued to stress the importance of cultural understandings, they became more specific:

> Breaking walls. It means making less walls between me and the people around the world, to be able to share ideas, to be able to say these things to Japanese people and convey my thoughts to them ...I think on a one-on-one basis maybe, but I think not in a large setting. I do not think in a large like even in a local setting, I still think I will be perceived as foreign, but maybe individuals, I will be able to do that and break through. (interview, December 28, 2012)

"Breaking walls" was going to be a very taxing task for Noah, particularly in light of his marginalized position in Japan. In order to maximize his chances of success, he established a different approach to opening meaningful dialogues: he would pursue animated conversations with specific individuals rather than trying to effect widespread social change. Moreover, he addressed the need to persistently improve his language skills: "I think my goal is to be able to leave with the ability to have full conversations in Japanese at least in casual [situations]" (interview, December 28, 2012).

Having had various positive and negative experiences during the middle period of his study abroad, Noah would furthermore commence a candid inquiry into the meanings of language learning and his relationship with Japan during the rest of his study abroad, as the following sections will illustrate. However, as this introspection became deeper, this inquiry would also lead him into a tortuous maze.

The Second Half: Before Entering the Darkness

Several weeks before the second semester, Noah decided to take a trip to Hong Kong. Although his initial purpose for this trip was simply to visit a friend, it would wind up prompting further inquiries about the ultimate purpose of his language learning abroad. Before arriving there, he was excited about seeing a different site in Eastern Asia; however, what he actually encountered was a Westernized environment. According to him, "Hong Kong feels much more like America than Japan does... [for example] the atmosphere, city structure and the way people hold themselves" (interview, February 9, 2013). The city had a homelike atmosphere, but he did not enjoy it. He rather felt much more isolated than he had been in Japan:

> I went to Hong Kong after living for several months in Japan. And while there have been times I felt foreign in Japan, I never felt so much outside as I did when I was in Hong Kong. The very basic things I had learned and begun to take for granted in Japan become more evident. Being able to speak to people, knowing how to appropriately react, knowing how to get around. ...I enjoyed my time in Hong Kong a great deal, but as an Outsider and a tourist. I returned to Japan feeling more that I belonged than I had when I left. (essay, February 9, 2013)

This quote indicates how this trip gave him a new perspective on his subjective positionality in Japan: his view of himself as illegitimate and marginalized shifted to a sense of belonging. Furthermore, this unexpected realization turned into full appreciation for his sojourn opportunity, as demonstrated in his examples of how ordinary Japanese customs had become bound with parts of his life. This sense grew to the point that he felt Japan was his home, as described in the next poem:

I was Lost and Left,	道に迷って行って、
To New lands went a stranger,	他人はあたらし陸に行った、
But I then came Home	でも私は家に帰りました
(poem, February 9, 2013)	(translated by Noah)

The English haiku poem seems to be a summary of the essay, but it extracts the quintessence of his feelings about Japan. For example, the first line "I was lost and left" uncovers an insight about the purpose of his trip beyond simply seeing his friend or sightseeing: it alleviated his confusion and sense of loss, thereby providing him with a new view of Japan as "home." As such, this poem represents a phenomenon of identity transformation, as Noah amalgamated his old self with a new one. The following poem, which was written several months after his second semester began, also epitomizes this identity phenomenon:

俺は二人、	I have two persons
アメリカと日本、	American and Japanese
住んでいる	mixed together
(March 30, 2013)	(translated by the researcher)

As can be seen, this poem also exhibits the vivacity of the process of blending new and old ways of viewing the self. Moreover, it reveals how this process involved Noah's introspection: he relentlessly contemplated and redefined the self in order to understand what it meant to have life experiences in Japan.

However, Noah's inquiry did not always go straight ahead. It seemed at times to deviate from its forward progression when he reappraised his past life in the United States, as described in Noah's first blog entry in almost six months. The post was entitled "This is a little different":

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Does anyone ever feel guilty? About something really trivial and stupid? Not necessarily

cause it is but its all about you and that makes your scope seem too narrow? ...For me it's

the fact that...I would tell dumb lies to my parents to get out of trouble as a kid.

The fact that I have turned away a person in need because I "had better things to do"

The fact that I refused to give my toys to the less fortunate when I was little

Or the fact that I tried to cut my throat because I decided that the opinions of other people

who I barely knew was more important than not only my friends, relatives, and all loved

ones, but also myself... But I do think it's important to move beyond this guilt and to feel

pride in the fact you realized that fault, and that that person while being you, is not who

you are now... having the realization of being a bad person in the past leads you to being

a better person in the present and continuing to strive to be better henceforth. You're

gonna stumble. There are gonna be days when you relapse and feel awful and bad again.

That doesn't stop it from being true. Don't beat yourself up about it, there are more than

enough other people to do that to you in this world. Just focus on doing better and helping

others get better too. (March 16, 2013)

This post comprises three parts: The first one is abstract and poses philosophical questions to the

readers. Then, his personal answers follow. They consist of a list of facts that entail confessions

of his prevailing conceitedness during adolescence and childhood. The last part contains his

suggestions of how to liberate oneself from such guilt and humiliation. Though they were

literally messages to the reader, they were made for himself too. This three-portion construction

represents a metacognitive sequence that involves self-reflection, self-analysis and

self-awareness. It also characterizes a transformative view of the self. This metacognitive

sequence has been theorized in psychological literature regarding inner speaking (e.g., Krueger,

Bernini & Wilkinson, 2014). They contended that such introspection is provoked by human's day-to-day experiences and induces self-discovery, or as they put it, "the sort of minds we have are shaped by the sorts of things we do" (p. 10). Indeed, Noah reported that this introspection occurred only as result of his new and changing experiences: "The thoughts I'm having, while not always directly related to Japan, would not have happened if I hadn't come to Japan" (blog, March 16, 2014). As such, a "new" identity allows one to see past selves from a different slant. This identity phenomenon represents how redefined identities affect one's perspectives on the self by blending old into new ways of thinking.

However, such dynamic identity transitional processes do not always enhance language learners' motivation to engage with new environments, particularly in Noah's case. His reluctance and refusal towards Japanese culture intensified in tandem. His dormant criticism about Japanese youths' pervasive apathy and Japan's social structure had flared up: "I still have difficulty imagining living here. So much still seems rather frivolous to me, whether it's the media or other people my age" (interview, March 20, 2013). Hence, the sense of belonging that he associated with Japan while in Hong Kong was turbulent during the second half of his study abroad. This drastic alternation represents the complex of identity reformation: the old ideological beliefs and norms constructed in his home culture provoked rejection and repugnance towards new ideological ideas, which hindered his overall tolerance. Noah's perplexity and reluctance not only deterred him from his engagement but also renewed his sense of alienation as a foreigner in Japan. Overall, his prolonged internal inquiry became even more complex and aggravated his confusion. While he sought for possibilities of selfhood, he seemed to have wandered deep into a maze.

The End: Reestablishing Definitions of Language Learning Abroad

Noah's remarks about the end of his study abroad indicate that his relentless search for answers to his inner inquiry became even deeper. Yet, the more he tried to grasp answers, the more he was frustrated and afraid of not seeing a light at the end of tunnel. He finally lost vitality and his sense of purpose. Additionally, he came to bitterly regret his decision to come to Japan. This situation led him to experience severe self-doubt, bewilderment and loneliness, and it even escalated into lethargy and depression, which was brought to light by a blog entry he posted around that time. In the post, he video-recorded himself and confessed his despair:

> When I'm sad, I can barely pick myself up in the morning. There have been days when I've had to skip class because of the anxiety I felt while looking at the door ... As of yet, I have not had any suicidal thoughts ... I don't believe I'm going to. It's not like I think this is a thing that is going to happen, but it's pretty a typical concern that comes from this situation, and I don't count myself as an exception to rules. But I don't see it going that way. Hopefully I can talk to someone about this before it gets bad. (blog, April 20, 2013)

This remark demonstrates his considerable trepidation. Contrary to his initial expectations that he would be able to immerse himself into a new community and enjoy lively and meaningful discussions with Japanese people about many topics, he now had intense doubts about whether he could meet this goal. Additionally, the pressure to perform well on his Japanese language final exams further deteriorated his mental condition during this last month of the semester:

> You always hear about people going abroad for a year and coming back fluent. I wasn't doing that... I was wasting my experience while I was abroad... Like I've studied Japanese for a long time, like, by the time that I was abroad, I had done my fifth year of Japanese, but I wasn't... I still... I don't feel close to fluent. (interview, August 30, 2013)

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This statement calls to mind his original view of learning language as critical to achieving deep and meaningful intercultural understandings, which was a vital interrelated goal for his sojourn abroad experience. However, he viewed himself as inadequate to these tasks. Although he was reluctant to abandon the dream of following in the footsteps of his revered American historical figures, which he had been cultivating since he was young, his unrealistic expectations of becoming fluent within a short time left him debilitated by a sense of failure. According to Savicki (2013), stressors experienced during study abroad not only evoke fear and anxiety but also "harm and loss with subsequent feelings of depression and grief" (p. 133). Noah's depression did not recover even when the semester ended. Thus, he left Japan with puzzlement and myriad regrets.

Out of respect for Noah's fragile situation, I did not contact him in the immediate period after he came back to the United States. However, I reached out after three months and found that he was willing to participate in a final interview. He reported that he was gradually recuperated, but he still had concerns about the uncertainty of his vision, values, and goal of pursuing a career as an international lawyer; "I am not so set on what I'm doing now" (interview, August 30, 2013). Noah also reminisced about negative and positive aspects of his entire study abroad experience. Whereas he emphasized the distress and discomfort of his positionality as a foreigner in Japan: "I've never felt like I belonged, like in my entire time I was there" (interview, August 30, 2013), he recalled a stunning experience that he would never forget—the time when he visited *Ise* Shrine[5] about a month before he left Japan. The shrine and the huge surrounding forest were awe-inspiring in their sacredness. He described the sensations associated with this

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[5] Ise Shrine is considered the holiest site in the Shinto religion.

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environment in the poem below:

りゅうがくした時、こわかった、でも   When abroad, I trembled

木とじんじゃを見た   But, there were trees and shrines

おきました   And this made me strong

(August 30, 2013)   (translated by Noah)

He additionally wrote an essay that provides context for how he composed the poem:

> But I do not dwell on [lethargy], I dwell on the trees. The trees that made up the forest
> that surrounded the shrine. They were so full of life and upon taking them in, my soul
> could do nothing but mirror that feeling of awe in the splendor of life. This is what I
> dwell on and what I remember. (August 30, 2013)

The poem visualizes him standing beneath the majestic trees of the forest. The fear from his
day-to-day study abroad experiences was allayed as he soaked into his awe. This sense also
transcended into respect for the sanctity of nature. One of the most striking features of both the
poem and essay is that he highlighted trees rather than the shrine per se. Tourists, by contrast,
would most likely focus on the historical and cultural uniqueness of the shrine's architectural
structures or seemingly exotic ceremonial practices such as throwing coins before praying. Noah
instead absorbed spiritual fulfillment from nature's power or, put differently, his body and mind
apprehended the abstract principle of its holiness in Shintoism: "For the first time, ever in my life
[I got] an idea of why anyone would follow beliefs like that" (interview, August 30, 2012).

In light of the depth of Noah's understanding of this indigenous religion, a question
arises—had he actually succeeded in attaining meaningful awareness of Japanese culture? This
recognition may not have registered at a conscious level when he visited the shrine, but his body

and emotions might have already assimilated the cultural understanding. Taking into account the entirety of his study abroad experiences, they were indeed a reiteration of struggles and frustration; however, he did not hastily dismiss Japanese culture as a whole. Instead, he persevered in self-introspection and contemplating his relationship with Japan. This perseverance eventually allowed him to attain an intuitive understanding of Japanese people's mindsets regarding their spirituality.

In fact, Noah's final remarks during the interview revealed the profundity of his cultural understanding and were also related to his subjective definitions of language learning and study abroad. Although he reaffirmed his original definition of language learning as essential to understanding different ways of thinking, he added an absolutely crucial awareness that sojourn abroad experiences require learners to go through unexpected excruciating paths:

> I think [the meaning of language learning is] to push yourself outside your comfort zone, to pursue things that you get an inkling that you should do but maybe you don't want to do. I think that's what you have to do is you need to push yourself forward. And I feel it's the same way with language is you need to push yourself to a place that you might be uncomfortable but you have to get there.... [then], I think you'll find that you can think about things in whole new ways that you weren't prepared to think of them before, that you're ready to approach obstacles in new ways that you didn't consider in the past. (interview, August 30, 2013)

This redefined meaning suggests that Noah now felt the language-learning phenomenon is not restricted to the learning-act itself but is rather a transcendental experience that involves integration between new and old cognitions to engender a new mental space. This space enables

learners' discovery of selfhood, as demonstrated in Noah's remarks about the meaning of study abroad:

> I think [study abroad]is learning to carry the places you go with you. And making them part of you. I think the good and the bad, taking those experiences and taking that country, making it a part of yourself. ... [so,] if you're going abroad, and you need to take a good look in your mirror right now, at who you are. And you should try to remember that person because that's not who you are going to be when you come back. You are going to learn without knowing you're learning and you are going to learn every moment that you are there whether you're just talking to someone or you're walking down a street, you're going to be changing into a new person. And it's better that you know that you're becoming this new person because if you're aware of it then I think you can guide yourself into becoming pretty awesome. (interview, August 30, 2013)

The whole quote suggests that learners could never imagine how their sojourn abroad experiences would shake their ideologically constructed identities to their very foundation. As Noah remarks, such experiences might lead learners to both negative and positive consequences. In his case, it made his view of the self complicated after study abroad: "I see myself as a person who doesn't quite know where he is going" (interview, August 30, 2013). However, he also left a positive comment on study abroad in the end: "but I think I would have been a lot less happy with being in the place I'm in had I not gone abroad and I was still as complacent as I think I was before I left" (interview, August 30, 2013).

A few months later, I ran into Noah at a coffee house near his university. He was with a Japanese student who was tutoring him in the Japanese language. With surprise, I asked him "You did not stop learning Japanese, did you?" He replied with a big smile, "No, of course not!"

I heard more news a year later. He successfully graduated university and is now enrolled in law school.

Closing Remarks on Noah

The overall contours of Noah's study abroad experience explicate psychological dimensions of the identity reconstruction process that occurs in the course of acculturation. As he oscillated between feelings of love and hate towards the host country's culture, his subjective positionality in the new environment was continually vibrating. In consequence, his sense of self became fragile. This unexpected vulnerable situation made it difficult for him to appraise the value of his language learning abroad, even as he strove to cling to his original goals and purposes. Table 8 recapitulates Noah's journey.

Table 8

Overall Contours of Noah's Case

Period	Subjective views of self-positionality	Subjective definitions of study abroad	Subjective definitions of language learning	Future goals
Pre-study abroad	Idealistic for language learning abroad	A life passage for his dream to bear fruit; immersing himself in the new culture; understanding Japanese ways of thinking	"A steppingstone to knowing the culture" (interview, April 27, 2012)	Becoming an international lawyer who plays a role in bridging a relationship between Japan and the United States
First half of study abroad	Undergoing a process of acculturation	Same as above	Immersing himself in the new culture; understanding Japanese ways of thinking	Same as above
Middle of study abroad	Isolated and marginalized as a foreigner	Tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences; breaking cultural barriers by transcending differences	Tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences; breaking cultural barriers by transcending differences	Same as above
Second half of study abroad	Oscillating between feelings of belonging and marginalization	Unclear	Unclear	A sense of loss regarding the direction of his future career
End of study abroad	A process of re-establishing selfhood " I see myself as a person who doesn't quite know where he is going"	Discovery of new aspects of selfhood	Obtaining intercultural competence by going through unexpected excruciating paths	Unclear direction of his future career; however, as time went by, he followed his initial dream

Of particular note is that Noah's trajectory throws the conscious and subconscious levels of learners' psychological phenomena into sharp relief and reveals these levels as discordant. In Noah's case, while he felt incompatible with Japanese culture and society on the level of his direct awareness, he intuitively assimilated a spirituality that is common among Japanese people. Furthermore, this case study expounds on what emotional fluctuation learners may go through when such contradiction occurs. Their senses of identities are thrown into disarray, which

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extendedly obscures their views of their own societal values. This in turn can obfuscate their future possibilities and evoke considerable trepidation, or in a worse scenario, depression. However, it is important to note that Noah's story does not solely connote such tribulation; rather, it indicates that such hardship can yield learners' deep intercultural understanding. If learners persist through difficulties and confusion, they can utilize their newfound knowledge and experience as steppingstones to their own future career and life, as Noah followed his initial goal to fruition in the end. In this sense, this case study provides both theoretical and empirical support for the notion that the psychological phenomena of identity reconstruction in a study abroad context are immensely complex.

Lastly, Noah's story can be closed with the following words to describe his overall experience abroad—birds must hatch from their shell before they can fly. Youths' dreams seem illusionary, but through the opening of unexpected paths to adulthood, their dreams can become feasible.

Case Study 5: Mare

Having focused on American students' study abroad experiences in Japan, this study now transitions to three case studies that will illuminate those of Japanese college students in the United States. These students were enrolled in a four-month program at an English language institute associated with an American university. Because these participants studied abroad for shorter lengths of time than their American counterparts, their case studies will be slightly more concise. Yet, a thorough examination will still expound on their trajectories of language learning abroad. Another major difference from the case studies among American students was that the interview sessions were held after Japanese students arrived in the United States. Hence, the data regarding their pre-study abroad experiences were based on their reminiscences. Furthermore,

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the interviews were conducted in Japanese. Thus, the quotes and statements from our conversations were translated by the researcher. However, these students wrote most of their essays and poems in English. In the event that participants provided poems or essays in Japanese only, the researcher translated them into English.

Pre-Study Abroad Experience

The first case study is about Mare, who was a junior in her early twenties. I observed that she was the most enthusiastic learner among her cohort of Japanese students, and she seemed to devote herself to every practice opportunity both outside and inside school while abroad. During our first interview, she explained that, despite her ambition and dedication, her initial interest in learning the English language began with a simple reason. When she was a lower primary school student, she saw her older sister studying her English textbook. Upon looking at the textbook, she became very curious about the letters and the words, which she had never seen before. The sounds of the language Mare overheard while her sister was practicing were very fashionable and glamorous: "It sounded very cool, so I really came to want to become a good English speaker, when I saw my sister studying it" (interview, November 7, 2011).

Our conversation then proceeded to the topics of how earliest experiences studying English and what had cultivated her interest in language learning from her childhood to the time she decided to sojourn abroad. When Mare became an upper primary school student, a new English curriculum was introduced. Her English classes were very different than those of other subjects: Native English speaking teachers came to class, and students played games or sang songs to practice pronunciation of the alphabet and words. Due to these classes, her interest in

English surged to the point that she had a dream of becoming a flight attendant[6] who frequently travels abroad and speaks English fluently. However, her great enthusiasm for English learning was counteracted by an antipathy toward studying in general. As such, her dream eventually faded into an illusion.

However, Mare's view of English learning as "cool" did not disappear; rather, it intensified as time went by. When she was a high school student, she reignited her interest in English. Even though she was still averse to studying itself, she put a little bit more effort into English than other subjects. Accordingly, she decided to go to a foreign language university to major in English. After Mare entered the university, however, she again found that her interest in formal, day-to-day studying waned as she began to long for direct experiences of English-speaking cultures. As in high school, she felt ambivalent about seemingly sober and passive learning methods that required her to make a steady and sustained effort. Hence, she focused on traveling to countries where English is commonly spoken as a mother tongue, including a one-month stay in Canada for an internship at a Japanese language institute. She believed that this method would provide more pragmatic and active learning opportunities (interview, November 7, 2011).

Mare subsequently elaborated on what made her decide her sojourn abroad. Over time, Mare gradually noticed that simply traveling overseas and finding chances to interact with fluent speakers did not facilitate learning as she had expected, particularly because she faced considerable difficulties communicating with people in Canada. Thus, after coming back from her internship, she became unable to dismiss the study abroad programs that were offered by her

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[6]A flight attendant is commonly considered a prestigious occupation among females in Japan.

university. However, she still could not remove her reluctance to go abroad for a program that emphasized intensive classroom learning: "I thought this program would not work for me. I preferred to interact with local people, as I did during my internship in Canada, but this program didn't seem like that" (interview, November 7, 2011). In spite of this doubt, she at times found that her childhood dream of becoming a fluent speaker still remained. Vacillating between such romanticism and dubiousness, she hesitantly applied to a four-month program when she became a junior. Nevertheless, her uncertainty about this decision lasted even after her application was accepted: "I didn't feel my study abroad would really happen, because I had a thing that I really wanted to do before study abroad. Actually, I had a part-time job. If I took off around that time, I would miss a chance for promotion" (interview, November 7, 2011). As such, Mare struggled to discern whether language learning abroad held genuine meaning for her.

Mare's indecisiveness, however, was alleviated as her departure date approached because in the meantime she had been reflecting on the great deal of effort she had invested in achieving cultural understanding through her past traveling and internship experiences. She also reminisced about several moments when she was able to communicate with local speakers. In doing so, she reappraised her aptitude for sojourning abroad. This self-discovery spurred her on to pursue successful language learning abroad. As such, around the time of her departure to the United States, she had a fervent hope to improve her language proficiency: "I strongly wished to master at least conversational English skills" (interview, November 7, 2011). The following essay and poem also illuminate her feelings:

Essay

一緒に留学に来た誰よりも英語を話して友達をたくさん作って、誰にも負けない

留学生活を送ろうと思っていた。日本にできることはアメリカではしない。

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My plan for study abroad is to make the most use of this opportunity by speaking English as much as possible and by making as many friends as I can, so that I will have the most rewarding experiences of anyone. I've determined not to do anything that I can do in Japan (November 7, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

Poem

American life is just a moment

This chance doesn't come twice

I will not do things that I can do in Japan (November 7, 2011)

Her unmalleable devotion to making the most use of her study abroad opportunity is unmistakably exhibited, and intriguingly no token of her previous irresolution about joining the program appears in either the essay or the poem. This remarkable change can be considered as an initial phase of the transition from youth to adulthood. In other words, youths by nature are relatively susceptible to the allure of the fashionable and new, which at times prompts them to develop illusionary dreams, desires, or longings. This naivety, however, can become a cue to tap into their undiscovered potential or discern new possibilities of selfhood when they undertake a sensible self-appraisal and identify deficiencies in need of improvement. In the process of reviewing the past, they might undertake self-analysis, self-assessment, or even self-reproach, where a great deal of guilt or regrets can also emerge. As such, Mare's reported indecisiveness can be understood as being fueled by her reluctance to deal with her emotions of fear and anxiety and face up squarely to her habit of procrastination, which had hindered her improvement of language proficiency. Over the course of such irresolution, she solidified her determination to

overcome her tendency toward perennial avoidance of accountability. This personal goal can also be considered as her subjective meaning of study abroad.

The First Half: A Jaw-Dropping and Disheartening Experience

Mare's fear and reluctance about study abroad had totally disappeared when she arrived in the United States. Her remarks made it seem that she was walking on air and had reached the zenith of excitement: "There was nothing in mind but coming enjoyable and happy experiences" (interview, November 7, 2011). The next poem also describes her feelings at the moment:

I can't help thinking an exciting life

Who will be my roommate?

What kinds of classes will I have?

If I have some trouble

It is just my experience in America

(November 7, 2011)

She composed this English poem without writing a Japanese equivalent beforehand, but she struggled with choosing words and combining them into sentences throughout her writing process. However, this poem expressively illuminates her thrilled anticipation of her new cultural life. The last two lines in particular exhibit how she was cultivating a greater psychological readiness to explore new experiences, regardless of whether they might be pleasurable or disappointing. She was fully expecting to find meaning and value from this opportunity.

Two weeks later, school began. Despite Mare's heightened expectation, she constantly encountered considerable problems communicating with local people. She was extremely stunned by the difficulties of overcoming the language barrier, which she attributed to her limited language proficiency:

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I had truly believed that I would be able to communicate with people here more smoothly, but it turned out that people [do] not understand what I [say] at all. I had thought that my English skills shouldn't have been that bad because I had experiences of traveling abroad and the internship. However, I've found that these experiences were meaningless. (interview, November 7, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

This statement suggests that her sensation of disturbance was triggered not only by her disappointment at her abilities but also the fact that she had substantially overestimated her aptitude for sojourning abroad. It also demonstrates the exasperation she felt as she struggled to subdue the feeling and surmount her myriad regrets about her past procrastination. Her state of disturbance was explicitly portrayed in the poem below as well:

Ashamed

Confidence disappeared

Afraid

Become silent

Become small

(November 7, 2011)

The more she spoke, the more she felt humiliated. Her voice became choked with anxiety, as demonstrated in the fourth line ("become silent"). During our interview, Mare additionally explained the meaning of the term "ashamed" in the first line: She did not feel nervous about her comprehension or communication problems; but rather she felt excruciatingly embarrassed upon recognizing how naive she had been in expecting to acquire language in a facile manner while neglecting the significance of an honest day's work:

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You know, people usually think that one who is enrolled in a foreign language university should acquire high language skills. They also think that one who has a lot of experiences abroad should speak English fluently. However, I've realized that having a lot of experiences abroad and knowing about different countries do not always allow learners to become fluent. (interview, November 7, 2011, translated by the researcher)

Mare realized how shallow and frivolous her understanding of what it meant to learn language was because it had been conceived based upon pervasive images of English speakers as intelligent, sophisticated and elegant in Japanese society. She had simply longed for becoming such an ideal social figure; however, this pursuit merely gratified her vanity and did not align well with the sincere improvement of her language skills.

When Mare experienced her mortifying realization, she simultaneously felt that she did not want to repeat the mistake any longer. It was utterly disheartening and discouraging to acknowledge her limited skills, but she resolved not to remain trapped in a mood of despondency or misery. Rather, she gritted her teeth and said to herself: "If I shut my mouth now, all effort that I've done will become worthless. I did not want to do that" (interview, November 7, 2011). Therefore, she considered her profound regret as a valuable lesson, which also served as the impetus for making a strenuous language learning effort from that point of her study abroad. This resilience altered her attention to the learning attitudes of other international students, who persevered in practicing English without hesitation even when they made mistakes: "I learned from their behavior that the key to improving English is to use it as much as I can" (interview, November 7, 2011). Enthused by their bravery and efforts to acquire the language, Mare found new inspiration to carry on. The next poem epitomizes her fortitude:

I don't want to be a loser

I have no choice

Keep going

Keep talking

(November 7, 2011)

As Mare reignited her courage, she started a new journey of language learning.

The Middle: Falling in Love with the English Language

During our next interview, Mare recounted noteworthy developments in the previous two months she had spent in the United States. As she became accustomed to her new life, she was actively engaged in practicing and learning the language both inside and outside school. She spent her free time with her Taiwanese and American friends. Whenever she had less confidence in her comprehension of their conversations, she asked her Japanese peers to join these gatherings and support her. Furthermore, she created more chances to talk to different people, including those who were not her classmates. In addition, she volunteered to tutor an American student in the Japanese language. Accordingly, her anxiety about speaking in her second language began to decrease (interview, November 7, 2011).

In regard to Mare's formal learning, she amended her goals to make them more specific and attainable. One of these goals was to complete an English book that she was assigned to read for homework: "Because I've never completed a whole book in English. ...I will definitely finish it by reading it everyday. Then, I hope I will eventually improve my skills to read another book" (interview, November 7, 2011). The target book was a short and simplified novel for beginner English learners. However, she lamented that there were ample unfamiliar words on every page she opened. She looked up each vocabulary word to understand the story, but combining translated words sometimes sounded awkward and did not make sense. She furthermore related

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her experience of completing this assignment through persistence: Although her tremendous frustration and confusion provoked exhaustion, Mare kept sitting down at her desk and reading. Then, one day she found herself fully absorbed in learning. Moreover, she realized that her view of the language changed: what had once seemed mysterious and foreign had become closer and more accessible. It was as if she had stepped into a new world, which she had never imagined to enter:

> By reading a book, I can connect with the English language. ...I really like spending time contacting anything related to the language. Before I came here or since I started learning it, I thought that acquiring linguistic skills was the target. However, I view it as a means of connecting to people, society, and literature in the target language countries. By working collaboratively with English, I can enter a new world. (interview, November 7, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

This entire quote greatly illuminates the extent of change in her feeling and perspective on the language. In other words, the act of learning had transcended into personal and meaningful joy. Furthermore, she cultivated a sense of intimacy with the language, as demonstrated in her decision to personify the language as her close companion in the last sentence. In fact, she conceived of it as her partner. This perception was vividly depicted in the poem below:

> Title: Dear English
>
> English is my partner
>
> When I'm with you, I'm excited
>
> I don't like that I'm with someone for 24 hours
>
> But when I'm with you, I want to be together for 48 hours
>
> (November 7, 2011)

Inlaid with expressions that signify her affection for English, this poem was conceptualized as a love letter. It also suggests how her new language was merged into her mind, body, and emotion—it had become part of her identity. Regarding Mare's English communication problems, she occasionally mentioned during the interview that her struggles had not been totally resolved at that point of her study abroad, though her joy of learning suppressed her fear and anxiety over these difficulties and led her to focus on the value of each moment. In addition, as she submerged herself in learning, her heart became full of appreciation for the opportunity to study abroad: "I have been very longing for English speaking countries since when I was young. ...Now I feel like my dream came true" (interview, November 7, 2011).

Mare's change in perspective on language learning was reflected in her understanding of study abroad. She initially conceived of it as a site of changing her attitude toward studying from one of detestation to one of deep enthusiasm, but she was pessimistic about her ability to truly achieve this transformation. However, when this monumental shift actually took place, she discovered a new aspect of self through the experience:

I don't try to find new things or new discoveries

But everyday I find [them] unconsciously

And I also find new myself

From now, I will change new myself to real one

(poem, November 7, 2011)

This poem indicates how students' ambition to learn can bring out their potential when their goals bear fruit. By discerning her inherent capacity for growth, Mare not only cultivated a new appreciation of learning within her specific study abroad context but also redefined aspects of selfhood in ways that would possibly continue to reverberate for the remainder of her life.

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Therefore, this is another significant token and reaffirmation of Hanauer's notion that language learning is a "significant, potentially life changing event" (2012, p.105).

Mare's discoveries in her new environment extended to the development of various interests that she never had before, such as deepening her understanding of her own country's history, society and cultures, and learning about international business: "I was not interested in matters of marketing or business at all, but now I ask [my friend who is majoring in International Business] to lend me books so I can make copies of some pages" (interview, November 7, 2011). Her eagerness and ambition to improve her knowledge and abilities was expanding without cessation.

The Second Half: Stumbling into a Quagmire of Love

In addition to studying abroad, Mare had another reason for coming to the United States. She was planning to attend a job fair, the Boston Career Forum, which was well recognized among Japanese college students because international companies sought highly qualified Japanese-English bilingual candidates there. Mare, who was a junior, started preparing for her coming job-hunting activities,[7] which would intensify after she went back home. During our next interview, she stated that her trip to Boston gave rise to bewilderment because she had soaked into the joy of learning so fully that her interest in continuing her education after obtaining her Bachelor's degree was growing. On the cusp of determining her future direction, she left hoping that her experience at the forum would convey a hint about how to make her decision. However, it wound up bringing her more confusion because she was overwhelmed by the highly advanced level of English language proficiency among the forum attendees. Her shock

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[7] Because each academic year in Japan starts in April, Mare was in the United States around the end of her third year in college. This is the period in which Japanese companies typically seek prospective employees from the pool of university students.

was vividly depicted in her essay and poem below:

Essay

このまま勉強を続けるか、就職するか自分で決められなかった。ボストンのセミ
ナーでどちらかに大きく傾いてほしくて向かった。着いていたら皆同じ日本人な
のに 語学力は外人並。皆の就職に対する意識も力強くて自信にあふれていた。自
分とは 何もかもが違いすぎて場違いなように思えた。全員から語学力を除いても
勝てない と感じた。

She translated the essay into English:

I cannot decide that I should continue to study or I have to do job-hunting. I went to
Boston to find my answer. But when I arrived there, I met many people who are Japanese
the same as me but their speaking is like foreigners. Everyone has strong confidence and
strong consciousness of job-hunting. They were different from all of myself. I felt that "I
should not come here." If I compete to everyone except for English skills, I can't win.
(November 30, 2011)

The essay illustrates her state of great agitation about her future career plan, which was
exacerbated due to her over-optimistic expectations for the forum. Even though she had already
acknowledged the need to continuously improve her language proficiency, seeing other student
candidates was the epiphany that awakened her to the tremendous challenges ahead of her,
regardless of which future direction she would choose. The poem below brings these unsettled
emotions into sharp relief:

I hope I can answer to my question

I want to throw my confusion

But I can't find answer, but I can just feel frustrated

I became even more disappointed at myself

(November 30, 2011)

Compared to the essay, the poem amply illustrates how this experience was a shattering blow to the confidence in her language abilities that she had been building at length. Furthermore, the emotional expressions "confusion," "frustrated," and "disappointed" indicate how difficult it was to shake off the languor aroused by her frustration and exhaustion because she felt as if she were put right back at square one. She additionally reported during the interview that her anxiety was so acute that her bewilderment remained for a while after coming back from Boston.

Mare's normal school life, however, seemed to alleviate her puzzlement gradually. Upon resuming reading a simple English novel, the stimulation of pursuing her personal goal again infused her mind with bliss. She was absorbed in the fascination of the story to the extent that she made daily habits of reading in the mornings and before going to bed so that she could discover what happened next (interview, November 30, 2011). As time went on, she finally reached the last page of the book:

I made it!

It was first time

I can understand this story

So I want to tell to everyone

I had a good time

I feel good and I'm not a loser anymore

(poem, November 30, 2011)

The poem visualizes Mare's smile of triumph and immense relief at the moment she finished the last page. She was so suffused with emotional gratification that she could not help but share it with her friends. In light of her way of rejoicing, it has become clear that her exultation derived not only from attaining her amended personal goal—finishing a whole book—but also from reducing the sense of inferiority that she experienced at the forum. Upon realizing this achievement, she rebuilt her confidence in her capability to accomplish her personal goals. In this sense, the statement "I'm not a loser anymore" suggests that the ultimate significance of her triumph lied in vanquishing her former habits of procrastinating and giving in to adversity; as Plato remarked, "The first and best victory is to conquer self" (n.d).

Not long afterward, Mare devoted herself to another assignment—conducting research on a topic of her own choosing and then making a presentation, which would be her final task during her study abroad. This task was also challenging for her because she was largely unfamiliar with academic research procedures, and she was only beginning to move away from her past tendency to put things off until the last minute. When she found the nerve to get started on this assignment, her Japanese peer recommended looking for sources whenever she had a spare moment. Stimulated by her peer's encouragement but plagued by doubt, she followed this suggestion. Surprisingly, she found herself enjoying searching for things she did not know. She started randomly inquiring into a wide range of matters in order to choose an appropriate topic for her presentation. Whenever she encountered intriguing information, she took notes and translated them into English: "I don't have any sense of tiredness or distress when I translate my thoughts into English" (interview, November 30, 2011).

Mare eventually decided her topic—the current widespread obesity epidemic. Her comments on her method of delving into the causes and factors of this social issue suggested to

me that she went into her project with heart and soul. She sometimes found that, without consciously realizing it, she had produced extensive notes full of her opinions and thoughts on the information. This progress reaffirmed how much she enjoyed learning the language:

English is not obligation for me

Even if I have to write with 10 pages or 20 pages

It's not tough for me

When I complete and see these papers

I want to write more

(poem, November 30, 2011)

After writing this poem, she said, "I can deal with any challenges as long as they are related to the English language" (interview, November 30, 2011).

Several weeks later, Mare completed a draft of her presentation script. With excitement, she immediately contacted her American friend, Sandra, to arrange a meeting in order to ask her to check her writing. However, when she showed Sandra her draft, Sandra seemed puzzled by Mare's text: "[Sandra] didn't understand what I meant to say, so she often asked me, 'What does this sentence mean?' 'How about that?' or 'Is this what you wanted to say?' After I explained, she changed the whole sentences" (interview, December 14, 2011). When Mare saw her sentences being erased and replaced with new and different ones, she had indescribably complex feelings. The next poem accurately portrays these emotions:

New paper made me confused.

Is this my paper?

But I want this paper to be my paper,

So, I have to learn about how to write

I found things that I need to improve in order to be a professional

(December 14, 2011)

The juxtaposition between Mare's rejection and acceptance of Sandra's suggestions were represented as her dilemma in this poem: On the one hand, she was experiencing discomfiture because her writing was deemed unclear, as stated in the first three lines. This uneasiness was also addressed during the interview: "I'm really uncomfortable when someone else corrects or changes my work. So, when my sentences were changed, I felt that they were not my work anymore. Because someone changed my work, my sense of art was gone" (interview, December 14, 2011). Both this quote and the first three lines of the poem, therefore, demonstrate how Sandra's changes affected her self-regard. On the other hand, Mare strove to accept the suggestions that Sandra provided by suppressing her wish to keep her work as it was and trying to understand that the text should be more comprehensible and natural to others. As such, the whole poem provides picturesque descriptions of how learners go through inner conflicts and psychological negotiations in the course of their second language writing.

Mare's nervousness also arose when speaking because it sometimes seemed difficult for her interlocutors to understand what Mare said. She had become sensitive to their puzzled facial expressions or responses such as "What did you say?" because she thought that those reactions were a mirror of her unclear pronunciation or inappropriate usage of words. Sandra also gave Mare similar reactions during the meeting. Thus, Mare's tenseness was mounting as she tried to clarify her complex academic thoughts on her presentation script:

Still now, I'm a little bit nervous

Because my speaking is not good

Does my speaking improve or not?

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Change or not?

What do you think my English?

(poem, December 14, 2011)

This poem illustrates how she was afraid and anxious to make a voice: The more she attempted to speak clearly and appropriately, the more she got nervous and tended to falter. Her disquiet and tenseness were vividly depicted by the questions in the last three lines. These questions were also her inner voices that reflected her aspiration to release herself from these concerns. In light of the aforementioned dilemma related to her writing, Mare constantly faced one challenge or another in her language learning. Nevertheless, she in fact declared that she had never given up on learning even though such distressful experiences recurred:

Every time I am about to give up my learning, I find myself refusing the resignation because I know that my regret will eventually become indelible, so I am not willing to abandon my challenges easily. ... I am really uncomfortable with people's reactions that they do not understand what I say. It is so painful that I often want to stop learning English, but once I stop, my development will never happen. While here, I just talk to myself, "Just hang in there!" (interview, December 14, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

From this quote, it is acknowledged that Mare's emotions oscillated between distress and elation and never became settled as she engaged in language learning during the second half of her study abroad. In light of the path that she went though, a question arises here: How did see perceive herself during this period of the time? In this regard, the quote below will disclose the answer. It will also elucidate her subjective and insightful perspectives on language learning abroad during this period:

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I used to be a person who tended to lose interests pretty quickly, so I had never continued anything. ...However, whenever I visited English-speaking countries or particularly during this study abroad, I realized that I really like studying English. I am simply focusing on this one thing, but I discover new things everyday through language learning experiences. I can also better understand myself about what I haven't done yet and what I should improve more. (interview, November 30, 2011)

This quote demonstrates her fortitude to keep challenging herself for language learning, which was so solid and absolute that she maintained a deliberate intention and ardent sprit to master the language. Even though she often felt daunted throughout her study abroad, she bore herself up, undeterred by repeated difficulties. As such, at this point of study abroad, she seized a sense of self as perseverant and diligent at learning. However, why did she have such a dogged determination? The reason radically differs from those expressed in the previously presented case studies: She adjusted her goals to more them more achievable and accessible during the earlier period of her study abroad in order to surmount her former aversion to studying. Upon doing so, she steadily attained her goals step by step, such as reading, searching for information, and persevering through a day's work, and cultivated her emotional gratification. In this sense, she no longer sought to become the idealized figure she had revered in her childhood—a glamorous and fluent native-like English speaker, nor did she prioritize numerically measured outcomes of linguistic knowledge. Instead, re-establishing her self-esteem became the cardinal desire for her study abroad. Her growing sense of fulfillment enabled her to endure the challenges that she had been facing.

Steeling her courage, now she was preparing for her presentation that would take place during the last class of her study abroad.

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The End: The Growth of Her Love for English

Mare recounted her experience of giving the presentation that she had worked on diligently. With myriad excitement and nervousness, Mare stood in front of the audience and started her presentation. When she saw several teachers had been invited to act as assessors, her legs trembled with fear; however, she completed her presentation without any problems: "I was able to give my presentation with confidence because I generally like presenting my work, and this presentation was thoroughly checked by Sandra" (Interview, December 14, 2011). After a few minutes, each teacher gave her/his feedback to Mare. One of the comments, however, struck her: "A teacher said, 'it was sometimes hard for me to understand what you said because you pronounced words differently. In order to produce English sounds more accurately, I'd recommend you increase your efforts to practice pronunciation'" (interview, December 14, 2014). This was the first time someone had directly pointed out pronunciation as a weak point, although others' confused reactions to her utterances had previously left Mare feeling disappointed in herself. As such, it seemed that the teacher's comment made her heart race with mountainous puzzlement and humiliation: "When I was given this advice, I realized my pronunciation hasn't fixed yet. ...I was directly noticed it at this last moment"(interview, December 14, 2011). She reported that it took several days to become unruffled, but she contemplated the feedback. Then, she decided to take the comment as a valuable lesson rather than a criticism. The following essay and poem illustrate this decision:

Essay

先生のアドバイスはとても鋭かった。少しショックをうけたがそれは自分でも感じていたポイントだった。でもこれは私のスキルアップできるポイントだからシ

ョックをうける事じゃない。またこのアドバイスを使って挑戦したい。もう一度

やってみたかった。

I found my teacher's advice was accurate but her words were also deeply poignant. I was

shocked even though I had already noticed this weak point. However, I should have

gotten a shock because the teacher gave me this advice to enhance my English

proficiency. I want to take on this challenge as the teacher advised me. However, I

wished I could have had one more chance to redo my presentation. (December 14, 2011)

(translated by the researcher)

Poem

My teacher's feedback was accurate

I was disappointed

This comment gave me encouragement to further improve my English skills

So, I don't need to be disappointed

Keep trying,

Keep improving

(December 14, 2011)

With a fervent wish to have another chance to make her presentation better, her school life in the

United States ended on a note of regret. However, both the essay and poem indicate that she

shifted her disappointment into a renewed vigor and determination to improve her language

proficiency further. Her sincere ardor for learning language persisted even though she had

received painful feedback. As such, throughout her study abroad Mare firmly laid the foundation

of attributes for learning. In other words, she fostered a capability to glean edifying lessons from

the rigorous demands of language learning. After writing the essay and poem on the experience of giving her presentation, she additionally commented, "Now that I know what specific skills I should improve, I've come to want to learn English more!" (interview, December 14, 2011).

Our last interview took place three days before she left for Japan. It primarily involved Mare's reflections on her entire experience of language learning abroad. Her trajectory elaborates upon how learners occasionally encounter distressing and challenging experiences in the course of second language acquisition, as demonstrated in other case studies; nevertheless, Mare mostly illuminated the delightful and pleasurable aspects of her experience, or more specifically, she described how she came to be absorbed in the bliss of her ordinary life in the new cultural environment:

The most enjoyable moments were those that I was using English. So, I actually enjoyed my ordinary life. For example, when I ran into my friend, we greeted each other by saying, "Hi, how are you?" then we had some small talk. After that, we said, "See you around!" I enjoyed such a simple conversation. Another enjoyable time was going out to eat with my friends. While having meals, we spoke English. These moments are the most memorable because I felt how much I immersed myself in this English-speaking world. ...These things happen to everyone, so they sound very customary and uneventful, but these events brought me a sheer joy. This is probably because, at the beginning of study abroad, I viewed these things as rare and special occasions, but now these events have become habitual and part of my life. ... Even though such typical day-to-day events have become so normal in my life, this American life is still precious. (interview, December 14, 2011)

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Subsequently, Mare composed a poem about this feeling:

Ordinary life is most special for me

Talking with my friends

Having a coffee and laughing

Before I came here, this life was my ideal one

But now in America

I am already in my ideal life

This ideal life has been not ideal anymore

This is my real life

But this real life is still special for me

In each moment I can discover new things

Because I'm in America, English-speaking country

(December 14, 2011)

The quotes from the interview and the poem exhibit how she had nurtured a sense of appreciation for seemingly trivial pleasures in her everyday life. The growth of this sense actually links back to the time of her childhood when she started becoming interested in the English language upon seeing her older sister's textbook. Since then, she utilized the full scope of imagination to conjure up what the world outside of Japan would be like: "English-speaking countries were so far off that they always made me long for them since when I was young. They were like dreamlands that I was able to see only through TV and movies" (interview, December 14, 2011). This description of her youthful habits allowed the researcher to envision her as a small girl in Japan, gazing at Americans' ordinary lives on the TV screen with curious and sparkling eyes. Her use of the term "dreamlands" suggested that, as she watched, she may have

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been fantasizing about being there and immersing herself into the sort of lifestyles portrayed on the shows. As such, Mare's study abroad allowed her to plunge into the dream and pursue its realization until she had come to cultivate a sense of belonging in the new environment. Hence, her customary life events, such as greetings, chatting, and having coffee or meals, came to constitute her dream itself. More importantly, though, she did not restrict her subjective view of study abroad to a site where one's dream bears fruit; rather, she came to understand it as an experience through which one can learn meaningful life lessons—namely, how to abide the long and tortuous path humans go through by cultivating senses of appreciation and bliss of life from ordinary recurring events.

Mare's perception of study abroad extended to her subjective understanding of what it meant to learn a language. Her joy of life was entwined with her delight of language learning. The next poem vividly illustrates this perception:

英語はツールである

友達をつくるため、勉強するため、旅行するため、

私の人生を楽しくするツールである

もっとみがけばもっとたのしいことがふえる

きっとつらいこともたのしいことにかわるきがする

English serves as an access point to my life possibilities

Of making friends, learning new things, or traveling abroad

It's a guide, which makes my life blissful

The more my skills improve, the more I experience elation

English can change darkness in life into vibrancy

(December 14, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

The poem suggests that study abroad enabled her to indulge her passion for language learning. It also reveals how this learning can transcend into personally significant life-related experiences—in Mare's case, she re-established self-reliance and self-regard and had opportunities to contemplate what was significant to her own life. The unification between language acquisition and the learning of life lessons opened her eyes to new possibilities, which can continue to reverberate for the remainder of her life. Furthermore, this poem demonstrates a considerable change of her subjective definition of language learning. Initially, she felt that the ultimate target or a final point was to master the language in order to be a fluent speaker; however, she eventually viewed it as an "access" or "guide" to further discern the values that guide one's life. This whole poem reinforces Hanauer's (2012) notion of *meaning literacy*, which considers language learning as a site that promotes one's ability to deliberate what it means to be human and make meaning of the world one lives in. In this sense, how can we say that language learning is discrete from humanized and life-related learning?

Closing Remarks on Mare

The overall contours of Mare experience expound upon how language learning abroad can extend to attentive considerations of life and self when it is infused into meaningful life experiences. This amalgamation, in Mare's case, allowed her to inwardly generate new perceptions of self, as typified by the considerable change in her perception of self from self-doubt to self-regard. This alteration aligned well with the transition of her views of language learning from illusionary and alluring into something more feasible and accessible. It opened up new possibilities of selfhood and induced her undiscovered potential as a language learner and

human. As such, her experiences of both study abroad and language learning led her to experience meaningfulness and enhanced self-growth. Table 9 recapitulates Mare's journey.

Table 9

Overall Contours of Mare's Case

Period	Subjective views of self-positionality	Subjective definitions of study abroad	Subjective definitions of language learning	Future goals
Pre-study abroad	Cynicism or disillusionment with study abroad and overestimating her own language proficiency	Overcoming her detestation of studying and tendency to procrastinate	Fashionable and glamorous, in keeping with dominant views in Japanese society; the target or final point goal is to master a new language	Becoming a fluent speaker (at least conversationally)
First half of study abroad	Inferior positionality because of her communication problems	A site where one can realize one's past mistakes and reconsider how to redeem oneself	A site where learners devote themselves to an honest day's work	Improve her language proficiency as much as she could
Middle of study abroad	Cultivating a sense of belonging to her new environment	A site of new discoveries of possibilities for selfhood	Viewed as her partner whom she enjoy being with	Finishing a simple novel in order to refine her language skills
Second half of study abroad	Holding feelings of inferiority, intending to maintain her positionality as a perseverant and diligent learner	A site where one re-establishes self-esteem or conquers oneself	A site that nurtures one's sense of fulfillment, which enables one to endure the challenges that one is facing	Reached a crossroads about whether to continue her education after obtaining her Bachelor's degree
End of study abroad	Perseverant and diligent as a learner	A site where one's dream bears fruit and one can learn meaningful life lessons	"Access" or "guide" to pursue the values that guide one's life	Unclear, however, her willingness to continuously learn language became solid

It is noteworthy here to examine the manifold ramifications of the polyphony between language and life-related learning from psychological dimensions. As with the previously presented case studies, Mare's trajectory also reveals that learners' perceptions or understandings of language learning and study abroad are fluctuating, frail, and unpredictable due to external repercussions, which mostly occurred in their day-to-day lives. These influences at times

internalize human emotions, feelings, and sensations. Hence, human moods are so innately volatile that human perceptions or understandings tend to be vacillating as well. However, Mare's story is contrary to this human disposition. By all means, Mare's subjective positionality in her new environment continually vibrated in the course of her acculturation; however, one wonders why her willingness and determination to learn did not yield to external negative influences to same extent as other participants. Of particular note is that Mare's story evinced her great courage and resiliency in fighting her way back from the inferior position imposed on her to conquer self. Her resiliency can be attributed to what Weil (1952) termed *attention*—an individual's deliberate intention to comprehend what is happening to her or around her. In other words, when humans direct their conscious attention to why they attribute certain emotional understandings to life events, they can develop the abilities to observe the events from different slants and possibly turn their minds toward good aspects of their experiences. Then, in Weil's theory, humans' cognitive overload is alleviated, and they can focus only on what is valuable and of vital importance to them. In this regard, Weil considers attention as a crucial and influential tool of self-transformation. As such, Mare occasionally practiced attention while abroad by swaying away from immediate moods of despondency or misery or by paying more attention to the various benefits of language learning. This psychological phenomenon in fact emerged in several poems and quotes as her emotions shifted from rejection to acceptance. Overall, attention allowed her to become mesmerized by the bliss of language learning and engaging with the new environment. Thus, she was able to conserve her dogged determination. In the end, Mare's case suggests how education can be essentially instrumental in one's life.

Case Study 6: Ayana

The aircraft that Ayana and her university peers took from Japan had finally landed at an

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international airport in the United States. Upon overhearing her peers' exhilarated voices, she found that her mind was composed and quiet, as if this event was nothing special. She was a bit surprised at this unexpected sensation because she had gone through a great deal of struggles in learning the English language and should have been the one who was most looking forward to this moment. However, she reported that her only sentiment in that instant was, "Okay, we arrived" (interview, November 17, 2011). As her first interview proceeded, it would occur to me that this sensation might have been attributable to some exhaustion associated with her past difficulties or a strange presentiment in the earliest minutes of her experience abroad. In fact, Ayana would go through recurring disenchantments while sojourning in the United States.

Pre-Study Abroad Experience

As our conversation began, Ayana expanded upon her hardships in language learning, which occurred during her two-week study abroad in Australia. She was a high school sophomore. From the time she started learning English in junior high school until this opportunity came, she had been studying English very diligently. The primary reason for her enthusiasm about language learning was that this subject was her strongest and had become her favorite. Due to her avid interest in English, she had maintained a firm determination to apply to a foreign language university to major in English since she was a junior high school student. In the course of pursuing this goal, she had been spending most of her time at her desk going over what she learned from school and preparing for routine quizzes and tests. Thus, an honest day's work was the center of Ayana's daily life, and she averred that this two-week study abroad signified a milestone in her long language-learning journey (interview, November 17, 2011).

Shortly after arriving in Australia, Ayana was traveling toward her host family's house. Her feelings were wildly fluctuating between nervousness and anticipation. Despite her

uneasiness, the family warmly welcomed her by stating, "You've become our family!" (interview, November 17, 2011). However, she found herself uncomfortable or even hostile to their statement: "When my host family told me that..., it was not easy for me to accept the idea. ... For me, my family exists in Japan. This is my family" (interview, November 17, 2011). While she enjoyed the regular school schedule, which included morning classes and afternoon excursions with her Japanese peers, her awkwardness and discomfort with staying at her host family's house intensified as time went on: "I had to be always attentive and careful to make sure that I was doing right, which caused huge stress. ... I did not enjoy my homestay at all. I was very upset about that" (interview, November 17, 2011). Reminiscing about her homestay experience during our interview, Ayana stated that a major factor in her negative feelings towards her host family had nothing to do with her language difficulties; rather, they stemmed from her maladjustment to a new environment, which was in turn triggered by her desperate homesickness.

Ayana stated that she left her host family full of bitter and miserable feelings, all of which would culminate in a final disappointment that she described at length. As the van that carried Ayana and her peers drove toward the international airport to go back home, she was looking forward to seeing her family again. While they were waiting for their boarding announcement, she was browsing in the stores around her gate to buy souvenirs for her friends and family. At a cosmetic store, she found nice and suitable items. She picked them up and went to the cash counter with her traveler's checks. The casher told Ayana brusquely, "Sign your three traveler's checks, please." She followed her instructions, but after the casher scanned the items, she found that the two traveler's checks covered all of the cost. Then, she said, "I just needed two." The third signed check, which was equivalent to two hundred dollars, had now become

invalid. In fact, traveler's checks are valid solely in the case that a customer signs them in front of the clerk during the sales transaction. Hence, Ayana was about to ask the clerk to rectify her error, but her language difficulties made her choke. Swallowing her anger and frustration, she took the check and left the store. The next poem vividly portrays her feelings about this event:

> Title: Traveler's check
>
> You said, "Please sign here"
>
> I did
>
> But it is your mistake
>
> My $200 is gone
>
> It is your mistake
>
> I lost my $ 200
>
> This is your fault
>
> Give me [back] my $200
>
> Come back my $200
>
> But I couldn't say anymore
>
> I couldn't get it back anymore
>
> This is my fault
>
> (November 17, 2011)

The descriptive passages evoked Ayana's groan of exasperation and outrage regarding the clerk's misbehavior or shoddiness. Furthermore, this vexation turned toward self-criticism, as the last three lines demonstrate. Her self-blame was actually triggered not only by a sense of inferiority in terms of her language proficiency but also by another factor, which is elucidated in the following essay:

Title: Traveler's check

I lost my traveler's check of $200. I tried to make claim to the clerk, but she didn't answer to me. Actually, I didn't have English communication skills to explain that situation. I also didn't have strong mind to say more claim to the clerk. I regret about this experience. I thought that I want to improve my skills and I don't want to repeat same situation. (November 17, 2011)

Her self-blame was induced by her resignation to the subordinate position that she occupied in social and linguistic hierarchies: Ayana was too young and did not have enough language skills to make a voice and stand up to the clerk even though she did not do anything wrong. The clerk took advantage of the socially superior position afforded to her by her age and first language speaker status. Therefore, the clerk's behavior resulted in Ayana's self-deprecation as a language learner and evoked a sincere sense of personal regret. Although her overall experience damaged her self-esteem, it did not actually disrupt her enthusiasm about learning English. Instead, it spurred her on to continue to learn the language and seek another study abroad opportunity in order to restore the self-regard and confidence that she lost in Australia: "My study abroad experience in Australia made me eager to study abroad again, indeed" (interview, November 17, 2011).

After returning to Japan, Ayana resumed her day-to-day work. Her next target was to pass her university entrance exam. She studied day and night, and about a year later, she took the exam. Despite her devotion and effort, the result did not meet her expectation. She was appalled to find herself completely lost as to her future academic career. After describing these experiences as a period of absolute darkness, she additionally reported that she still maintained a desire for continuing to learn English in order to study abroad once again. Then, she decided to

enter the two-year community college associated with the university to which she originally applied. If she successfully obtained her associate's degree and passed the transfer exam, she would be admitted to the main university to complete her bachelor's degree. Therefore, her community college life was occupied by her hard work in order to prepare for the exam. Simultaneously, she began preparing to apply for a one-year study abroad program by taking official tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). To become a qualified applicant for this study abroad program, reaching required minimum scores on these tests was necessary. Hence, she prepared ahead in order to submit her application immediately after she would successfully enroll at the main university: "Before I came here, English was everything... for me. I mean studying English or getting high scores on tests of the English language. I spend so much time in my life studying and preparing for TOEFL, TOEFL or TOEIC, TOEIC" (interview, December 14, 2011).

Ayana's two years at community college went by quickly. She succeeded in finishing her associate's degree and passing the transfer exam. She was already a junior when she finally started studying at the university that she had longed for. Not long after her first semester began, she made a strenuous effort to meet the requirements to become a strong applicant for the one-year study abroad program. However, she was not able to reach the scores by the deadline. This outcome prompted shocked resignation, ultimately leading her to choose a four-month program instead.

With the senses of frustration and disappointment that arose from these experiences still lingering in her mind, Ayana was now about to disembark from the airplane in the United States Her trajectory of language learning and intense sense of inferiority hindered her from feeling

enthralled as her peers seemingly did. Because her sense of inferiority had swiftly accrued as she repeatedly ran into brick walls, her ardent sprit for language learning could not be rekindled even at the moment she had waited for at length. Hence, she was not able to become cordially excited about it.

Having examined Ayana's experiences before her departure to the United States, it has become clear that her motivations for language learning were always centered on overcoming immediate obstacles, such as passing entrance exams, attaining minimum required scores on standardized tests, or obtaining good school grades, rather than thinking deeply about her overarching purposes. Similarly, she had not identified any concrete objectives for her time in the United States other than simply studying abroad for a second time, so once again she did not have any foresight as to what genuine meaning language learning abroad held for her: "Regarding this study abroad, I didn't have specific purposes" (interview, November 17, 2011). However, in stating that her previous unfulfilling sojourn in Australia had made her eager to pursue a more successful experience, Ayana intimated that her subjective meaning of study abroad was to remove the intense misery and distress that had accumulated throughout all of her past language learning experiences in order to rebuild her self-esteem. The next poem epitomizes this wish:

性格

弱い自分を変えたい

免疫力

強く

失敗

乗り越えたい

I want to change myself

who has no backbone

to become more resilient

stronger

to overcome

my previous failures

(November 17, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

By holding these hopes, she started another journey.

The First Half: Dreams and Wishes Pulverized

Ayana and her Japanese peers arrived at the campus where they were going to spend the next four months. She characterized the period immediately following their arrival as extremely hectic—it was as if they scarcely had time to breathe as they settled into their new dorm lives, attended the orientation provided by their language institute, and so forth. They also took placement tests to check their language proficiency levels. Ayana was placed into the second lowest level, which was classified as below intermediate. She was extremely upset and confused about the institute's decision because she thought her skill levels were higher. Therefore, she was yet again plagued by bewilderment and discontentment as school started. During the first several weeks, she found the courses were easy because they covered content that she had already learned at her university in Japan. In spite of this circumstance, she somehow strove to reignite her motivation by harboring great expectations for a lively and dynamic classroom atmosphere.

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This hope stemmed from several stories that she heard before coming to the United States from Japanese students who had previously studied at the institute. According to their experiences, her classes would be far active than those in Japan, in which students tend to sit in the back quietly, avoiding being called on by teachers. She had also been told that students from other countries at the institute were enthusiastic about learning English. However, the class atmosphere fell short of her expectation:

> I heard that [international] students energetically participate in class activities and voice their opinions and they are very active. I really like such enthusiastic and motivating behavior because they inspire me and make me compete with other classmates. However, it turned out they are quieter than I imagined. (interview, November 17, 2011)

While Ayana was in a state of agitation, discontent, and anxiety regarding this learning environment, she desperately wanted to avoid being oppressed by the lukewarm atmosphere. However, she also noticed that her motivation for learning English had already become too fragile to endure any further at this point because of her past recurring disappointments. Nevertheless, she once again strained to squeeze out what remained of her vigor and voluntarily spoke out in class many times in order to enliven the atmosphere. Despite her effort, the class remained mired in a malaise. She gradually came to feel awkward and uncomfortable about being the sole active student among her disenchanted peers. Her vitality faded eventually:

> No one is willing to participate in class, but I thought at the beginning that what others were doing shouldn't have mattered. I shouldn't have been influenced by others though. Of course, learning environment is also important. However, I wanted to make a huge effort regardless of what others were doing, so I actively participated in class activities and often spoke up even though no one did at the beginning. However, as time went on,...,

I have lost my reasons why only I participate, and even now I am totally demotivated to

voluntarily speak out my opinions in class. (interview, November 17, 2011)

To make matters worse, Ayana could not find opportunities to have English conversations with

her classmates from other countries during breaks between classes either: "my classmates tend to

get together with those who are from their own cultures. ...I do not have so many chances to

speak English because I mostly spend time speaking in Japanese with my Japanese classmates"

(interview, November 17, 2011). In regard to the atmosphere of her classes, she also wrote an

English poem to describe her feelings:

Title: In the class

So quiet

No energy

Boring

Sleepy

Disappointed

My imagination was broken

What's my purpose to come to study abroad?

I lost my hope in America

(November 17, 2011)

The poem indicated that her discontent and disenchantment had finally bottomed out. The wishes

that had been barely keeping her afloat were now totally pulverized. As the last two lines

demonstrate, she lost her hope and purposes of sojourning abroad.

While Ayana was utterly disappointed at school, she sought for new chances outside of

school to make American friends on her own by staying in the library or a coffee shop on

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campus. However, this experiment did not facilitate as many opportunities as she wished:

> I recently stay in the library or Starbucks. I actually spend more time at Starbucks to study or kill time. ...However, there have been few opportunities to talk to American people. I rarely speak to people, so I cannot make friends outside school. (interview, November 17, 2011)

Her loneliness and isolation both outside and inside of school greatly hindered her from regenerating her barely remaining impetus to engage with the new cultural environment. Ayana was most likely tortured by being at the coffee shop without finding any solution to free herself from such aloneness. Because this situation was the last straw, she was too distraught to hide these disheartening feelings and often shed tears during our interview. She additionally explained the reason for her struggles to make new friends. According to her observation, her subjective understanding of friendships was different from those generally held by other Japanese peers. Whereas Ayana considered that friendships should build up emotional connections through deep and substantial conversations, some Japanese peers were seemingly excited about becoming superficially acquainted with new persons and called them friends. She felt bitterly hostile toward their ostensible friendships. This antipathy grew as time went on and made her considerably circumspect about exploring opportunities to meet new people:

> For me, friends are those who I can have meaningful conversations with ...When I talk to people, I want to have a deep conversation. I do not like to have very superficial conversations such as greetings—"Hello," "How are you?" or "See you!" I am not interested in these types of communications. (interview, November 17, 2011).

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Now that unexpected circumstances had left Ayana utterly resigned to disappointment, she spent

vacant hours at the coffee shop. Her loneliness was vividly described in the next poem, which

was written in English:

Title: Friend

My image of friend is who talk with me deeply

We can always spend good time

But no one [is] like that in here

If you speak to me, I cannot respond in English

I want to talk [to] you more

But I'm sorry, my poor English

(November 17, 2011)

This poem insinuates what Ayana imagined her life abroad would be like before she came to the

United States—she envisioned that she would fully immerse herself into the new society by

enjoying English conversations with her new friends. In this poem; however, Ayana not only

lamented her limited chances for socialization but also ascribed this circumstance to a sense of

inferiority stemming from perceived deficiencies in her language skills, as the last three lines

demonstrate. As such, she did not lay all fault at the institute's door but rather began to

understand that other situations and elements, including her language proficiency, contributed to

her disheartening circumstances. This awareness dawned on her in the end of the first half of her

study abroad.

Having analyzed Ayana's experiences, it has been acknowledged that her subjective

positionality in her new environment was isolated and marginalized due to factors both external

(her school situations and scarce socialization opportunities) and interpersonal (her sense of

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inferiority and limited language proficiency). Under this circumstance, it is also important to comprehend her overall subjective meaning of language learning at this point of her study abroad. When directly asked what language learning meant to her, Ayana answered:

> I am probably a perfectionist. ...Once I start something, I want to be perfect, so I am not usually satisfied with my subtle or small improvement. So, if one learns English, one should become, for example, an English scholar or professor. Without being an expert, I cannot consider it as success. I cannot admit it. (interview, November 17, 2011)

This quote exhibited her highly romanticized conception of language learning. To reinforce just how naively optimistic Ayana's ambitions were, Cook's (1999) remarks on the complexity of second language acquisition are helpful:

> Multicompetence is intrinsically more complex than monolingualism. Whether or not one accepts that some L2 users can pass for native speakers, these passers form an extremely small percentage of L2 users. Research with this group documents the achievements of a few unusual people, such as those described by Bongaerts et al. (1995), as typical of human beings as are Olympic high jumpers or opera singers. (p. 191)

In light of the extreme challenges of attaining native-like fluency, there was a considerable disparity between Ayana's grandiose goals and most individuals' practical experiences of language learning. However, even though her unrealistic expectations led to disillusionment time and time again, she continued to linger on them rather than squarely facing up to her situation and determining more feasible objectives.

However, it is also important to adopt a suitably cautious understanding of Ayana's romanticized picture of second language acquisition, which cannot be attributed solely to her idiosyncratic nature. This view can be also derived from deeply entrenched social myths of

second language acquisition as a relatively quick and easy process (Cook, 1999; McLaughlin, 1992). This myth unmistakably affected the participants in this current study as well because similar propensities were revealed in most case studies, including Ayana's. The majority of participants were considerably distraught by their language difficulties at one point or another because the language barrier was much higher than they imagined before study abroad. Though Ayana's view of language learning was idealistic to the extreme, it must have been at least partially influenced by this pervasive myth.

All in all, Ayana's romanticism made it difficult for her to become resilient and rebound from the hardships that she encountered during the first half of her study abroad. Instead, she just fell deeper into a desperate plight. As such, the light of her hope for acquiring English skills was most likely diminished. The following quote epitomizes this feeling:

I have been making so much effort but I have never had a sense of accomplishment while I am learning English. Although I have already made considerable effort, it seems far away to reach the stage of professionalism, so I feel I cannot do it anymore. I actually already gave it up. (interview, November 17, 2011).

Ayana's overall language learning abroad experience exacerbated her distress and misery that had been slowly accumulating since she was a high school student. She was too upset and dismayed to confront this circumstance and decided to abandon further challenges in language learning. However, this perception of language learning abroad would begin to change slightly in the second half of her study abroad. She would regain some degree of hope, even though she would not be able to fully reignite the courage and motivation she had held before study abroad. Her focus on language learning would instead shift toward a different direction. These changes will be presented in the following section.

The Second Half: Entering a New Phase

Ayana's vacant time sitting at the coffee shop continued unabated. Even though she already decided to abandon language learning, she actually found herself somewhat reluctant to entirely detach herself from her prolonged desire for improving her skills. This dilemma made her confused about what it meant for her to learn English:

> I usually sharply distinguish things that I want to do from those that I don't. Once I decide to do something, I usually want to do it very intensely until it becomes perfect, but once I don't care about it, I completely stop doing it, so I always go from one extreme another. ...However, if I give up acquiring the language now, my language abilities will become nothing because I will totally stop learning it. ...[but] I don't want to be a professor or teacher of English, so I am getting confused about why I am studying English so hard. (interview, November 17, 2011)

Ayana struggled to discern what her genuine meanings of language learning were. Her puzzled thoughts kept going around in circles and got nowhere. Her disheartening experiences abroad induced this confusion, but her lack of concrete learning objectives other than simply studying abroad for a second time posed additional difficulties as she tried to find her own answer to this quest. Hence, she was turned adrift as her frustration over her boredom and loneliness was mounting. However, this disorientation also provided an opportunity to seriously contemplate her definition of language learning and how she wished to continue it if she was determined to do so:

> People seem to have their own specific purposes to learn English. ...[They] use [their] language skills as tools to do something. English is just a tool. If so, I am wondering why I have to learn such tool? What does it mean for me? If English functions as a tool, I

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reconsidered what I want to do by using it. Then, I ended up becoming satisfied with my language abilities to have basic conversations such as greetings or asking questions, or talking to American friends. Of course, it would be so ideal if I could use my English skills for my future jobs, but it is difficult in reality....so I have finally become okay that my English skills are incomplete. Yes, indeed. (interview, November 17, 2011)

This quote elucidates the conclusion that she reached after her lingering quest for answers. Whereas Ayana seemingly made a firm decision by stating "I ended up becoming satisfied with my language abilities to have basic conversations...," the last sentence: "I have finally become okay that my English skills are incomplete" does not connote any exhilaration; rather, the emotional overtone in the text indicates that she was actually not quite satisfied with this resolution. Thus, this quote reveals the complexity of psychological dimensions of second language acquisition: learners' emotions and feelings toward language learning at times control their behavior, attitudes or even the act of learning itself. These volatile emotions function like a gear repeatedly being shifted between drive and reverse, bolstering and diminishing learners' motivation. The more learners are involved in intense learning experiences, the more abruptly the gear is shifted. This vulnerability and uncertainty evokes their agitation, which can extendedly affect the decisions they make about how to move forward regarding their future language learning and life paths.

Although Ayana's study abroad moved on to an unexpected direction, she did not fall into despair anymore. Once she had settled on the goal of maintaining her current skills, she summoned up courage once again, as if she shook off the pessimism that had accumulated over her past study abroad experiences. Then, she established a new routine in order to change her present situation. For example, on weekdays, she would focus on studying after school. On

weekends, she planned to attend parties when she was invited. In doing so, she believed that her weekday work would be useful to have smoother conversations at parties. Regarding her weekday study, she concentrated on memorizing and reviewing vocabulary words that she learned both in Japan and the United States. She made this language-learning plan after reconsidering what skills were most essential to her purposes: "I realized that I need to improve vocabulary skills. You know, when I can find the right words, people sometimes can understand what I say even if my grammar is incorrect, so I think vocabulary skills are essential" (interview, November 17, 2011). Since she established this new routine, she began making the most use of her time. As time went on, her comfort and confidence regarding speaking to people in English slowly increased:

> Before establishing my learning habit, I spent too much time thinking about my concerns. So, I was not able to communicate. By reviewing the words that I learned from classes or experiences here as well, even when I sometimes forget them, my memories sometimes also come back. So, this learning habit is working very well now. (Interview, November 17, 2011)

Furthermore, Ayana sought for an alternative strategy to practice English conversations in order to compensate for her dissatisfaction with the circumstance that she was facing at school. She took several weekend trips on her own to utilize her English skills in natural settings: "I cannot rely on anybody, [so] I ask someone about directions when I am about to get lost" (Interview, November 17, 2011). While traveling, she asked local people how to get to her destinations with abundant nervousness. However, she simultaneously savored the pleasure of understanding and being understood through these communications: "I feel so good!" (interview, November 17, 2011).

In sum, the distinctive hallmark of Ayana's experience in the second half of her study abroad was that she began to view her life abroad in terms of optimism and liveliness rather than negativities and miseries. Going through unfavorable and unexpected study abroad experiences brought her to a significant inquiry about what her genuine meanings of language learning were. Over the course of this quest, she developed the capability to solve problems on her own and learned how to deal with her emotional strains. Accordingly, the resilience that she did not sufficiently possess during the first half of her study abroad grew at this point. As such, she learned the value of life lessons—experiences of disorientation and uncertainty that enhance self-growth. In this regard, Howard (2015) noted how becoming resilient relates to this growth:

> Being resilient doesn't necessary mean thriving in the face of failure, rather, it's the ability to pick yourself up and put one foot in front of the other. It's not an inborn trait: it's a combination of behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed. (p. 5)

Whereas Ayana's sojourning abroad experience provided this advantageous influence, it did not entail similar benefits for her language learning. Her initial emphasis on the significance of formal and day-to-day serious studying waned. Instead, she viewed study abroad as more of a means for her convivial and festive joy. In fact, consulting websites to learn about others' motivation for language learning prompted Ayana to shift her attention to discovering new leisure-time activities:

> I actually do not know what the purpose of my language learning is. Then I came to become curious about others' purposes of language learning. When I searched for their purposes on the website "Chiebukuro [others' advice]," I found that some people want to understand English movies and music or visit concerts to their favorite bands. It seems

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that most people's reasons relate to their own hobbies. I do not actually have any hobby, except for having coffee with friends. However, after I came here, I noticed that many people enjoy their own hobbies. Since I have eventually come to want to try something new, I want to meet various people to ask their hobbies in order to extend my interests. (interview, December 1, 2011).

Ayana averted her gaze from serious challenges in second language acquisition, and her previous ardent spirit for language learning disappeared. Yet, she began utilizing her language skills as a means of inquiring into humans' sources of happiness or pleasure in life. This inquiry would have a significant influence on her personality and views of life, as the next section illustrates.

The End: Pondering What Life Is

Time went by very quickly. It was almost two weeks before Ayana was going to leave the United States. As the end was approaching, she frequently indulged in reminiscences about her experience sojourning abroad. While doing so, she found that there were two things she would regret not doing before she went back home. One was to understand Americans' perspectives on finding joy in life. For Ayana, who spent most of her time studying, it was very invigorating to see people's different attitudes and behavior towards life in the United States:

Before I came here, I had been studying all day and night... However, after coming here, everyone seems to enjoy his or her own life. The one thing that I want to ask people about is their joy. Everyone seems to have his or her own interests other than studying... I realized that human beings should enjoy their own lives. From this study experience, I learned how important it is to have time for joy. (interview, December 14, 2011).

As this quote exhibits, Ayana's curiosity had been slowly growing since she arrived. She actually came up with a specific method regarding how to ask people about this topic after seeing Haruna,

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her Japanese peer, conduct a small-scale survey research project. Haruna was investigating people's perceptions of their own countries and delivered questionnaires to American and international students. Her enthusiastic engagement in her project was so inspiring that Ayana also became interested in doing a survey on her own topic:

As Haruna does, I want to ask various things to many people to understand Americans' ways of thinking. ...American people seem to enjoy their own lives. Because I often feel depressed and unhappy, I want to know why American people think about things so positively. I want to know their perceptions of joy. (interview, November 17, 2011)

However, her hesitance to talk to new people had hindered her from taking action until the last minute, but her curiosity intensified as the end of her study abroad was approaching.

Another thing Ayana wished to do before leaving was spending some time with the international students she was acquainted with at school: "I had seldom asked someone to go out to eat. If I did, I usually asked only Japanese peers. When I thought about what I did during the last four months, I would regret it" (interview, December 1, 2011). Ayana had this hope not only because she had wanted to have an experience of being together with her acquaintances. She actually had another reason:

I am relatively reserved and sometimes face difficulties talking to new people. This weak point might have a negative influence on my future life, so I've decided to overcome this difficulty by...going out to eat with people. It sounds very easy, but it is extremely challenging for me. ...It would be a huge step if I could go out to eat with someone. (interview, December 1, 2011)

As this statement illustrates, she regretted her shy and retiring manner. Hence, she had wanted to change herself in order to enhance her self-esteem by becoming more open and sociable.

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Although Ayana had these two wishes, time had already become too limited to fulfill both of them. Therefore, she decided to focus on the latter because she thought it would be much more feasible. Then, Ayana conjured up memories of a pleasant time spent with Natalia, a Spanish international student, during a trip to Niagara Falls that was offered by the university around the middle of the semester. She remembered having an enjoyable conversation with Natalia while traveling on the bus. It had become an unforgettable memory since then:

> Since our Niagara trip, I have not seen her frequently because we are not in the same classes, but I occasionally run into her. I have wanted to have some conversations with her, but she seems always busy, so we usually greet each other by saying "Hi" or "See you." I always feel that something is missing because we had a good conversation during the trip. So I'd like to get a chance to spend some time with her. (interview, December 1, 2011)

The more Ayana tried to contact Natalia, the more nervous she became. Holding her breath, Ayana accessed Natalia's Facebook page. Immediately after she wrote Natalia a message, she sent it: "If I did not send it right away, I was afraid if I would have changed my mind" (interview, December 1, 2011). Fortunately, Ayana's anxieties proved to be unfounded, as Natalia responded to her soon afterward, and they made a plan to go out to eat. Ayana wrote the next English poem to describe the moment when she knew one of her wishes was going to bear fruit:

> I have something to regret now
>
> I want to talk with my friend more
>
> I want to use English more
>
> I want to go back to beginning of this semester
>
> But I have only 2 weeks more

I can do anything if I want to do that

Just do it!!

I have more time

Be positive!

(December 1, 2011)

This poem is mainly comprised of two components. The first four lines mostly illustrate her regret about her past reluctance to challenge herself in language learning, while the remainder of the poem indicates that her remorseful feeling had transcended into bravery and courage, which had an influence on rebuilding her self-esteem and confidence. As such, this poem denotes that her path towards achieving her goal—changing her shy and retiring personality—had begun to take shape.

Upon learning that two of Ayana's Taiwanese acquaintances were also going to join the meal with Natalia, the researcher suggested that Ayana ask her companions about their sources of joy in life, so that her other wish would also be realized. Ayana was excited about this suggestion, but she was worried about how to ask questions in English. Then, Ayana and the researcher collaboratively composed questions in order to prepare for her gathering.

The date Ayana had been looking forward to finally came. Ayana recounted how she was getting nervous as the scheduled time approached: She was afraid about whether she could smoothly communicate in her second language or, if not, her limited language proficiency would cast a chill over the gathering. She described feeling such incessant anxiety that she put into her bag the list of questions that she prepared with the researcher, hoping it would somehow help to enliven the get-together. Then, she nerved herself to leave for the dining hall where she was planning to meet them. Despite her concern, Ayana had a great time. When she brought up her

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questions about joys in life, each of them gave Ayana honest and open answers. More surprisingly, one of the Taiwanese students divulged that, much like Ayana, she struggled to find a better way to enjoy life:

> She does similar things as I do and shared with us how this personality makes it difficult for her to enjoy life. Then, we were able to share this commonality. We said to each other, like "I understand you very well!" So, we could share our feelings. I really enjoyed my time with them. (interview, December 14, 2011)

By sharing similar concerns with each other, Ayana and her Taiwanese companion developed an emotional connection. Her remarks indicate that she had begun to feel emancipated from all of the frustration and distress that had been mounting while abroad at that moment because the goals and wishes that she had had before and during her study abroad were now accomplished. For example, in her moments of greatest despair, how could she imagine building up a friendship of sorts in the new environment at this last moment? Furthermore, her other wish—asking questions about others' perspectives on joy in life—was achieved. She not only obtained some information in this regard but also learned about the universality of human life: individuals go through personal difficulties regardless of where they come from or what language they speak. Moreover, she began re-establishing self-esteem regarding her language proficiency after enjoying meaningful interactions in her second language. As such, the dinner gathering signifies a milestone, which attested that her original goals—changing herself by alleviating the sense of misery that she had while in Australia and rebuilding her self-regard and self-confidence—had been attained. The next poem epitomizes her fulfillment. It was written at the end of Ayana's final interview to describe her overall feelings about her study abroad experience:

Study abroad [gave] me more wonderful time than before

Before I came here, I was studying everyday,

No hanging out with my friend[s]

I [spent] serious time in Japan

However, American life made me notice

The word, "Enjoy your life"

It's the biggest change in my life

I found English is very useful for me

I can do anything I want to do

I am lucky to study English

(December 14, 2011)

This poem indicates how Ayana's perception of life dynamically changed through her sojourning abroad experience. By observing and understanding people's different attitudes and behavior towards their own lives in the new cultural environment, she reached an epiphany that humans have the right to pursue their own pleasure and happiness, rather than merely spending their lifetimes studying and working. This change also illustrates that her distress and frustration throughout her study abroad brought about its most meaningful consequence. In other words, her emotional strains induced her to inquire about what boundaries humans encounter in life, and how they attempted to overcome them. This question additionally guided her to delve into a fundamental inquiry—what does it mean to live as a human—and prompted her to contemplate her own future. In this sense, her overall study abroad engendered a valuable life learning experience.

Whereas Ayana's experience in the United States affected her as a person and influenced her perception of life, she devoted relatively little attention to language learning itself, although the abovementioned poem unmistakably demonstrates a positive perspective on the value of English. However, this value was characterized in terms of practical utility rather than profound meaning. In fact, during our last interview she did not clearly express any interest or enthusiasm about continuing to study English after returning to Japan. Instead, her previous view of language learning as convivial and festive remained: "Well.... English is a good thing to have in order to expand my interests or hobbies" (interview, December 14, 2011).

Prior to closing this case study, there is one final question arising from the ramifications of Ayana's entire experience of language learning abroad to be addressed: Was her study abroad ultimately successful? As a student in the classroom, the answer might be questionable. However, if her experience is considered in terms of how it had affected herself and her perception of life, the answer might be different. The overall experience enabled her to reform her understanding of what it means to live as a human in her own innovative way. It also generated the formation of her autonomy, which is significant to one's self-growth in the course of the transition from adolescent to adult. In conclusion, Ayana's case study reinforces Hanauer's notion that language learning is intricately bound with one's humanity and philosophy of life, as did all of the others.

Closing Remarks on Ayana

The overall contours of Ayana's sojourning abroad experience illustrate her trajectory of breaking free from her self-perceived inferiority and the misery that she had endured since her first experience in Australia. By establishing an objective of studying abroad for a second time, she attempted to overcome her emotional strains and redefine the self. However, the more intensely she strove to do so, the more she faced obstructions, such as failing her university

entrance exam and being disqualified from applying to a one-year study abroad program. Even after she somehow fulfilled this goal by deciding to join a shorter four-month program, her experience in the United States ran counter to her pre-study abroad expectations. Her recurring disillusionment, which stemmed from agitation about school and isolation in the new environment, aggravated her prolonged emotional ordeals. Furthermore, it deterred her motivation for language learning and eventually led her to avert her gaze from serious challenges in second language acquisition before she could reach a point of clarity and determine her genuine purposes of language learning. Ultimately, she redefined her meaning of language learning as a convivial and festive tool to expand her leisure activities. Table 10 recapitulates Ayana's journey.

Table 10

Overall Contours of Ayana's Case

Period	Subjective views of self-positionality	Subjective definitions of study abroad	Subjective definitions of language learning	Future goals
Pre-study abroad	Intense sense of inferiority	Changing herself by alleviating the sense of misery that she had while in Australia in order to rebuild self-regard and self-confidence	Passing her entrance or transfer tests, meeting the required TOEFL and TOEIC scores, and obtaining good grades	Obtaining a second chance to study abroad
First half of study abroad	Lonely and isolated at school and in her new environment	Losing self-regard and self-confidence	Pulverizing her desire and motivation for learning	Loss of her goals to utilize her language skills
Second half of study abroad	Relieving her sense of alienation because of her intention of engaging in the new environment	Contemplating her meanings of language learning and her future directions of life	A tool to expand her leisure activities	Maintaining her current language proficiency
End of study abroad	Starting to immerse herself into the new cultural environment	Deepening her understanding of how individuals attempt to overcome boundaries in life; self-growth; creating her autonomy	Same as above	Unclear whether she would continue language learning; however, her personal goal of changing herself by alleviating the sense of misery was achieved

As demonstrated in the table, Ayana's subjective definitions of language learning were originally shaped by social compulsions to pursue signifiers of success and prestige, such as grades and exam scores. These initial definitions link to Bourdieu's (1982) concept of *habitus*, which refers to socially and culturally inculcated ways of thinking and behaving that one considers to be normal or regular. In other words, prominent social conceptions of English as a neutral instrument for career advancement or a means of inhabiting a cosmopolitan persona were reproduced in Ayana's subjective assumptions about what it meant to learn language. Not only her definitions of language learning but also her perception of life was constructed by the

habitus; hence, she felt compelled to devote her life to studying and was devastated when she did not pass the entrance exam for her most preferred university. In the course of her experiences, however, she shifted to a far more idiosyncratic definition. Once she stepped outside of her own country and was exposed to different people's perceptions and attitudes towards life, her ideologically constructed perceptions of learning and life in the past were deconstructed. By synthesizing the past and present, she was freed from such limited views and created her own definitions. This process enhanced the formation of her autonomy, which was a significant phrase of the transition from adolescent to adult.

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Case Study 7: Haruna

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Pre-Study Abroad Experience

Haruna described an ordinary scene from her childhood: Rushing to answer her mother's call, "Haruna, it's time to go!" her young self jumped into the car. Her family had a usual routine after starting the engine—turning on the CD player to listen to 80s or 90s American pop music. Although she did not know what language was in these songs, Haruna explained that she could not help but get into the swing of the rhythm and tap her toes and fingers: "I have been listening to music in the car since I was a child, such as Earth, Wind and Fire, Abba, and Mariah Carey" (interview, November 7, 2011).

Not long afterwards, Haruna became aware that these sounds were a foreign language when she began enjoying an educational TV show called "*Eigo de Asobo!*" ["Let's play with English"] by *Nippon Hoso Kyokai* [the Japan Broadcasting Corporation]. It was directed at preschoolers and lower-elementary grade students. "I liked the TV show very much. Even though I didn't understand what it was talking about, I tried to imitate it" (interview, November 7, 2011). Haruna's reminisces about her enthusiastic enjoyment of the program evoked an image of

her as a child eagerly mimicking the songs and dances performed by the show's animated characters and romping around the room.

As she grew up, Haruna became more interested in the meanings of the song lyrics or the TV characters' sayings rather than the sounds or rhythms. This interest deepened particularly when she started learning the language as a junior high school student: "I really liked English and enjoyed studying it!" (interview, November 7, 2011). One day, Haruna saw Hikaru Utada, a New York-born Japanese singer, performing an English song on TV. Utada's fluent English, which was relatively exceptional among Japanese singers at that time, completely floored Haruna. She immediately fell in love with the singer: "I was inspired by her because she was really cool! I had a strong feeling of *akogare* [longing] to be like her, so [after seeing her for the first time,] I decided to study English seriously" (interview, November 7, 2011).

In this manner, Haruna's ardor for English consistently amplified without any recession. English eventually became her best and favorite subject at junior high school because of one instructor's unique, phonics-based pedagogy. It was distinctly different from traditional Japanese grammar-translation methods: the students sang and imitated phrases, such as "A is A, A, Apple" (interview, November 7, 2011), as if the English class had become a music one. This approach was so alien that the students often made fun of it or complained by stating, "What a stupid song! It's boring!!" (interview, November 7, 2011). However, Haruna's enthusiasm was not disturbed by such criticism; rather she challenged herself even when most students seemingly gave up producing accurate English sounds (such as "r" and "l"), which the Japanese language does not have. She repeatedly practiced these sounds at home, dreaming about her ideal singer, Utada. However, learning English solely at school did not gratify Haruna. She started imploring her mother to allow her to attend private English conversation lessons. Haruna's stubborn insistence

somehow convinced her mother to at least take Haruna to a free trial lesson, although her regular

piano and swimming lessons hindered her from attending such classes.

When Haruna was a high school student, she decided to enter a speech contest. The

prospect of speaking English in public for the first time evoked acute anxiety and nervousness,

but she alleviated her tension by attending one-on-one tutoring sessions with an Assistant

Language Teacher (ALT)[8] to prepare for the contest. The ALT helped her amend unclear sounds

or mispronunciations. Though the outcome of the contest did not follow her expectation, she

certainly became confident in her ability to speak in her second language through these

experiences.

Haruna continuously thrived on language learning and successfully entered a foreign

language university far away from her hometown. Though separating from her parents was a

bitter experience, her aspirations to further improve pushed her deeper along her desired path. In

the beginning, she was uniformly bewildered by her new life; however, around the time she

became a junior, she was already accustomed to being independent and decided to join a

four-month study abroad program. However, as Haruna's departure for the United States

approached, she heard negative accounts from peers who had previously studied abroad. These

stories exacerbated her uneasiness and anxiety even though she knew this decision would fulfill

her prolonged dream. She sometimes expressed her fear to her parents on the phone: "I felt

scared. I said things like, 'What am I gonna do? Will my study abroad go well?' or 'I don't want

to go'" (interview, November 7, 2011). However, with their great encouragement, she finally

headed for her first life experience of going abroad. The following essays and poem are

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[8] An Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) is a native-speaker of English who is hired by the Japanese government in order to assist with English courses at public Japanese primary and secondary schools.

renderings of her feelings about this adventure. She wrote the essays in both Japanese and English but composed the poem solely in English:

Essay in Japanese

日本を発つまでは、不安９割、楽しみ一割…と言う感じ。いざ伊丹に着いて搭乗ゲートを目の前にした瞬間から、次第にわくわく感が増していった。アメリカに向かう飛行機の中、私を応援してくれている人たちのことを想った。メールを見返して、「やってやろう！」という気持ちになった。とにかく今まで憧れ続けていたアメリカ。やっとそれに近づけることができるチャンスだということを思うと、悪い思い出には出来ないと思った。お母さんの「帰ったら働かなきゃいけないんだから、おもいっきり楽しんでおいで！」のメール中の言葉がとても強く私の背中を押してくれた気がした。(November 7, 2011)

My feelings consisted of 90 percent anxiety and 10 percent excitement until I saw my departure gate in Osaka Itami airport. My excitement started increasing out of the blue. During the trip, I was thinking about my family, friends, and the people who encouraged and supported this decision. After I read their email messages once again, my anxiety was gone, and I finally felt "I can do it!" America is the country I had longed for. This wish was going to be finally fulfilled, so how I can spoil this precious opportunity? A message from my mom that read, "Soon after coming back from the U.S., you'll have to start job-hunting, so you should enjoy yourself as much as you can!" removed all of my concerns and hesitations about my adventure. (November 7, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

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Essay in English

When I got to the airport, I just felt like stay here because I was afraid of my first challenge to myself. My ideal was always high and that was also the reason why I was afraid of leaving Japan. However, my mother words pushed my back when I saw her message in the plane. (November 7, 2011)

Poem

The atmosphere of the airport made me afraid

The expectations for becoming what I want to be made me afraid

This is my first challenge

This is my challenge to myself

I wanted to be my ideal

I was afraid

But, my mother said

"Go and enjoy"

The words broke my anxiety down

The words made me tough

The words pushed my back [to move forward]

(November 7, 2011)

Regardless of their varying lengths, these essays and poem vividly depict her emotions and sensations at the moment of her departure—her heart beating full with rapturous delight, as if her previous massive black cloud of anxiety had been entirely lifted. Furthermore, these writings

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denote the deep bonds of kinship between Haruna and her parents. One of her subsequent remarks reinforces her intimate affiliation with them: "They didn't give me any pressure by stating 'Your study abroad costs a lot, so you should succeed.' Rather, they just said, 'We're happy for you because it's a rare opportunity. Not everyone gets such a chance" (interview, November 7, 2011). Hence, their encouragement was the wellspring of her decision to enter an important phase of her language-learning journey. While the three accounts disclosed similar emotions about her departure, they also bring distinctive differences into sharp relief. Haruna's Japanese essay expatiates upon her feelings to a greater degree than her English text. This disparity suggests the complexity of second language writing, which leads many learners to encounter enormous difficulties and struggles in articulating full circumstantial or emotional accounts of their experiences. Yet, the poem provides a rich elaboration of her sensations through deliberately chosen words. The nature of poetry, which does not always require as much explicated, coherent structure as narrative essays (Hanauer, 2010), allowed Haruna to expressively describe her feelings in English. As such, utilizing poetry writing as a research instrument is efficacious in enabling even those who have limited second language proficiency to shed light on their emotional and psychological insights.

Having examined her pre-study abroad experience, it is also important to divulge her subjective definitions of study abroad at this point. When the researcher asked about her purposes, she reported that she did not have any concrete objectives, but was rather merely focusing on controlling her overwhelming anticipation for the upcoming adventure: "If I had too many expectations, it made me afraid because I always like 'I want to be like this or that. My ambitions never stop and sometimes make me nervous" (interview, November 7, 2011). Nevertheless, her subsequent remark: "I want to see how I can adapt to a new surrounding"

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(interview, November 7, 2011) indicates that she defined study abroad as a self-imposed challenge to position herself in culturally different environment. Furthermore, she had a particular interest she wished to quest for while abroad: "I want to know how Japan is seen by other countries" (interview, November 7, 2011). This inquisitiveness stemmed from the accounts that she previously heard from those who experienced racial discrimination in foreign countries: "I heard that Japanese people were looked down on or insulted when they go to Europe, so I am very curious about how people from other countries see Japanese people " (interview, November 2, 2011). Hence, she had prepared to face what sojourning abroad would be like squarely by being exposed to an environment in which she would possibly have distressing experiences. In sum, Haruna pursued new possibilities of her selfhood while attempting to deepen her intercultural understanding.

Just as Haruna had feasible purposes for study abroad, her target for language learning in the United States was also achievable and practical, although it was not specific: "I want to improve my language skills a bit because I knew the reality of what language learning abroad would be like. I've already acknowledged that one cannot be as fluent as a native speaker within four months" (interview, November 7, 2011). As such, she took this learning opportunity as a steppingstone towards her second language acquisition. Now Haruna and her university peers' aircraft landed on the United States, and the next section will illustrate how exploratory and adventurous her experiences were.

The First Half: Endless Growth of Intercultural Understanding

Haruna's experience of sojourning in the United States started with restless excitement. Surrounded by students from diverse cultures at the English language institute, she became more intensely curious about cultural differences as time went by. She actively asked about their

countries whenever she had opportunities. The students also enjoyed responding to her questions, which also induced nostalgia for their homelands. More interestingly, these conversations naturally led to comments on what they knew or found interesting about Japan, which was related to her original inquiry as to how people from other countries viewed Japan. Furthermore, not only those with whom Haruna was acquainted but also unfamiliar students sometimes spoke to her and expressed their interest in Japan. One day, while Haruna was studying in the classroom, a male student came close to her and asked whether she was Japanese. Once he confirmed Haruna's nationality, he showed her his strong sense of affinity for Japan and excitedly talked about the things he knew while pointing at several well-known places, such as Tokyo and Osaka, on a world map posted on the back wall of the room: "I was surprised that more people are interested in Japan than I thought" (essay, November 8, 2011).

Of these talks with Haruna's international student fellows, the most enjoyable and meaningful conversation was with Wen-Shing, a Taiwanese student. She explained the complex history of Taiwan, such as its political struggles with obtaining and maintaining its sovereignty from the Republic of China. Additionally, she described the relationship of her country with Japan—how Japanese culture has been deeply ingrained in Taiwanese modern society since Taiwan experienced being colonized by Japan. Despite this historical circumstance, Wen-Shing mentioned that Taiwanese people were well disposed towards Japan, and some occasionally enjoyed visiting there. Haruna was listening to Wen-Shing with a gleam of full interest in her eyes because it was her first experience talking to a Taiwanese and hearing about such details. Wen-Shing also showed Haruna a sense of affiliation with Japan and subsequently asked many questions about the culture. The more they exchanged information, the more engrossed they became in conversation until they lost track of time. Since then, they were good friends. In fact,

they would foster an intimate friendship throughout the period of their study aboard.

The conversations with international students made Haruna more eager to develop her intercultural understanding. Another intriguing experience was when she asked a Korean student about Korean people's general views on Japan. South Korea was a country that she had had been interested in for a long time, but she had also felt rueful that this country had held discordant relations with Japan due to their political conflicts throughout history. The dispute had sharply intensified since Japan occupied Korea from 1910 to 1945, which extendedly evoked severe prejudices and resentment among public people in both countries. Haruna's sorrow about this ongoing acrimony had nurtured her wish to directly hear Korean people's opinions. Now she was surrounded by an international environment, and she had more opportunities to meet and talk to Korean students. She fortunately had a Korean student who was friendly to her. Although she gradually became close to the student, she was concerned and wondering whether it would be appropriate to bring this sensitive topic up in conversation. However, Haruna did so with bravery: "'I was afraid to ask, but I did it: 'Is it true Korean people don't like Japan?'" (interview, November 7, 2011). The Korean student replied openly and gently, "fifty-fifty" (interview, November 7, 2011). Haruna was in a stunned silence for a moment as she came to grips with this unexpectedly large number: "I got a shock, like, 'That's a lot!'" (interview, November 7, 2011); however, she also could not help but enjoy becoming aware of varied views or opinions of Japan as well as expanding her intercultural understandings. Accordingly, Haruna's social network with international students was also enlarging. The next poem, which Haruna wrote in English, vividly illuminates the bliss of her sojourning abroad experience:

I met them

They were from everywhere

Taiwan, China, Korea

Saudi Arabia, Italy

Spain…

I met them, I could use English

Thus, I could be close to them

Without English,

I might be lonely,

I might feel strong frustrated

I just spoke English

But I could get many friends

I could know one another

I could want to know them

Without English

I couldn't be close them

(November 7, 2011)

This poem denotes how she was experiencing a sense of fulfillment through her study abroad

experience. She seemed to have been suffused with this international atmosphere of delirious joy

while obtaining extensive knowledge of the world as well as her home country. The poem also

implies her utter surprise that she was indulging in such bliss, which ran contrary to the

prolonged anxiety she had experienced before studying abroad. Additionally, it suggests a

change in Haruna's subjective definitions of language learning. The English language, which

used to be a target that she had wished to acquire, was reconceived as a means of connecting

herself to an unknown world. Overall, Haruna viewed study abroad and language learning to this

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point as a site where individuals do not merely expand their knowledge in abstract and intellectual ways. Rather, they can actually construct tangible understandings of other cultures by interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds. Thus, Haruna underwent a metamorphosis during the initial period of her sojourn, as if she had emerged from a cocoon as a butterfly, flying away towards a new world of infinite possibilities.

The Middle: "Really? You Don't Like Your Country, Japan?"

While Haruna's language learning was flourishing in this manner, there was an occasion that prompted her intense keenness to understand people's views of Japan more profoundly. This took place during class where the students were involved in group discussions about their reading assignment. In her group, there were two Taiwanese, three Saudi Arabians and three Japanese, including Haruna. Although they were supposed to engage in the required task, the Saudi students began talking about their country, which was much more intriguing than the assigned discussion topic for the other group members. They were attentively listening to these students' account of the beauty of Muslim culture and society: "I remember their story attracted me" (essay, November 8, 2011). In the middle of the story, however, a Japanese student suddenly got a word in edgewise: "I don't like Japan!" (essay, November 8, 2011). Additionally, another Japanese student also nodded and agreed with this statement. All of the group members turned towards them and simultaneously said, "Why? It's your country!" (essay, November 8, 2011). Haruna was also shocked by this Japanese student's statement. She vividly elaborated on her feelings in the following essay:

...だが、彼女はその理由を言わずに「えっと…」と言うだけであった。私は恥ず

かしくてたまらなかった。皆が不思議そうにこちらを見ている。本当に恥ずかし

かったに加え、その彼女に少しだけ苛立ちも感じた。おそらく私達は日本について よく知らない。仏教って何、お寺って何、神社ってお寺とどう違うの、障子って 何、日本の総理大臣はどうして変わったの、日本って何があるの、良い所は何、 私達はこれらの質問に答えられるだろうか？...私がアメリカに来てから、日本が 好きだ、という外国人にたくさんであった。...こんなに日本に興味を持ってくれ ている人がたくさんいるのに、なぜ日本人の中には日本が嫌いという人がたくさ んいるのだろうか。なぜ自分の国に誇りが持てないのだろうか。

However, my Japanese peer didn't tell any reason but "Umm…" This behavior acutely embarrassed me too because other students looked at me, [as if they were wondering if I also had a similar feeling of antipathy toward my country]. I felt excruciatingly humiliated. I was also frustrated about her inexplicable behavior. Probably this is because we, Japanese, don't know about our own country as much as those who are from other countries. I wonder how many Japanese people can answer questions about our culture, such as "What is Buddhism?" "What are temples?" "How are they different from Shinto shrines?" "What is 'shoji' [a sliding door in a tatami room]?" "Why did the prime minister resign recently?" "What does Japan look like?" or "What are good things about Japan?" ...After I arrived in the United States, I have often met people who said, "I like Japan!" I didn't know such a large number of people outside of Japan are interested in my country. ...Yet, I don't understand why some Japanese people show their distaste towards our country. I wonder why they don't have a sense of proud of being Japanese.

(November 8, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

While this essay unmistakably demonstrates Haruna's frustration and annoyance towards her

Japanese peers, it also indicates that this emotion overlapped with guilt and remorse because she realized she had not properly appreciated the unique and captivating aspects of Japanese culture that drew a great deal of international attention and interest. Despite this realization, she had often encountered difficulties explaining Japanese culture adequately to her international student fellows when she was asked questions such as those listed in the essay above. Thereby, such events caused her to face self-reproach and self-disappointment at her limited knowledge. Another reason for her irritation was that Haruna felt as if these Japanese students' behavior distorted the senses of pride and affinity for Japan that she had just recently started reaffirming and fostering. Haruna wished to defend herself against their criticism by promptly explaining good aspects of Japanese culture in front of other group members, but she lamented that she was too shocked and astonished to do so in that moment.

During our interview, Haruna expressed her regret about not rectifying the situation that gave her group members the impression that Japanese people felt disdain for their homeland: "I think we [Japanese] don't have enough knowledge of our country to explain. This is why we think of our country in this negative way, so this event made me think about patriotism" (interview, November 7, 2011). This statement led the researcher to recommend that Haruna should conduct a small-scale survey research project on international and American students' perceptions of their countries. When she heard this suggestion, she was trembling with excitement because her long-held wish would finally be realized. Then, we brainstormed how to get started on the project, proceed with it, and show the results in public. While a large number of ideas were produced, the researcher recommended that Haruna write a brief note on her reasons, purposes, and what she wished to learn through this project before designing a specific plan. She agreed with this suggestion, and we decided to have another meeting on the following

day.

During our next meeting, Haruna showed her two-page long note, which was comprised of a list with 17 items and a short essay about what experience triggered her motivation for this project. In particular, the following three items showed the overall principles of her research study:

3）そもそも「愛国心」とは何か（定義は国によって異なるか同じか）。

4）愛国心を抱くことで生じてくる利点と欠点。

17）理想の愛国心とはどんなか。

3*)* What in the world is patriotism? (Is the definition different from one culture to another?)

4) What are the advantages and downsides to patriotism?

17) How should we foster our patriotism?

(November 8, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

Based on these principles, she was going to make a survey questionnaire, which would be dispatched to diverse cultural populations, such as Saudi Arabians, Chinese, Koreans, Italians, Spanish, Japanese, Americans, and so on. To show the result, we decided to hold a workshop about patriotism, during which she was planning to give a presentation. Now that we had a concrete plan, Haruna rolled up her sleeves. Her next challenge had just begun. In sum, her decision to conduct this project symbolized her commitment to continuing her educational and personal growth. More specifically, she intended to further enhance her intercultural understandings, extend her knowledge of language and academic skills, and see possibilities of selfhood.

The Second Half: Sweet and Bitter Life Experience

Haruna was working on the project as we planned, but she found herself facing a titanic struggle to make progress with it because she was also under tremendous pressure to keep up with her schoolwork: "I was like, 'Can I do this?'" (interview, December 13, 2011). However, she had a firm mind to complete it successfully and began spending more time at the library with her friends. The next essay and poem, written in English, expound on her emotions around that time:

Essay

Recently, I usually shut myself in Library and work hard. What make me do so? The answer may be my realization that we don't have enough time. However, I decided to start my survey about "Patriotism." Today, I am trouble with defining what I want to know through the survey. It's also with clarification the purpose of the survey. I just want to know about foreigner's opinion for the topic. I realize this project would take a lot of time. But I do. I just do. I know this working become my actual power and skill. Now I am pushed by a lot of things. I think I don't want everyone who are waiting for me with big expectation in Japan to be disappointed by what I am (what I will be) when go back to Japan. My parents, my friends in Japan, my friends who are studying abroad now, and myself. Always my ideal is apt to be high, so I may be easy to be disappointed to myself if I don't work hard. I don't have enough time as I said, so I shut myself in Library. Everyone works hard here, and they stimulate me to study more and more. This is kind a struggling maybe. (November 14, 2011)

Poem

I am pressed by something

Expectation from parents,

Friends, and myself

The heaviest is by myself

I want to get great English skill

I want to be good student or good daughter

...

I do not wanted everyone to be disappointed at what I am

Thus I work hard

So I have to do my best

I do not have enough time until I go back to Japan

I realized that

So I am struggling in this situation

Studying abroad make my hurdles higher than ever

It is stressful

But it is also pleasantness

I actually make my effort better than before

That is a thing that I realize

(November 14, 2011)

The essay and poem reveal that her purposes for the project were not only self-growth but also to

measure up to the expectations of her family and close friends, who had supported her decision

to study abroad before she came to the United States. She had kept the encouragements that she read in the plane close to her heart, and they had become the core of her fortitude to continue this challenge. An outstanding difference between the essay and the poem is: while the former largely exhibits Haruna's difficulties with the pressure, the latter unmistakably discloses that this project was viewed as rewarding and a tribute ("But it is also pleasantness"). Not only for her self but also for those whom she loved and by whom she was loved, her determination became strong: "I want to show them how much I've grown up [when I return back home])" (interview, November 28, 2011). Overall, these writings denote how she lived in the bosom of her family.

While devoting herself to her work, Haruna received a message from her parents that her grandmother had passed away. This news made it difficult for her to concentrate on her study because it became her emotional trauma. In fact, she had already experienced several sudden deaths or separations from those who were close during the past half year:

> Particularly, this year, in March, my dog died, and in June, I loved my grandma so much, but my grandma passed away because of cancer. In September, my boyfriend of five years dumped me and said, "I have another girl now." I was told this by him right after I came here. So I was like, "What!?" After that, my other grandma also passed away. (interview, November 28, 2011)

Her other grandmother's death deepened her sorrow and reopened wounds stemming from the passing of her grandmother who died in June. Haruna was very close to her, and they had made a great deal of good memories together: "I really respected her way of thinking and how she lived. …She told me, 'A good deed will be repaid back in one way or another.' …She was always thinking about me" (interview, November 28, 2011). During our interview, she shed tears and wrote the poem below, which was a letter to her grandmother:

Title: Dear my wonderful grandma!

Long time no see you!

Where are you now?

Behind me and protect me?

Now I am in U.S.A.

I know you are worried about my American life too much

I'm fine, so don't worry about it

I want to show myself to you

I will go to see you and pray

I have a lot of things to tell you about my American life

Thank you for watching me everyday

From Haru

(November 28, 2011)

In this poem, Haruna demonstrated her affection for her grandmother through the repeated use of colloquial expressions, as if she was talking directly to her. This rhetorical feature demonstrates that their connection and intimacy still existed as before. In particular, the questions on the third and fourth lines, "Where are you now? / Behind me and protect me?" indicate that her grandmother was still alive in Haruna's heart, and the last line illustrates that Haruna actually felt protected by her grandmother. The eighth line, "I want to show myself to you," suggests how her love of her grandmother yielded her aspiration for success at school and her research project. Therefore, the poem reaffirms that her great fortitude arose from her heartfelt connection to her family, which permeated to the very depths of her soul.

However, Haruna had not completely recovered from her grief and sometimes gave

herself up to despair. This pattern continued until one day in late November when she looked up and saw around the environment surrounding her: she described leaves that were falling daintily and created yellow-golden carpets on the campus ground. Under tender autumn sunlight, she saw American students chatting and laughing or playing with a Frisbee. Then, she noticed the beauty of nature and humans and how cheerful they were. She savored the moment with relish and realized how blessed life is. Thereby, she started highlighting positive aspects of life—the bliss of her present experience abroad: "I realized that if I do things positively, everything will be okay. I learned this life lesson from Americans" (interview, November 28, 2011). It may have been difficult to keep her spirits up, and yet she eventually considered this grievous experience as a life lesson to learn how to prevail over boundaries in one's life. The next poem typifies this view:

I must not forget about this lesson that

America teach me

Be patient

Be active

I have chance

I have possibility

With this experience

I might give up to do my best to be a person

Who I wanna be

I wanna be a active and smiley lady in my future

Without this American life

I couldn't change myself better

Thanks for my parents pay a lot of money for me

Thanks for my family cheering me up every single day

Thanks for friends and America

(poem, November 28, 2011)

To this point, her original purposes for study abroad (such as improving her language proficiency and deepening her intercultural understanding) transcended into a desire to determine a meaningful path for her future life, as indicated in the first line "I must not forget about this lesson." Hence, this poem also represents language learning abroad as a fundamentally transformative experience, as did the other case studies. To this point, Hanauer (2012) notion of language learning as a life-changing endeavor was absolutely confirmed. In this regard, Haruna additionally remarked: "Yes, definitely, I learned how to live. In other words, the way of thinking affects one's life" (interview, November 28, 2011).

While cherishing her study abroad experience, Haruna's pressure had come to a head as the end of the semester approached. Her pressure was actually derived not only from this time limitation but rather her wish to follow through on the completion of the patriotism project that she had already described to her friends and peers:

I already told my friends about my project. Also, I've been getting support from you. If I don't make any effort, people will think my project is nothing special. I really want to avoid this. So, I was like, 'I'll do my best no matter what.' (interview, December 13, 2011)

This quote denotes that she pursued quality in her work. By extension, this pursuit illustrates that her motivation was not merely derived from the desire to demonstrate her integrity by fulfilling a previously stated commitment; rather, it emanated from her deep belief in the societal value of

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her project—providing an opportunity for her peers to reconsider their own countries and other cultures. In this sense, her self-growth, which was initially pursued for personal benefits alone, had shifted to a wider concept of growth, or what Hanauer (2012) described as the ambition "to be a socially and culturally contextualized individual with a rich, extended history of personal experience" (p. 108).

Time had passed quickly, and only three weeks were left. Haruna spent more time at library around this period. Though she continued to work diligently, she often encountered struggles to find an effective way of designing a survey: "I was always wondering, 'Am I doing it right?' or 'Is this right?' while working on it" (interview, December 13, 2011). Meanwhile, she found that word about her project had spread. Some said, "Wow, how brave!" (interview, December 13, 2011), which gave her more pressure; another peer gave her courage by telling her, "In your case, it seems that huge pressure brings out the best in your ability" (interview, December 13, 2011). Nevertheless, she merely focused on the project. About a week later, Haruna finally completed her survey questionnaire. She immediately contacted the researcher, and we decided to collect data from American students in the library. The following interview quote illustrates her experience of dispatching the survey to Americans:

I was very nervous when American students were studying very hard, I asked them like, "Do you have time?" [However,] I was surprised that they wrote a lot of their own opinions. I had thought most of them would just circle their answers and leave the open-ended questions blank... Unexpectedly most all of them wrote their own opinions. Some went into the margins with their thoughts. One participant said, "I'm still writing my answers. I'll give it back to you later." I appreciated their cooperation even though this project didn't have anything to do with their studies. I was very happy that it went

very well. (December 13, 2011)

The statement vividly describes how she was a bundle of nerves about speaking with unfamiliar American students and asking them for a favor while they were working. In return for her effort, Haruna obtained a sense of accomplishment and relief. Moreover, American students' sincere behavior toward her project uplifted her motivation for the next step for the project, which was collecting data from her international student peers. This step also proceeded smoothly. In the end, she collected data from more than 60 participants, including 30 Americans, 13 Taiwanese, 15 Japanese, a number of Saudis that she did not specify, and so on. Now that Haruna had a great deal of sources, she reached to the point of preparing for her presentation. She also reserved a room on campus and officially announced her workshop date and time.

To conclude this section on the second half of Haruna's study abroad experience, the distinctive hallmark of this period, her transition from intrapersonal to interpersonal growth, should be remarked upon. In other words, her purpose for study abroad, which was originally defined solely in terms of changing her conception of self, evolved into the drive to make a contribution to a global society. This change in sense of purpose can be understood as a significant identity reformation, echoing Pennycook's (2001) conception of identity as "a constant ongoing negotiation of how we relate to the world" (p. 149). During this phrase, Haruna also refined her concept of the social world itself, which had been originally ingrained in national ideology. Through her decision to conduct a project on patriotism indicated that she still held allegiance to a particular nation as a significant dimension of her worldview, it is crucial to note that her experience of sojourning abroad also brought an intercultural dimension to her perspectives. In other words, she actively sought out diverse viewpoints on patriotism in order to discern similarities and differences across cultural boundaries and more fully understand the

scope of beliefs and values that shaped global society. By doing so, she repositioned herself within her new concept of the world by simultaneously reaffirming her existent Japanese identity and developing new networks of affiliation as a global citizen.

The End: Self-Achievement Opens a New Life Path

The workshop was scheduled two days before Haruna's departure for her home country. On the night before the event, she could not fall asleep. Myriad thoughts and concerns were restlessly circulating in her mind: "I was very worried about whether it would go well. ...I was very afraid if they would attend" (interview, December 13, 2011). The next day, she arrived at the conference room early, arranging tables and seats and setting up her presentation. She reported that, as the time was approaching, her stomach churned with anxiety. While her tension was running high, she found that there were still plenty of seats empty even though it was only a few minutes before the event was scheduled to begin. She frequently looked at the time: "I was worried. I was like, 'Will they surely come?'" (interview, December 13, 2011). However, several minutes later, many audience members suddenly started entering the room, and almost all of the seats became full. Then, Haruna started her speech. She expanded upon what she was feeling during that moment: "[My] anxiety was stuck in my head. Actually I was scared to death" (interview, December 13, 2011).

There were two reasons for her apprehension: One was her topic of patriotism; the other was her confusion about how to express her own opinions in public. Regarding her former concern, Haruna was afraid about whether the topic would be sensitive or controversial to some particular nationalities. The concept of patriotism involves individuals' senses of devotion to their own countries. She was worried that some audience members would be hesitant to discuss this topic with those who came from countries that had held discordant relations with their own.

If such a case arose, the workshop would cause their discomfort:

> When I talked about patriotism in my presentation, I felt scared because I was worried that some arguments would happen. When some audiences heard different opinions, they could oppose those ideas. Or, what on earth would happen if they disagreed with my ideas? They would say, "You're not right!" or "What are you talking about?" (interview, December 13, 2011)

This quote symbolizes Haruna's trepidation about her new challenge. The stress of tackling a sensitive topic was particularly intense for her because of her upbringing in Japanese society, which emphasizes social harmony and generally insists that people circumnavigate arguments or disagreements in public because both are generally considered as inappropriate in daily discourse. Courageously working to alter this sociocultural disposition, Haruna actively used this workshop as a platform to launch discussions about this delicate topic.

Haruna's sociocultural background relates to her other concern about expressing her own opinions in public. While showing the results of her data, she also commented on these findings. However, she realized how petrifying it was to make her own voice. The following her interview quote, essay and poem epitomizes her edginess:

> During my presentation, I said, "In my opinion..." Then, the room suddenly became quiet. I was really nervous because I thought, "Is my opinion strange? If the audience members think so, what should I do?" ...[Particularly,] when I was talking about politics, I should have said, "We shouldn't simply reject or criticize their ideas without understanding what their intentions are." Instead, I just used simple words: "You should respect the governments in your own countries." I realized that it sounded bolder and had a different nuance than what I actually intended to say. Then, I got even more worried about whether

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this claim sounded too strong, and so on. I couldn't help but worry. While all of the

audience stared at me and listened to my speech, I felt really scared about saying my

opinions. (interview, December 13, 2011)

Essay

自分の意見を堂々と発言することは日本人にとって少し不安を感じることだと思

う。今日のディスカッションで"In my opinion…"と言い出したものの、やはり

日本人、私も少しこわかった。もしこの私の意見が皆と持っている意見とは大幅

にず れていたら…なんて日本人のグループオリエンテッドを発揮。ここはアメリ

カ。私は私の意見を言うことに人の顔色をうかがう必要なんてないのに。いや、

日本にいたってその必要はないのかな。発言の自由って何だろう。

How nerve-wracking it is for the Japanese to say our own opinions with confidence!

When I said "In my opinion…," I was scared, as most Japanese might feel it. I was afraid

that my opinions would be totally different from others. This concern made me realize

how I am a typical Japanese. At the same time, a question arose: I am now in

America—the country that stresses human liberty, so why am I worried about what others

think? Then, another question popped up in my head: Did I actually need to care about

how others see and think of my way of thinking even when I was in Japan? Did it truly

matter? Umm...maybe not... Now I have begun to reconsider what human liberty is.

(December 13, 2011) (translated by the researcher)

Poem

Title: "The word of "In my opinion"

I was afraid to say "In my opinion"

Because I am Japanese

But here is America

I don't need to care about others

Even in Japan

How should I do?

(December 13, 2011)

Each account portrays her tenseness and anxiety but elicits slightly different elements as well. The narrative interview provides a descriptive illustration by chronicling how she trembled as the presentation was proceeding. The essay, on the other hand, allowed the writer to reflect on her past ways of thinking, as she pondered, "Did it truly matter?" Furthermore, this uncertainty shifted into a firm claim in the poem, as the last three and two lines state: "I don't need to care about others even in Japan." This transformation represents the ramification that she came unbound from prototypical notions about how the Japanese should think or behave. There is another intriguing emotional transformation across the essay and the poem. In the essay, she made a philosophical question, "What is human liberty?" She did not exhibit any clear answer to this abstract question in the poem, yet she began to consider how she could possibly incorporate the intercultural perspectives that she generated while abroad into Japanese contexts after she went back home ("How should I do?"). This question reveals that a new challenge was waiting for the one who had come to adopt a non-place identity.

Haruna's presentation finally finished, and she received warm applause from the audience. The following discussions proceeded smoothly despite her concerns: audience members from different cultures actively participated and shared their thoughts about their own and other countries. Instead of staunch opinions, some of them owned up to the political and

historical fallibility of their countries: "We shared our deep thoughts during the discussion" (interview, December 13, 2011). The poem below describes her sense of triumph upon completing her project:

> I can do that if I do that,
>
> I can't do that if I don't do that
>
> This is true
>
> I believe so
>
> I felt like challenge myself with this anxiety
>
> How well can I work?
>
> If I did it, it would be so cool, and get confidence
>
> After discussion, I thought
>
> I could do it when I did!
>
> Happy to hear "Great job"
>
> Nice to do it
>
> (December 13, 2011)

This poem describes how the accomplishment brought Haruna complete fulfillment. It also demonstrates that her doggedness in the face of the puzzlement, frustration, and struggles arising from the project provided her with a meaningful lesson: life requires one to cultivate senses of adventure, courageousness, and perseverance towards innovative challenges in order to achieve one's goal:

> I actually put myself under so much pressure by conducting this project only by myself and having my wish to show my peers my tenacity to complete it. Without this pressure, I would have given it up because this project was too tough for me. ...Not giving up on

something you really want to do in life, it is important to keep trying and working on it.

(interview, December 13, 2011)

Both the poem and interview quote symbolize a realization that pressure need not be an obstacle to one's achievement but rather can motivate the courage to persevere and ultimately function as a stepping-stone to one's own success. Last but not least, she wrote the following words to wrap up her experience of adventuring abroad:

The things I learned from my study abroad experience

I saw what America looks like

If I didn't come, I wouldn't have such an experience

If I didn't come, I wouldn't become interested in

(December, 13, 2011)

This statement echoes Popova's (2016) remarks about the importance of "taking on challenges conceding the possibility of imperfection and embarrassment, and seeing those outcomes as part of the adventure rather than as failure at achievement" (Para 7). Haruna had come to discover that the hardest victory is to be achieved over oneself. Regardless of whether one succeeds, pursuing new challenges that demand perseverance is the key to enriching one's life. Her entire language learning and study abroad experience taught her this notion.

Closing Remarks on Haruna

The trajectory of Haruna's study abroad experience provides a full circumstantial account of how breaking out of one's shell was bound with the broadening and diversification of an identity that was formerly defined in terms of national ideology alone. It elucidates how being exposed to a different site in the world can be an eye-opening experience for those who generate intercultural perspectives while abroad. Her overall experience also demonstrates how the

alternation of one's perspective on the world is inextricably entwined with identity reformation. As Haruna interacted with her international and American student peers more frequently, she repositioned herself within her new concept of the world. Thereby, she developed new networks of affiliation as a global citizen. Even though Haruna's sense of pride and affinity for Japan still remained, this sense eventually became well balanced as she interacted with people from diverse cultures. Through these encounters, her respect for different ideas and thoughts arising from particular social and cultural backgrounds grew. More intriguingly, this identity reconstruction also altered her perceptions of life. Her self-centered perspective on life had enlarged into one that existed on a global scale. Accordingly, she ceased to view life difficulties as discouraging obstacles to achievement and began to conceive of them as opportunities for self-growth, which in fact served as the impetus to complete her research project. Table 11 recapitulates Haruna's journey.

Table 11

Overall Contours of Haruna's Case

Period	Subjective views of self-positionality	Subjective definitions of study abroad	Subjective definitions of language learning	Future goals
Pre-study abroad	Longing for an English-speaking country but vacillating in her decision due to rumors about study abroad	A site of self-imposed challenge to position herself in culturally different environment	An entity of "*akogare*" [longing] to be an English speaker; a target that she had wished to acquire	Continuous improvement of her language proficiency and intercultural understandings
First half of study abroad	Immersing herself into the international environment	A site where one can construct tangible understandings of other cultures by interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds	A means of connecting herself to an unknown world	Deepening intercultural understandings
Middle of study abroad	Growing a sense of allegiance to her own country while being curious about other cultures	A site of educational and personal growth	A site of educational and personal growth	Completing her research project
Second half of study abroad	While maintaining her allegiance to Japan, recognizing the significance of respect for differences across diverse cultures	A site of the transition from intrapersonal to interpersonal growth; a site which provides a life lesson; boundaries in life are steppingstones to one's success; a site of eye-opening which enlarges one's perspectives on the social world	A site of bringing an intercultural dimension to her perspectives on the world; important skills to understand different thoughts and ideas of those who are from diverse culture backgrounds	Completing her research project
End of study abroad	Her sense of being as a global citizen had begun growing	A site of life lessons: pressure is considered as a stepping-stone to one's own success; a sense of adventure towards innovative challenges, courageousness, and perseverance are required to achieve one's goal	Providing a platform where people, who have different cultural backgrounds and languages, can share different and similar opinions; deepening intercultural understanding	Completing the workshop successfully

Of particular note in Haruna's case study is that her trajectory reveals relatively fewer unpalatable experiences than those of other cases. Most participants in the current study experienced considerable emotional distress and frustration, such as senses of isolation in their new environments and of inferiority that derived from perceived limitations in their language proficiency. Needless to say, Haruna might have encountered a certain level of these emotional strains, yet the primary focus of her own study abroad experience was the bliss of life in her new environment. Therefore, her fear and anxiety related to sojourning abroad transcended into joy, while she deepened a sense of appreciation toward the situation that she encountered at each moment. In sum, her story demonstrates that one's ambition leads one into new adventures. It is purely up to individuals to decide how to take this challenge and move forward. However, one's determination and perseverance can be maintained through the development of an ambition to contribute to society. Then, one can find their societal value in the course of expanding networks of affiliation as a global citizen.

To close this entire chapter, it should be noted that all of the aforementioned case studies ultimately evidence the eccentric, unique, and idiosyncratic nature of each participant's experiences. This was the primary finding of my longitudinal and mixed method investigation of the psychological dimensions of individuals' language learning experiences abroad.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS PART II

This chapter is designed to answer the second research question: In collecting data on personal experience in different genres (narrative interview, narrative essay writing, and poetry writing), what are the values and qualities of each of the data elicitation methods used? In the previous chapter, these different types of data were utilized to understand psychological aspects of participants' experiences of learning language abroad. The current chapter focuses on their values as research methods—in particular, the different characteristics identified among these spoken, written, and poetic forms. The aim is to compare the data elicited by each method, certain combinations of methods, or all three methods in tandem. The answers should illuminate the benefits and drawbacks of these data types, which link to data collection challenges for researchers conducting investigations related to human emotions. In order to evaluate this concern, this chapter adopts a three-fold structure: (a) subjects' willingness to participate in their given research tasks; (b) quantitative analyses of the textual characteristics of the corpus, including frequency of emotive, analytic, and authentic words; and (c) qualitative comparison of content types elicited by each tool. The overall goal of these analyses is to expound on the qualities of each data elicitation method.

Participants' Willingness

This section displays the rates of participation in voluntary data elicitation tasks. It primarily contains two analyses: (a) the subjects' willingness to participate in certain tasks; and (b) how frequently they were willing to describe a particular experience abroad in multiple genres.

The First Analysis: Subjects' Willingness to Participate in Certain Tasks

This analysis is not limited to the subjects who were selected for full case studies in Chapter IV; rather, it encompasses the entire dataset: nine American and ten Japanese college students who sojourned abroad in their target language countries for five to ten months. All of the participants were relatively novice L2 writers (in the low to high intermediate range) who were seeking to achieve higher levels of language proficiency at language institutes associated with their host universities. To reiterate what was previously established in Chapter III, each individual was provided the option to take part in interviews, write essays, and/or compose poems in their L1 and/or L2 during each data collection session. Table 12 below presents how frequently each individual provided certain types of data (Participants other than those selected for case studies are referred to by a letter rather than a pseudonym). In order to contextualize the information that appears in this table, several terms and procedures need to be explained further. A data collection session was defined as any interaction during which a subject provided at least one of the three data types. Sessions were conducted face-to-face, via an online video conferencing program (Skype), or by email. The researcher attempted to schedule one session per month with each participant before, during, and after her or his study abroad. However, due to differences in the participants' availabilities, some individuals took part in more sessions than others. Furthermore, one American subject (C) requested two additional sessions with the researcher. Lastly, some participants provided more than one sample of a given data type during a single session (e.g., writing two poems, each of which was about a different experience). Table 12 illustrates individual discrepancies in frequencies of participation in addition to totals for the American and Japanese groups. Prior to the table, it is important to clarify why the researcher elected to separate participants based upon nationality. Since the current study has stressed that

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the phenomenon of identity reconstruction through language learning is not shaped solely by social discourses but also involves agentive and idiosyncratic elements to a great degree, this manner of exhibition might seem contradictory. Hence, it bears emphasis that the researcher's primary intention is not to suggest that participants' willingness or refusal to provide certain data types in a first or second language was connected to any innate characteristic or mindset stemming from national origin. Rather, the researcher seeks to exhibit the commonalities and divergent trends that emerged between the two broad groups. Moreover, the table demonstrates how these trends may have been influenced by common educational practices in the Japanese and American contexts along with particularities among participants in the present study, such as the fact that all Japanese individuals majored in English (see also Chapter III). Additionally, while these findings cannot predict how willing other individuals will be to provide data in different genres during future studies, they may nonetheless provide researchers with considerations to bear in mind when designing future inquiries and identifying which data collection tasks might require the greatest amount of support and encouragement for participants.

Table 12

Frequencies of Participation

American	Length of stay (months)	Number of sessions	Inter-view in L1	Inter-view in L2	Essay in L1	Essay in L2	Poetry in L1	Poetry in L2
Sophia	10	6	5	0	5	0	3	0
Dustin	10	6	5	0	5	0	3	1
Connor	5	5	5	0	6	0	6	1
Noah	10	7	7	0	4	0	4	6
A	10	8	8	0	6	0	6	3
B	10	6	6	0	7	0	6	1
C	10	12	12	0	9	0	6	2
D	10	6	5	0	2	0	0	0
E	10	6	5	0	7	0	2	0
Total	85	62	58	0	51	0	36	14

Japanese	Length of stay (months)	Number of sessions	Interview in L1	Inter-view in L2	Essay in L1	Essay in L2	Poetry in L1	Poetry in L2
Mare	5	3	3	0	6	8	0	9
Ayana	5	3	3	0	0	4	0	4
Haruna	5	10	3	0	4	7	0	16
F	5	3	3	0	8	5	0	5
G	5	3	3	0	7	1	0	10
H	5	3	3	0	2	2	0	3
I	10	4	4	0	6	2	0	4
J	5	5	5	0	0	2	0	0
K	5	6	6	0	10	6	0	1
L	5	6	6	0	13	7	2	8
Total	55	46	39	0	56	44	2	60

Regarding similarities, both Americans and Japanese were very willing to take part in interviews in their L1 (American subjects: 94%; and Japanese: 85%), whereas not a single participant in either group elected to take part in an L2 interview. In this sense, conducting interviews in L2 seems to be a largely unfeasible research approach for novice language learners due to their apparently extreme reticence to undertake extended spontaneous conversations in

their L2. In examining each group's attitudes towards L1 narrative essay writing, American subjects voluntarily provided this data type often (82%), and even higher rates of participation emerged among Japanese subjects, who averaged more than one sample per session (122%). Although both groups' attitudes towards this task were comparable to those towards L1 interviews, there was a marked discrepancy in terms of L2 narrative essay writing. On the one hand, American subjects flatly rejected invitations to provide this data type ($n = 0$). On the other hand, their counterparts were favorably disposed toward completing this task (96%). During data collection, the researcher offered support and guidance for the L2 composing process to both participant groups in equal measure. Though both groups tended to express initial reluctance to produce L2 essays, Americans and Japanese typically reacted very differently to the researcher's gentle encouragement to attempt the task. Whereas the former persisted in emphatic rejection, the latter tended to rise to the challenge after some further prompting, and their greater sense of readiness after experiencing the composing process with the researcher's aid was palpable. One of the Japanese subjects commented, "I didn't know that it was not so difficult to write about my everyday life as long as I got some help. I really enjoy it" (Participant K, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

As noted above, these divergences between the two groups is a complex phenomenon that defies any simple explanation. Upon initial consideration, it would seem tempting to attribute the difference to the fact that the Japanese subjects had been required to study English since junior high school (a period of more than seven years), while the Americans had been studying Japanese as an elective for two to three years on average. However, despite the greater length of time Japanese subjects had spent learning their L2, the "grammar-centered and test-oriented" approach characteristic of the Japanese EFL context meant that they likely had

"minimal chances of writing any kind of English essays" (Iida, 2011, p. 171). Once again, all of the Japanese subjects were English language majors, whereas none of the American subjects majored in Japanese, as this option was not provided by their home university in the United States. Therefore, even though some Americans were strongly motivated to learn Japanese at the onset of their study abroad, their language learning outcomes were not bound with their overall academic success to the same degree as Japanese participants.

Another possibility is that writing L2 narrative essays was more novel and enticing for Japanese participants because the test-centric educational culture described above resulted in few opportunities to explore their emotions in an L2, particularly in the classroom. Thus, this task could have been appealing because it presented a chance for English majors to finally use the linguistic knowledge they had spent many years acquiring in a personally fulfilling way. On the other hand, the Americans may have had similarly few opportunities to compose L2 narratives *and* lower reserves of L2 linguistic knowledge due to less total time spent studying Japanese, which could have engendered the perspective that the prospective rewards of writing an L2 narrative were not worth the cognitive and emotional strains the task required. In this regard, the resistance exhibited by American subjects echoes previous contentions that "interpreting, communicating, and describing in a second language is even harder because different languages have distinct emotional vocabularies and ways of expressing emotions" (Pavlenko & Driagnina, 2007, p. 91). However, findings of this analysis suggest that researchers should be cautious not to presume that asking subjects to use their L1 during data collection will automatically be a more feasible plan than using their L2.

As seen above, there are some commonalities and differences concerning both groups' attitudes towards interview and essay writing, and the results regarding the poetry writing tasks

divulged another polarity between these two groups. The American group evinced more willingness to compose poems in their L1 (58%) than L2 (23%), thus establishing a general preference for using their L1 throughout the three data types. By contrast, their Japanese counterparts wrote extremely few L1 poems (4%) while demonstrating an extraordinary enthusiasm for writing L2 poems (130%). The ramification of Japanese subjects' hesitation towards poetry writing in their L1 conjures up the researcher's reminiscence about her education in Japan, during which opportunities to learn poetry writing were scarce (e.g., a few classes at the most were devoted to composing haiku poems during the entire period of primary and secondary schooling). Hence, a lack of familiarity and experience may have shaped their disposition towards this task. However, a question arises as to why Japanese participants were more willing to compose poems in their L2 than their L1. Similar to the phenomenon that occurred in their L2 narrative writing, their underlying motive could stem from their inquisitiveness about expressing their feelings in a new genre and in a language other than their mother tongue. Hence, as long as they were given detailed instructions or some assistance, they at least attempted the task, and many of them eventually came to derive joy from writing L2 poems. Iida (2011) described similarly transformative moments in his research on Japanese college students' attitudes towards composing haiku in English. As his subjects grew more comfortable with this task, they reported that crafting L2 poems reduced their general anxieties about writing in English, developed their confidence, and enhanced their abilities to describe their thoughts or feelings.

Also notable was the fact that poems were the only L2 data type that American subjects were willing to provide, although the average rate of participation (23%) was still comparatively low. Those who composed L2 poems still demonstrated considerable hesitancy, as can also be seen in Chapter IV. For example, Dustin and Connor did not trial writing poems in Japanese until

their last data collection sessions. However, there was an exceptional case—Noah, who composed L2 poems without hesitation throughout his time overseas. Thus, the variation in their attitudes indicates that the inclination towards experimenting with L2 poetry writing is largely a matter of individual disposition. However, the findings regarding both American and Japanese subjects' willingness reveal that poetry writing tasks may in fact be the most productive approach to collecting L2 data, particularly among American novice language learners, who steadfastly declined to take part in interviews or write essays in Japanese. One possible reason for this effectiveness is the nature of poetry writing; as Iida (2011) asserted, "especially the genre-specific features such as a short text, less attention to grammar, and the freedom for self-expression seem to diminish negative feelings of writing in [an L2]" (p.174).

In sum, researchers might be apt to fall into the assumption that research methods involving the use of subjects' L1 are inherently more feasible plans for obtaining data. Admittedly, this principle generally held true for Americans, but the Japanese group was far keener to produce essays and poems in their L2. As such, prior to implementing data collection, researchers would be well advised to investigate participants' educational backgrounds and consider how their levels of experience with various genres might affect their propensities to provide certain data types. Moreover, findings of the present study suggest that poetry writing might constitute the most feasible strategy in cases where collection of L2 data is essential.

The Second Analysis: Frequencies of Participation in Multiple Tasks

The analysis aims to explore how often subjects were willing to describe a particular topic related to their experiences abroad in multiple genres. Data for this analysis is drawn from the seven subjects (4 Americans, 3 Japanese) whose case studies appeared in Chapter IV. The total number of experiences discussed was calculated as follows: first, the researcher read

through the entire body of poems (n=52) and narrative essays (n=30) written in English,

Japanese, or both by the focal participants and carefully generated a list of thematic codes. The

researcher then reviewed the interview transcripts and selectively extracted portions (n=53) that

were relevant to the previously determined codes. For this review, only English translations were

used. Table 13 below shows that the number of the topics addressed across participants'

interviews, essays, and poems was 54. As might be expected given the design of the present

study, the most common topics that they raised were definitions of language learning (n=14) and

of study abroad (n=13), while other memorable events and concepts were also illustrated.

Table 13

Frequency of Topics Raised in Two or More Data Types

Topic codes	Number of elicitations
Definitions of language learning	14
Definitions of study abroad	13
Memorable events (e.g., having a close friend, taking a trip to Hong Kong, conducting a research project)	6
Views of the self	5
Difficulties with socialization	4
Contemplating the future	4
Unexpected events (relative's death, parents' divorce)	2
Others (views on host or home country, social positionality, accomplishing goals, and life lessons)	6
Total number of topics	54

Table 14 exhibits the frequencies with which the subjects described a particular experience in

various combinations of genres.

Table 14

Frequencies of Participation in Multiple Tasks

	Total	American participants	Japanese participants
Interview & essay	1	0	1
Interview & poem	25	2	23
Essay & poem	1	1	0
Interview, essay & poem	27	16	7

As shown above, the combination of all three tools was the most common outcome (n=27); followed by that of interview and poetry writing (n=25). However, interview-essay and essay-poem pairings were exceedingly rare (only once instance each). Thus, subjects who were only willing to provide two of the three requested data types elected to write poems far more often than essays. One factor that may explain this tendency can be found in Rukeyser's (1996) remark on features of poetry writing:

> A poem invites you to feel. More than that: it invites you to respond. And better than that: a poem invites a total response. ...it is reached through the emotions. A fine poem will seize your imagination intellectually—that is, when you reach it, you will reach it intellectually too—but the way is through emotion, through what we call feeling. (p. 8)

This remark illustrates one's cognition related to poetry writing—how it can bring out one's emotions. This cognitive process is different from that used to talk or write prose about life stories. The following explanations of how subjects typically engaged with each genre can further clarify why interviews and poems were a popular combination as well as why the combination of all three data types was the most frequent result overall.

While being interviewed, subjects tended to recall an event by literally delineating what happened. In addition to enabling participants to flesh out their recollections of what precisely

occurred, interviews also brought to mind the various emotions associated with the events depicted. Some subjects were able to easily and spontaneously transition to exploring and creatively expressing these emotions in the form of a poem. However, other participants required a middle stage to more fully comprehend the meanings or concepts of events through detached reflection because the complexities or ambiguities of their life experiences made it difficult for them to articulate their emotional concerns. In these cases, essay writing enabled subjects to undertake a metacognitive process—thinking about what they think or feel—to decipher otherwise indescribable aspects of their experiences. As essays "attempt to capture and comprehend something known" (Hishfield, 2014, para. 1), they are well suited to helping individuals unpack complexities or reconcile ambiguities in order to reach clearer emotional understandings. In this respect, a sequence beginning with interviews, transitioning to essay writing, and concluding with poetry writing can allow many participants to express themselves in a comfortable and intuitive manner, a possibility supported by participants' greater willingness to provide all three data types than any combination of two. In fact, every subject who produced all three data types chose this sequence even though the researcher clarified that essays and poems could be composed in either order.

Discussion

Despite the patterns and trends described above, it is important to reiterate that strict hierarchical probabilities for obtaining data with these elicitation tools cannot be determined because some cases were unpredictable. Yet, general tendencies can be observed in terms of levels of anxiety associated with producing different data types due to their perceived difficulty levels. As Table 15 represents, overall poetry writing can entail high anxiety when written in

either L1 or L2, but its combination with other research instruments can alleviate apprehensions associated with its production, such as when essays are used an intermediate step.

Table 15

Levels of Anxiety and Perceived Difficulty Associated with the Data Types

	Interview	Essay writing	Poetry writing
L1	Low anxiety / perceived difficulty =	Low anxiety / perceived difficulty <	Possibly high anxiety / difficulty depending on subjects' experience with writing in the genre
L2	High anxiety/ difficult to the extent of being infeasible >	Anxiety/ difficulty is likely to be high and infeasible in worst cases >	Possibly high anxiety / difficulty, but elicitation is potentially feasible
Two or more data types	Interviews, essays & poetry <	Interview & poetry <	Interview & essays, or essays & poetry

All in all, poetry writing and/or the use of subjects' L2 have been greatly underutilized as research methods in human sciences (Hanauer, 2010), but the analyses in this section uncovered their potential for obtaining data. Certainly, participants may be more hesitant to produce these data types as compared to L1 interviews and essays, but as long as the researcher understands their dispositions toward given tasks, any of these research tools (either individually or in combination) can be productively employed. Nevertheless, researchers must go beyond examining the quantity of data obtained in order to fully understand subjects' psychological concerns. Doing so requires further investigation into each data type's values and qualities from different stances. To delve into this inquiry, the following two sections will conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Quantitative Analyses: Textual Features of the Corpus

The analyses in this section utilize a computational linguistic approach to examine the degrees of expressivity present in the corpus of texts in each genre. Expressivity is defined in the current study as a set of linguistic and rhetorical features that convey individual experience. In order to analyze these features, the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) 2015 software program (Pennebaker, Booth, Boyd, & Francis, 2015) was used. This program counts and compares word frequencies across pre-defined categories. The figure outcomes are represented as percentages that are derived by dividing the number of words in a given category from that in the total corpus (Total Word Count). The most relevant of approximately 90 available output categories were selected for the current study, including Summary Language Variables (e.g., Analytical Thinking, Clout, Authenticity, Emotional Tones); Linguistic Dimensions (e.g., past, present, or future tense, first and third-person pronouns); Personal concerns (e.g., work, home, leisure activities); and Psychological Processes (e.g., affective words, social processes). The reason for focusing on these particular categories is to explore three primary aspects—rhetorical features, interpersonal/intrapersonal perceptions, and emotional content, which are significant elements for research on psychological phenomena in one's life stories.

The first aspect, rhetorical features, is comprised of two categories: Analytical Thinking and Clout (speaking with authority). The second aspect, interpersonal/intrapersonal perception, involves the Linguistic Dimensions and Social Processes categories. The last aspect, emotional content, is centered on the Affective Words category, which also includes subcategories such as Positive Emotion, Negative Emotion, Anxiety, Anger and Sadness. Additionally, this section demonstrates differences in degrees of expressivity between L1 and L2 writing. By investing these aspects, the goal is to compare the values and qualities of each data type for research on

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personal experiences. The findings from the analysis in this section can establish which data

types elicited the highest degrees of expressivity and suggest how each data type could be

effectively utilized for various research purposes. Prior to getting into the main analyses, the next

section illustrates additional information about the qualities that render the data set suitable for

quantitative analysis.

About the Data

The LIWC 2015 analysis was conducted on the same corpus of 135 samples (interviews:

n=53, narrative essays: n=30, and poems n=52) utilized in the previous section. Handwritten

essays and poems were typed into Microsoft Word documents exactly as they were originally

written to create appropriate output files for the LIWC software program. However, only English

texts and translations were utilized for the current analysis because the software cannot process

other languages. Typed essays and poems were entered along with relevant interview excerpts to

yield the percentages displayed below in Table 16 below. The Dictionary Words category

represents the percentage of standard word forms from the Total Word Count (For example,

"going to" would be tabulated as two dictionary words, whereas "gonna" would not be counted).

As can be seen, each data type scored at over or nearly 90%, meaning that the corpus was very

intelligible to the software and high degrees of accuracy were achieved in other categorizations.

Table 16

Intelligibility and Characteristics of the Data

	Total Word Count (n)	Dictionary Words (%)	Authenticity (%)	Emotional tone (%)
Interviews in L1	19315	92.50	85.46	57.59
Essays in L1	4030	91.46	92.52	61.06
Essays in L2	643	90.82	96.48	51.99
Poems in L1	2589	88.53	91.70	58.66
Poems in L2	2046	88.27	88.17	59.07

The Authenticity category reveals the proportion of honest, personal, and disclosing language, as opposed to more guarded and distanced terms (Pennebaker, Booth, Boyd, and Francis, 2015). The outcome exhibits that all data types yielded approximately 90%, which also indicates the subjects' openness to sharing their personal experiences. To be sure, an apparent limitation of this category is that the software can only tabulate frequencies of terms associated with honesty and candor and cannot determine whether subjects were actually being honest in the views they expressed. Yet, it is still an important source to demonstrate how participants articulated their experiences and perspectives. The Emotional Tone category establishes whether the text contains positive or upbeat expressions, as contrasted with words indicative of anxiety or hostility. As can be seen, all of the results are nearly 50%, which suggests the subjects' expressions regarding their life stories were not excessively optimistic or pessimistic but rather neutral on the whole. This outcome may imply their psychological state at the time they portrayed their personal experiences.

Table 17 demonstrates what percentages of the Total Word Count consisted of words in various categories related to Linguistic Dimensions (Past, Present or Future Focus) and Personal Concerns (Work, Home, Leisure, and Money). This table displays overall tendencies among the

data types. In relation to tense, present tense is used more (14.08 %) than either past (4.86 %) or future tenses (1.62). This result denotes that the subjects often portrayed their experiences by stepping back in time and reliving significant moments as if they were once again occurring in the here and now. Furthermore, their most commonly referenced topic was Work (e.g., homework, learn, study), as the total average rate was 2.89% compared to other categories such as Leisure (e.g., party, playing), Home (e.g., family, home) and Money (e.g., buy, shop). This outcome corresponds with the consequence in Table 14, which also reveals the most frequent topic raised was language learning.

Table 17

Percentage of Words from the Total Word Count Regarding Linguistic Dimension and Personal Concerns

	Past tense	Present tense	Future tense	Work	Leisure	Home	Money
Interviews in L1	4.91	14.12	1.47	3.51	0.40	0.15	0.31
Essays in L1	5.38	11.29	1.76	2.26	0.57	0.57	0.15
Essays in L2	5.60	12.60	1.40	3.27	0.62	0.16	0.31
Poems in L1	4.40	15.80	1.85	2.55	0.46	0.42	0.19
Poems in L2	4.01	16.57	1.61	2.88	0.29	0.15	0.24
Total average	4.86	14.08	1.62	2.89	0.47	0.29	0.24

In summary, the aforementioned two investigations demonstrated that the corpus was highly intelligible to the LIWC 2015 program, and they identified numerous trends and tendencies related to linguistic terms used and concepts addressed. Beginning with the next section, three aspects—rhetorical features, interpersonal/intrapersonal perceptions, and emotional content—will be investigated to demonstrate conspicuous discrepancies in textual characteristics across the data types. In these investigations, only the data produced in L1 were utilized due to

the complete lack of L2 interviews and essays from American subjects and L2 interviews from Japanese, as addressed in the previous section.

Rhetorical Features

The following analyses explore the pre-defined categories of Analytical Thinking and Clout. The former category assesses whether the text contains content or expressions related to logical and hierarchical reasoning, as opposed to personal, here-and-now and narrative thinking (Pennebaker, Booth, Boyd, & Francis, 2015). Table 18 demonstrates that narrative essay writing (34.89 percent) shows higher degrees of Analytical Thinking than either interviews (17.32) or poetry writing (23.38).

Table 18

Percentage of Word Frequency According to Analytical Thinking and Clout

	Analytical Thinking	Clout
Interviews in L1	17.32	30.52
Essays in L1	34.89	24.89
Poems in L1	23.38	9.99

This outcome reaffirms Hishfield's (2014) above-mentioned notion that essay writing involves a metacognitive process by allowing individuals to reflect on their ways of thinking and reorganize their ideas or thoughts. In other words, it provides the subjects with an observant eye about their life experiences so that they do not merely rely on their feelings or opinions. On the other hand, interviews seem to induce comparatively extemporaneous thinking from a relatively instinctive and inner-directed stance. This consequence intimates how researchers can consider this explicit difference in data characteristics when choosing instruments for their empirical studies. For example, in a study related to subjects' analytical reasoning or critical thinking abilities, such as

scrutinizing a situation in order to solve an associated problem or distinguishing whether a complicated issue is important or should be ignored, essay writing can be a more effective method than the others.

The second category, Clout, analyzes textual forms of authority. It evaluates the existence of assertive or submissive nuances in language. Table 17 conveys that the figure from interviews is higher (30.52%) than essay writing (24.89 %) and poetry writing (9.9 %). This result can be linked to that from the previous analysis of Analytical Thinking, which revealed that interviews involved more spontaneous and instinctive thoughts and statements. In other words, subjects may express themselves in a more self-assured manner during interviews because they were sharing immediate, surface-level impressions, which could result in the use of more speculative terms, rather than carefully thinking through how or why their life experiences happened. It also suggests how one's use of metacognition influences one's ways of articulating thoughts. Overall, the analyses of rhetorical features also reveal the differences in one's cognitive process depending upon genres.

Interpersonal/Intrapersonal Perception

This analysis aims to understand the degrees to which subjects' remarks were concerned with relationships with others and society or more internal thoughts about the self. To this purpose, several linguistic features including first person singular (e.g., I, me), third person singular (e.g., she, he), and third person plural (e.g., they, them) were analyzed. As can be seen in Table 18, first person singular pronouns are more frequent in poetry writing (13. 87% than either interviews (9.61) or essay writing (9.35). This sequence suggests that poetry tends to be written from more personal perspectives than the other genres.

Table 19

Percentage of Words in the Linguistic Dimensions and Social Processes Categories

	1st person singular	3rd person singular	3rd person plural	Social Processes
Interviews in L1	9.61	0.84	1.34	9.46
Essays in L1	9.35	0.69	0.74	6.97
Poems in L1	13.87	0.12	0.58	6.26

Moreover, third person singular and plural pronouns appear least frequently in poems.

Furthermore, examination of the Social Processes category, which represents the usage of

language concerning social relations including family, friends and other social groups, yields a

similar outcome. As Table 18 tabulates, the usage of words tied to social relations in poetry

writing is less frequent (6.26%) than the other data types (interviews: 9.46 and essays: 6.97). The

overall analyses suggest that poems typically focus on the inner self rather than external

interactions with others in the social world.

Emotional Content

The analysis presented below deals with emotional content within the corpus. The

Affective Processes category and its subcategories were used to yield the percentages of the

Total Word Count comprised of words regarding moods and feelings. The first column of Table

20 below displays the Affective Processes category, which exhibits the frequency of words that

deal with any emotion, whereas subsequent columns depict specific subcategories, such as

Positive Emotion (e.g., love, nice, sweet), Negative Emotion (e.g., hurt, ugly, nasty), Anxiety

(e.g., worried, fearful), Anger (e.g., hate, annoyed), and Sadness (e.g., crying, grief, sad).

Table 20

Percentage of Words from Total Word Count According to Affective Processes

	Affective Processes	Positive Emotion	Negative Emotion	Anxiety	Anger	Sad
Interviews in L1	4.02	2.83	1.14	0.37	0.10	0.26
Essays in L1	5.04	3.45	1.59	0.62	0.15	0.40
Poems in L1	6.37	4.02	2.28	1.00	0.15	0.70

The tabulation of overall Affective Processes in poetry writing is 6.37%. This percentage was higher than either interviews (4.02) or essay writing (5.04). The subcategories corresponded with this overall result. For the corpus of poetry writing, both positive emotion words (4.02%) and negative emotion words (2.28) were elicited more frequently than the other data types. As can be seen in this table, similar phenomena occurred when subjects expressed their anxiety, anger and sadness. On the whole, these analyses suggest that genre influences the degree of emotional expressivity present in subjects' depictions of the same life event. Furthermore, poems uniformly elicit the highest rates of emotional content regardless of what specific emotions participants express.

Comparison Between Features of Data in L1 and L2

This additional analysis illustrates similarities and differences in degrees of expressivity between L1 and L2 writing. As previously mentioned, none of the participants in the current study were willing to take part in interviews in their L2. Hence, the analysis in this section utilized the data from their essay and poetry writing. The aim is to elucidate how the usage of different languages affected the values or qualities of elicited data. Table 20 below tabulates frequencies of words in 14 previously referenced categories from the Total Word Count. Numbers appearing the column labeled "L1-L2" were calculated by subtracting the L2 value

from the L1 value in each category. A positive number indicates that the L1 frequency was greater, while a negative number designates that the L2 frequency was greater. The next column, "Compare," displays which language contained a higher rate of expressivity within a given category. If the difference between the values was less than one percent, the balance was presented as equal.

Table 21

Comparison of Elicited Data between L1 and L2 Writing (Percentage of Words from Total Word Count)

Categories	Essay writing				Poetry writing			
	L1	L2	L1-L2	Compare	L1	L2	L1-L2	Compare
Analytic Thinking	34.89	15.81	19.08	L1>L2	23.38	16.1	7.28	L1>L2
Clout	24.89	10.21	14.68	L1>L2	9.99	7.89	2.1	L1>L2
Authenticity	92.52	96.48	-3.96	L2>L1	91.7	88.17	3.53	L1>L2
Emotional Tones	61.52	51.99	9.53	L1>L2	58.66	59.07	-0.41	L1=L2
1st person singular	9.35	13.69	-4.34	L2>L1	13.87	15.07	-1.2	L2>L1
3rd person singular	0.69	1.09	-0.4	L1=L2	0.12	0.1	0.02	L1=L2
3rd person plural	0.74	0.93	-0.19	L1=L2	0.58	0.68	-0.1	L1=L2
Social Processes	6.97	7.78	-0.81	L1=L2	6.26	6.5	-0.24	L1=L2
Affec Processes	5.04	6.69	-1.65	L2>L1	6.37	7.04	-0.67	L1=L2
Positive Emotion	3.45	4.04	-0.59	L1=L2	4.02	4.35	-0.33	L1=L2
Negative Emotion	1.59	2.64	-1.05	L2>L1	2.28	2.59	-0.31	L1=L2
Anxiety	0.62	0.78	-0.16	L1=L2	1	1.12	-0.12	L1=L2
Anger	0.15	0.31	-0.16	L1=L2	0.15	0.2	-0.05	L1=L2
Sad	0.4	0.62	-0.22	L1=L2	0.7	0.83	-0.13	L1=L2

The Compare column in essay writing exhibits that seven of 14 categories yielded negligible difference between L1 and L2 (i.e., less than one percent), and four categories in L2 (Authenticity, 1st person singular pronouns, Affective Processes, and Negative Emotion) had greater values than their L1 equivalents. In other words, 11 of 14 total categories (71%) from this

analysis suggest that the usage of L2 did not result in the elicitation of less expressive or lower quality data. Similarly, the results regarding poetry writing are: 10 categories were essentially equal, and one category in L2, 1st person singular pronouns, was higher than its L1 counterpart. Once again, the figures from 11 categories indicate that the use of L2 did not impede subjects from expressing themselves as they did in their L1. This analysis intimates that research instruments involving subjects' L2 are capable of eliciting equal degrees of expressivity. In a few select categories, L2 data actually demonstrated greater expressivity values than L1 data.

Discussion

The quantitative analyses in this section revealed different values and qualities in the data that each genre is capable of eliciting. Table 22 summarizes these discrepancies.

Table 22

Values and Qualities of Elicited Data

	Interviews	Essay writing	Poetry writing
Cognitive processes	Spontaneous and instinctive reflections	Metacognitive thinking	Metacognitive thinking present to a lesser extent than essay writing
Inter/intrapersonal	Focused on external interaction with others in society	Societal stimuli and personal perspectives are referenced to a lesser extent than in interviews or poems	Focused on internal aspects of the self
Degree of emotional expressivity	Lower degree	Moderate degree	Higher degree
Overall features	Sociological	Analytical	Psychological

Interviewing typically draws out comparatively socially-oriented memories and percept $ions. Because participants' words tend to stem from spontaneous and instinctive stimuli, they are

possibly focused at the surface level even when subjects provide some affective details such as associated emotions. By contrast, essay writing usually leads the subject to metacognitive thinking through contemplation of both interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of life experiences. Furthermore, this research method can extract a certain deep level of emotional information as well. Likewise, poetry writing involves reflective and analytical thinking, but it is typically not as thorough as essay writing. However, because this genre allows for more self-focused than social aspects, it frequently guides subjects to address their insightful feelings and emotions even more vividly and expressively than essay writing.

In sum, interviews can be more effective for exploring sociological aspects; for essay writing, analytical; and concerning poetry writing, psychological. These discrepancies in values and qualities of elicited data might be useful for future research depending on its purposes and goals. Additionally, using multiple research instruments to combine the values and qualities elicited by each data type can enrich the overall breadth and quality of the data set. Utilizing subjects' L2 as a research tool can be a productive strategy. As the analysis above demonstrates, L2 data elicitation tasks can provide subjects with more options for self-expression, and the data they yield often possesses equal degrees of expressivity to their L1 equivalents. Some textual categories (e.g., Authenticity, First-person Pronouns) may actually be more prominent in L2 data, though other features (e.g., Analytical Thinking, Clout) might be present to a lesser degree.

Qualitative Analyses of Content Types Elicited by Each Tool

In order to supplement the quantitative analyses presented above, this section provides a qualitative examination of content types elicited by each data collection tool. Whereas the LIWC analyses were centered on the level of the word, this investigation focuses on how and to what extent subjects' discursive representation of their experiences varied by genre in order to identify

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prevalent textual and rhetorical characteristics—referred to as content types—in each data collection method. The analysis began with a recursive thematic review of the corpus of seven case studies (four Americans and three Japanese) from Chapter IV to find instances in which subjects addressed the same topic across all three data types. Of these, ten representative topics that were referenced in narrative interviews, narrative essays, and poems in one or more case studies were identified. These representative topics were: definitions of study abroad (three cases), language learning experiences (two cases), memorable study abroad events (three cases), future plans (one case), and life changes (one case). The analysis first illustrates content types elicited by each tool in the table below and then provides multiple examples to delineate which dimensions and aspects of subjects' experiences they chose to foreground in interviews, essays, and poems. The overall goal for this analysis is to establish how subjects tended to depict and interpret significant occurrences in each genre, and furthermore to demonstrate how a multi-genre approach can result in more nuanced and thorough understandings among researchers and participants.

Data Analysis and Results

The table presented below is a summary result of the analysis that illustrates discrepancies in the content types most commonly elicited through the three different tasks.

Table 23

Content Types from the Qualitative Analysis

Genre	Content type	Brief explanation
Interview	Narration of events	Chronological description of an event with some references to characters and settings
	Impressionistic commentary	Short, spontaneous and instinctive thoughts, opinions, feelings or impressions
	Nascent understandings	Small amount of contemplation or speculation to start understanding the essential meanings of events
Essay writing	From analytical thinking to understanding of meaning	Analyzing feelings or perspectives on an event and initiating or achieving significant insights about the nature of events and their ultimate meanings
	Asking critical questions	Building upon personal meanings of events by critically questioning the implications of those meanings on larger social levels
	Abstraction	Impressions of events that are too complex to depict literally are described with abstract or figurative expressions
Poetry writing	Imaginative representations	Imagining what upcoming events would be like by using similes or metaphors
	Symbolizing emotional states with lyrical expressions	Using lyrical and figurative expressions to clarify ambiguous and complex feelings, emotions or moods associated with past events
	Distillations of emotions in different rhetorical forms	Identifying the essence of emotions that were previously referenced during interviews and/or in essays and using lyrical expressions to convey them precisely for various rhetorical purposes.

To elucidate these characteristics, the three following sections will provide multiple samples and expound on how the subjects addressed their experiences in interviews, essays, and poems.

Interviews. As seen in Table 21, three primary characteristics emerged from the elicited interview data: *narration of events*, *impressionistic commentary*, and *nascent understanding*.

Narration of events. Particular features of this category were the subjects' comments on their significant moments, which were largely restricted to factual accounts of what had occurred. They conveyed core components of narrative, such as the setting, sequence of actions or

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occurrences, or circumstances such as the individuals involved and the specific sociocultural environment. Ayana's account of a memorable study abroad experience—purchasing souvenirs for her family and friends at the airport by traveler's check—exemplifies the subjects' tendency to provide direct and unadorned narration while devoting relatively less attention to other elements such as emotional significance of the events:

> I was thinking to buy cosmetic items as souvenirs. At the casher, I was told to sign my three traveler's checks. I followed the clerk's instruction. However, after a while, the clerk realized that my two checks should have covered all of the expenses, and she said that she did not need the third check anymore. Then, the check became worthless. It was actually about 200 dollars. ... Then, I tried to use the check at other stores, but, of course, it was already useless because a check holder is supposed to sign in front of clerks. Then, I came back to the store to complain, but her behavior was like it was not her fault. I was very mortified to realize that I was not able to explain it clearly in English... (November 17, 2011, translated by the researcher)

Sophie's narrative about her parents' divorce is similar to Ayana's in that it is very matter-of-fact, and emotions are addressed only briefly:

> My parents separated this year. …It was handled really well, like, honestly there's a lot of emotional pain to get through, but it wasn't like, there wasn't any fighting, everything was really peaceful. Everyone's still on good terms with each other. So that much is all right. I have a little sister too. She is only a year younger than me but she's at home. So she was having to go through that all on her own. I really wished I could have been there for her. (January 4, 2012)

In Connor's portrayals of exasperating experiences involving his international student peers'
obtuse attitudes towards acclimating to Japanese culture, he focused on outlining the individuals'
objectionable behaviors, as demonstrated in the following sample:

> My roommate would be a good example. He is American. He's twenty years old. And he
> came here with his basic knowledge of Japanese and, I think, with zero cultural
> knowledge. …it's really funny like, you know, in Japanese culture we say "Sumimasen,
> sumimasen" a lot, you know, in every situation. But he just says "Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!"
> It's like "Dude!" They don't know what you're saying!" (March 30, 2013)

As seen in the other subjects' commentaries, Connor's remarks provided facts to establish how
each case occurred, but his emotional reflections on this event were terse and rudimentary.

Another example of a memorable study abroad event, Haruna's account of giving a
presentation in English, incorporates a greater amount of emotional details, but these are
expressed literally through basic phrases (e.g., "really nervous"; "really scared"):

> During my presentation, I said, "In my opinion..." Then, the room suddenly became quiet.
> I was really nervous because I thought, "Is my opinion strange? If the audience members
> think so, what should I do?" … While all of the audience stared at me and listened to my
> speech, I felt really scared about saying my opinions. (December 13, 2011, translated by
> the researcher)

All in all, some subjects elaborated on how the events occurred, while others gave simply
basic descriptions. Regardless of the degree of thoroughness provided, the overall feature of this
category is a journalistic style of presenting information, which emphasizes directness, simplicity
and factualness and often omits abstract and complex concepts such as the subject's inner or
deep thoughts and emotions.

Impressionistic commentary. Interviews elicited relatively surface level perspectives even when the researcher asked more abstract questions about subjects' personal definitions of what it meant to study abroad or learn language. For example, Sophie's stated reasons for sojourning in Japan before her departure—"for language and culture"; "just for experience living there"; and "to learn a lot about myself"—invoked social discourses about the putative purposes and benefits of study abroad, with the result that her remarks revealed few unique individual views. Similarly, her descriptions of emotional states were terse and simple: "I'm really excited but also really scared." As presented in Chapter IV, Sophie achieved a far more vivid and distinct expression of her pre-departure perspective on study abroad, particularly when writing a poem, by using the metaphor "standing at the end / a sheer cliff below."

Dustin's definitions of study abroad contained more specific details about his ambitions for learning Japanese, but the nature of his remarks was fairly impersonal. They referenced external measures of success or prestige: "to have at least the Japanese Language Proficiency Test 2 level"; or career goals: "[to work for one] of the U.S. companies that have large holdings and workings with Japanese companies." Such extrinsic rewards were invoked far more than humanistic concerns such as sense of self or personal growth.

Additionally, the meanings of study abroad that Connor articulated before going to Japan a second time were comprised of expressions that demonstrated his uncertainty or repeated struggles to identify his precise goals. He often murmured incomplete or ambiguous thoughts, such as "..and like...but I ...so...it's like...": "I don't know how to begin"; and "Sorry, it's hard...it's hard to describe it." In fact, it took almost the entire interview session to bring forth his personal definitions of study abroad. Even though he at long last made a clear comment in this regard: "...okay, this time [I can explain it]... because of my first experience, I realized I wanna

go back to Japan possibly to work there in the future," this statement was still quite straightforward and practical.

Likewise, other interview data about different topics, such as language learning experiences and memorable study abroad events, reveal similar features. Connor's statements about his difficulties with improving his language proficiency demonstrates the typical simplicity of these descriptions: "It is still hard for me," "I've concluded that learning is just really hard for me" and "It's challenge, huge, huge challenge." When writing poems, by contrast, he portrayed his feelings toward language learning through the use of creative comparisons such as "to leap across the ocean" or "to find a path," as demonstrated in Chapter IV.

Nascent understandings. In spite of the abovementioned findings that interviews tended to elicit comparatively literal and surface level dimensions of subjects' experiences and perspectives, there were a few exceptions in which participants engaged in some contemplation or speculation. However, this content type-was elicited relatively infrequently. Dustin's expression of his meanings of study abroad before his departure for Japan typifies this feature. In an exception to his general trend toward literal and less creative comments, as shown earlier, he additionally expressed his definition through simile: "I feel like, I have a tiny little keyhole that I'm seeing through... I want to open the door, see what's there." It was only through this figurative use of language that a more individualized purpose—gratifying curiosity by stepping into a world beyond the familiar—emerged alongside the pursuit of extrinsic rewards.

Another example is Mare's language learning experience of asking an American friend for feedback on a draft of the presentation that would serve as her final course project. In addition to describing the sequence of the event, she extended a small amount of reflection and

speculation about its meaning (e.g., "I realized..."; "I thought about this experience once again and finally understood..."):

> She did not understand what I meant to say, so she often asked, "What does this sentence mean?" "How about that?" or "Is this way that you wanted to say?" Then, I answered, "This meant..." Then, she changed whole sentences. ...I am really uncomfortable when someone else corrects or changes my work. ...However, I thought about this experience once again and finally understood that this case was different. ...I realized that I shouldn't have felt like, "I don't like these changed sentences because they are not mine anymore." (interview, December 14, 2011)

Yet, these expressions are still succinct compared to those elicited in other genres, as will be demonstrated later. It seems interviewing plays a role in guiding the subject to an initial stage of understanding in order to prompt further contemplation or reconsiderations of events.

Discussion. Having examined the elicited interview data qualitatively, this analysis reveals the following representative features: comparatively straightforward and literal representations of experiences, reiteration of common social discourses, rudimentary consideration of events' meanings and emotional significance, and statements of uncertainty in response to abstract questions. Several factors can explain why interviews tended to evoke these content types, particularly *narration of events* and *impressionistic commentary,* which seem to be linked to humans' cognitive process of retrieving memories. Because it involves re-accessing one's retained information in the brain, recounting life stories through interviewing is an act of cognitive stimulation. Due to the natural course of cognition, subjects may need to establish short and spontaneous accounts of what literally occurred as an initial stage before they can proceed to any degree of contemplation. This neuropsychological principle intimates the immense

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complexity of the human mind. As Kramsch (2009) contended, one's mind has inward and hidden natures at both the conscious and unconscious levels. However, reaching the core or unconscious level of thinking resembles, according to Burks and Robbin (2011), seeking for a "hole in the onion" (p. 350). Because a great number of layers cover each other like onionskins, recognizing the "core" of thoughts or feelings may not even be attainable (Burks & Robbins, 2011).

Though this analysis indicates some potential downsides of interviews, it is not intended to disparage the effectiveness of interviews as a research instrument. It rather aims to make the critical point that, although interviews are one of the leading research tools in the humanities and social sciences, their efficiency in eliciting profound reflection has possibly been overestimated, particularly in relation to much less frequently utilized tools such as essay and poetry writing. Certainty, interviewing can delve into subjects' thoughts or emotional states, as seen in one of the features, *initiating understandings*. Nevertheless, it is also important to bear in mind that these epistemological implications of this analysis, which indicates that interviews are prone to elicit mostly extrinsic aspects. Hence, researchers might face more boundaries or struggles than they expect in extracting more complex and latent views and emotions through interviews. For this reason, interviews may be most effective when they are utilized as a precursor to other data collection tasks rather than the sole tool in a given study. Indeed, McGregor and Muller (2013), who utilized only interviews to conduct their case studies on psychological aspects of study abroad experiences, related how they had difficulties obtaining insightful thoughts and feelings from their subjects. The downsides of this method speak to the need for consideration of how the psychological and phenomenological aspects of one's life experiences can be investigated.

Narrative essay writing. Three primary content types emerged in subjects' essays: *from analytical thinking to understanding of meanings, asking critical questions* and *abstraction.*

From analytical thinking to understanding of meanings. This category refers to the phenomenon of subjects analyzing their feelings or perspectives on events and reaching the point where they solidify understandings of what the occurrences meant to them personally. Examining Sophie's definitions of study abroad once again, her essay contains the reasons underlying her own emotions about her upcoming study abroad. Rather than merely reporting her excitement as well as anxiety, as she did during her interview, she added these reasons she felt these particular ways: "...because I think it will finally force me to figure out how to take care of myself as an adult"; "I have never done anything like this before"; "I might fail" and so forth. After analytically observing these feelings, she subsequently delved further into her deep-seated desires and sought out a more fundamental meaning associated with this opportunity: "I'm thinking of this experience as just a chance to experience a country and culture... but this is trip is more than just a study abroad for me. It's also my first big step into my adult life." As opposed to the rudimentary definitions of study aboard expressed during her interview, she identified a solid and individualized purpose—stepping into adult life—in her essay.

This content type was also elicited in Sophie's essay about her parents' divorce. In the beginning of the essay, she elaborated upon and analyzed how her family had changed by contrasting Christmas holidays in past years ("the warm atmosphere filled with light and music") to that of the present ("my house was empty" and "dark and silent"). She additionally described how the separated family spent this special day. In the end, this amplified distinction conveyed her what her parents' separation taught her: "The family that I grew up with will not be there when I came back home... It's finally time to grow up now."

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In Mare's essay about preparing for her presentation, she scrutinized what made her American friend decide to correct and change Mare's English written text and why she had to bear the discomfort of seeing her original words eliminated:

> People do not understand what I want to say in my writing, but it seems they understand the sentences after my American friend corrected and changed them. These sentences were not mine anymore, so I had complex feelings. However, I will need to understand how to write properly (November 30, 2011, translated by the researcher)

She analyzed this circumstance by differentiating which of its aspects should be considered important and which were trivial. Instead of emphasizing her initial disappointment, she came to regard what her American friend did as a life lesson: "This experience taught me what skills I should improve more." Once again, essay writing enabled Mare to more completely grasp and articulate the enduring significance of the moment, which she had only tentatively established in her interview.

Ayana's essay about losing a two-hundred-dollar traveler's check in the airport due to a sales clerk's error demonstrates her intention to analytically review and identify why this exasperating occurrence took place: "Actually, I didn't have English communication skills to explain that situation. I also didn't have strong mind to say more claim to the clerk." Rather than dwelling on the intense anger she felt in that instant, she calmly scrutinized the occurrence and determined a goal to prevent such an event from happening again: "I want to improve my skills and I don't want to repeat same situation."

Asking critical questions. This content type describes instances in which subjects built upon their firm understandings of personal meanings attached to events by critically questioning the implications of those meanings on larger social levels. For example, in Haruna's essay about

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giving her presentation, she elaborated on the terse emotional descriptions provided during her interview (i.e., "really nervous"; "really scared") by analytically reviewing the circumstances in order to understand why she felt these particular ways. Then, she took her inquiry a step further and identified how the tenseness she experienced during presentation had been ingrained by an inherent aspect of Japanese culture:

> I think it is a nerve-wracking experience for the Japanese to say our own opinions to others at the drop of the hat or with confidence. At the moment I stated "in my opinion" during the presentation, I found myself feeling frightened and then realized this disposition was inherent to my Japanese cultural backgrounds. (December 13, 2011, translated by the researcher)

Furthermore, this diagnostic observation achieved through essay writing induced critical questions about how one's seemingly different or unique thoughts and actions may in fact be the result of cultural conditioning:

> Simultaneously, a question arose: "I am now in the U.S.—the country emphasizing human liberty, so what am I worried about?" Then constantly another question was popped up: "Did I actually need to care about how others see and think of my way of thinking even when I was in Japan? Did it truly matter?"

These elicited data demonstrate how she delved into her analysis and extended her personal reflection to the level of social critique.

Similarly, in Connor's essay about his experiences of being dismayed by his international student fellows' seeming disregard for Japanese social norms, his frustration was distilled and represented as critical questions:

What are you doing? There is more going on around you than you can imagine. You are here to witness how another culture lives. Although it is fine to show your culture, you need to put it on the back burner and focus on how they are reacting to you. You may find that what they see is not very good and they are only humoring your attitude towards their life. (March 20, 2013)

In contrast to Connor's basic factual descriptions of his peers' behaviors during the interviews, essay writing allowed him to distill his remarks into a core underlying emotion: angry resentment.

Abstraction. This category encompasses instances in which subjects established more abstract and figurative meanings to associate with concepts and events. These meanings were typically rooted in complex thoughts and feelings that were not easily describable in literal and logical ways. In Connor's essay about his personal meanings of study abroad, he depicted Japan as a "destination," and this word choice had dual meanings: one referred to the geographical site but also implied his sense of intimacy towards Japan. There was no psychological hindrance to him reaching the country, despite its physical remoteness from the United States: "it is just another part of the world and not an impossible destination." The other definition of destination was a place that was meaningful for his future because it represented the fruits of his determination: "it was still something that I made happen because I wanted it to happen... it helped me get a better grasp of goals that I want to pursue in life. One of which is to return back to Japan" This instance shades light upon latent, more personalized, and more consequential concepts he had begun to associate with his upcoming experience—his belief and desire that study abroad would guide and open a new life path, which suggests the development of more abstract and profound goals than the mere job hunting he referenced in his interview.

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Another example is Dustin's definition of study abroad. Its meaning and his associated emotional states were described with the metaphor of performing on a theater stage:

> It's a big opening, similar to a slightly unprepared actor on a packed house for opening night. There is a lot of pressure to do well, mixed with excitement for getting the first chance to perform. There are a lot of people, who have supported you up to now, but you step on stage, it is all up to you to deliver the performance. (August 1, 2012)

Unlike the desires for external measures of success or prestige emphasized in his interview data, this essay brings his complicated meanings and emotions about study abroad into sharp relief. It implies a contradictory emotional state between his wishes for success and subliminal doubts about his capacity to fulfill his ambitions.

Discussion. The analysis reveals that essay writing can expatiate more upon the subjects' perspectives on events, compared to interviews. Essay writing educes detailed information and subjects' in-depth thoughts and feelings by allowing them to contemplate how the self and their surrounding circumstances are intertwined through critical and analytical observations. Furthermore, participants' obscured perceptions or complex emotions were uncovered through the use of abstract and figurative words. Pavlenko & Lantolf (2001) noted that "the outcome of the narrative is unknown until it occurs" (p. 161), and the present study suggests that this final outcome can be realized through essay writing.

Additionally, the overall consequences of this analysis assert that essay writing can contend with the highly complex nature of narratives more effectively than interviews. As Polkinghorne (1988) explained that narratives involve retroactive clarification of occurrences, multiple steps are needed in order for subjects to solidify core-underlying meanings of events

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and understand how and why they occurred. Analysis of the elicited essay data elucidates the process depicted below in Figure 6.

First, subjects reflect on how or why life events occurred by summarizing or organizing disperse and complex thoughts and perceptions. In the course of doing so, they strive to holistically understand the phenomena by observing their social positionality in situated circumstances (this type of reflection at times appears in the introduction of the essay). In cases where subjects are able to pin down their major issues, concerns or quandaries to some degree, they proceed to scrutinizing and distinguishing which aspects are of consequence and which should be ignored. Therefore, analytical thinking and asking critical questions occurred as content types in this genre analysis.
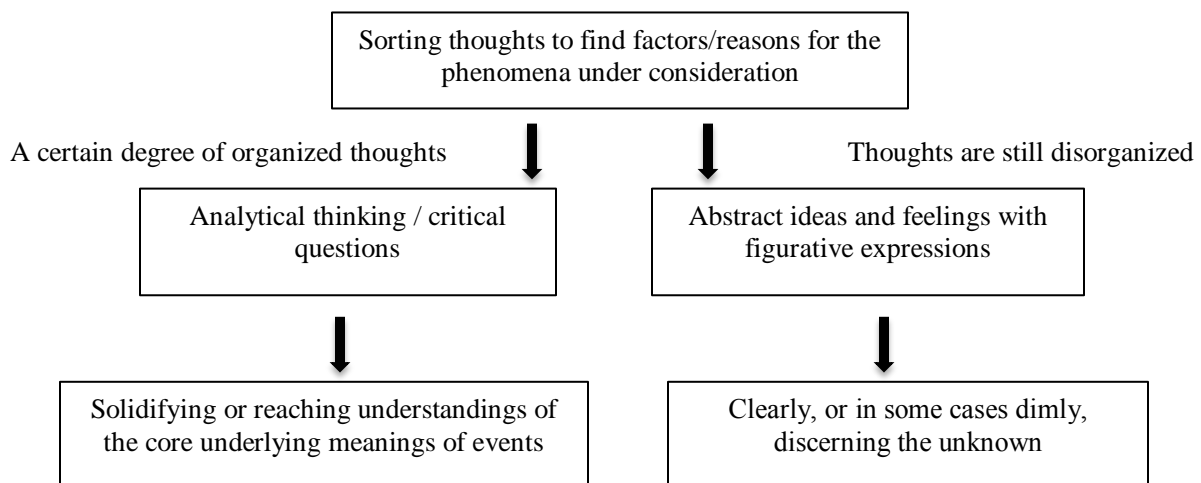
```
                    ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Sorting thoughts to find factors/    │
                    │  reasons for the phenomena under      │
                    │  consideration                        │
                    └──────────────────────────────────────┘
A certain degree of organized thoughts    ↓           ↓    Thoughts are still disorganized
        ┌─────────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │  Analytical thinking /  │          │  Abstract ideas and     │
        │  critical questions     │          │  feelings with          │
        │                         │          │  figurative expressions │
        └─────────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────────┘
                    ↓                                    ↓
 ┌──────────────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
 │  Solidifying or reaching         │   │  Clearly, or in some cases       │
 │  understandings of the core      │   │  dimly, discerning the unknown   │
 │  underlying meanings of events   │   │                                  │
 └──────────────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 6. Process of understanding events in narrative essay writing

However, every case did not follow this sequence. Some subjects were unable to make their thoughts more precise because of the complexity of their perceptions and feelings. They tried to muddle through pinpointing vague concepts, but without finding literal words to articulate them, they instead used abstract or figurative expressions. Because these expressions

enabled subject to demystify the unknown, they can be considered as a different yet equally valid form of self-discovery. The nature of essay writing, in which "form and linguistic choice cannot be ignored and require specific attention in discussing assigned meaning to the text" (Pavlenko, 2007 as cited in Hanauer, 2010, p. 61), allows one to generate and clarify complex thoughts and emotions in texts, whether this is accomplished through literal or figurative descriptions.

Overall, the outcome from the analysis of the elicited essay writing data echoes Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) concerns, which also arose in Chapter III, about utilizing narrative interviews as the sole research instrument. Narrative essay writing could compensate for the shortcomings of interviews if the two tools are used together efficiently.

Poetry writing. Three content types emerged in subjects' poetry: *imaginative representations, symbolizing emotions with lyrical expressions* and *distillations of emotions in different rhetorical forms.*

Imaginative representations. This content type refers to subjects' imaginations about what upcoming or future events would be like as well as what psychological states were involved with preparing for the occasions. Their imaginative and creative visions of future events were inextricably entwined with emotions, which were often too intricate to articulate literally. Therefore, subjects at times used symbolic or metaphoric expressions. Sophie's pre-departure perspective on study abroad, as exemplified earlier, was depicted through the metaphor of being at the end of a sheer cliff. The poem has additional vivid emotional portrayals of what this experience was like: "fog and blinding light ahead" and "I cannot see where I will fly/ Or where I will fall." These sensory and visual descriptions clearly signify her fears about the uncertainties ahead. Furthermore, she characterized her study abroad experience as a milestone in her life path by using the expressions: "My life ends here / My life begins here." These expressions suggest

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her core underlying meaning of this opportunity was to take on all of the changes that came her way. She believed that study abroad was the only way to the next life stage, from childhood to adulthood, and a gateway to future possibilities for selfhood. Therefore, she in a sense had a compulsion to jump off the figurative cliff, as her excitement outweighed her anxiety. This finding allowed the researcher to capture her deep-seated perceptions of study abroad.

Dustin's pre-departure perception of study abroad has similar characteristics to Sophie's. As he also described in his essay, he used the image of standing on the stage for the first time to symbolize his sensation:

Stage is lit, house full

Murmurs, chatters and tension

Of heart, set to burst

(August 1, 2012)

Although the metaphorical setting of this poem is different from that of Sophie's, there is a common concept between the two poems. Both settings imply that the subjects' situations are irreversible. In Dustin's case, he had already stepped into the spotlight in front of a packed house. The curtain had opened and everything was on the line. Regardless of his anxiety about whether he would succeed, he could do nothing other than start his performance. This haiku-style short poem distils the essence of his emotional sensations and denotes his latent meanings of study abroad—a daunting challenge that he would inevitably have to overcome to achieve his life goals.

Connor's pre-departure views of study abroad also fall into this category. He perceived himself as a wandering traveler who has an uncertain life ahead:

I fell through the sky

Onto on island of mystery

I thought I know what I knew

But I knew nothing about what I know

As I look back into the sky

I see that I know what I didn't know

Is something I already know

(November 17, 2012)

Connor's use of oxymoronic constructions creates a contrast between the uncertainty lying ahead and a firm belief in his momentous decision to study abroad in Japan for a second time. The contradictory nature of these feelings hindered him from articulating them in interviews or essays, because he was puzzled about why he could not resist his impulse to return and why he had this deep intimate feeling toward a foreign country. However, when writing the poem above, he ceased his conscious deliberation and trusted his intuition. As he stated, " ... what I didn't know / Is something I already know." He had a spiritual connection because he had felt so inexplicably close to or familiar with Japan even before he visited for the first time. However, he had been unsure whether this country could be defined as his final destination to call "home." In this sense, the poem disclosed the insightful meaning he attributed to this opportunity—finding an answer of what it would mean to live there long-term by further engaging with Japanese culture. Although finding a job, as stated in his interview, was a rational and practical reason, it can be considered a mere instrumental means of pursuing his deeper and more profound goal of finding a place to belong.

The abovementioned three instances were imaginative descriptions of subjects' emotional states regarding their future events. As can be seen, their definitions of study abroad were inseparable from deep-seated emotions, which made them difficult for participants to convey through straightforward or analytical description.

Symbolizing emotional states with lyrical expressions. This category encompasses the use of similes or metaphors, as does the previous content type. However, whereas the previous category was concerned with subjects' imagination about future events, the current content type emphasizes their emotional states regarding past experiences. One of the examples was Sophie's poem about her parents' divorce, in which she depicted herself and her sister as "seeds in the wind":

My parents can go back to their families

But my sister and I are like seeds in the wind

Suddenly our roots have been cut out

She has been blowing around in these winds of uncertainty

But I have been hiding

Observing from under a rock in a foreign country

(January 4, 2013)

The image of the seeds represents her and her sister's powerlessness in the wake of this emotional upheaval. Their sense of security was broken off, and they became vulnerable. However, both of them had no way of venting their uncertainty and anxiety. The poem additionally noted that she felt guilty about her leaving her sister to deal with the fallout from her parents' divorce while she maintained a safer distance from abroad. Overall, this data indicates

that poetry writing enables the subject to evince repressed feelings, which in turn can allow the reader to grasp the essential emotional nature of the experience and form a sympathetic response.

Another instance is a poem about language learning that Connor wrote around the second half of his study abroad. As with the previous example, he used creative and metaphoric phrases in his poem, whereas he simply stated "It is still hard for me" during the interview:

To leap across the ocean is an easy task

To find a path that makes sense is quite the task

The walk through the unknown

Will eventually lead to the desired track

(May, 4, 2013)

This poem suggests how substantial language learning was for him, because his language proficiency could be one of the keys to immersing himself into the new culture. Through the use of metaphors, the first two lines contrast the ease of physically journeying abroad ("To leap across the ocean") with the challenges of meaningfully integrating into new surroundings ("To find a path that makes sense"). These difficulties of "[walking] through the unknown" evoke his senses of uncertainty and fretfulness about whether he could attain his insightful goal of finding a sense of belonging in Japan. As such, the poem reveals that language learning was not a mere act of acquiring skills to him; rather, it was entangled with his process of discovering his life direction.

Another example is Dustin's definitions of study abroad that were composed during the end of his sojourn. He symbolized his relationship to Japanese society by using the metaphor of a cog in his haiku poem:

A cog apart from

Is not less, unless the cog

Would fall to distress

(May 12, 2013)

Taken alone, these abstract expressions require the reader to use her imagination and form an interpretation of the poem. However, Dustin provided further explanation of its meaning during his interview (*D* is Dustin, *R* is the researcher):

D: What I'm trying to say is that there is the part you tend to be, but probably there, other things can also happen. There is the part that society will try to plug you into and there's the part that you choose to be. So it's about... Finding something different to open yourself up to.

R: You mean, coming here, it's a sort of a cog, you get there, other things happened

D: Other things happened

R: which led you to a different path

D: That's it!

(May 12, 2013)

From the poem and the interview, it has become clear that Dustin utilized a cog to represent how he did not fit in well with Japanese culture (see also Dustin's case study in Chapter IV). This realization allowed him to reaffirm his American identity, which also led him to his choice to concentrate on his science study in the United States. Therefore, the entire study abroad experience guided him to a definite life path in the end.

These example poems reveal that one's statements are comprised of concepts layered at both conscious and unconscious levels. Negativity and positivity about their life events lie one

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upon another and tangle with each other. However, poetry writing can unveil and untangle human's complex or core underlying emotions as well as the meaning of the events they experience.

   Distillations of emotions in different rhetorical forms. This last category demonstrates how poetry writing elicits essences of emotions, which were described using different rhetorical expressions from those of interviews or essays. For example, Connor's essay about the study abroad experience with his international student fellows utilized confrontational and didactic tones, such as "What are you doing? / You are here to witness.../ You need to..." These tones became sedate and mellifluous in the poem.

   In this world there is more to see

   more than one can imagine

   to close your eyes to react

   is the way to close yourself in

   (March 20, 2013)

This tonal shift suggests that the sardonic perspective on his fellows Connor expressed in his essay was refined and extended to philosophical principals in life, which engage the reader on another level. Instead of imparting the depth of his frustration and irritation, he offers contemplative wisdom in a way that encourages the reader to take heed of his words. This stylistic choice entails a distinct rhetorical effectiveness because it pursues a different audience reaction.

   Similarly, Ayana's poem about losing her traveler's check in the airport uses different tones than her essay, but the emotional progression they demonstrate is the opposite of that evidenced in Connor's essay and poem. Whereas the cynical expressions in his essay shifted to a

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more placid tone of voice in his poem, the descriptive and relatively sedate voice Ayana used in

her essay became acerbic in her poem. Her emotions were represented as sheer exasperation:

You said, "Please sign here"

I did

But it is your mistake

My $200 is gone

This is your fault

Give me [back] my $200

Come back my $200

But I couldn't say anymore

I couldn't get it back anymore

This is my fault

(November 17, 2012)

This second language poem is comprised of relatively simple and straightforward phrases, which

reflect her intention to address the reader in a very direct and colloquial manner. Unlike her

interview and essay, which contain more elaborate descriptions of the event, the poem focuses on

intense internal emotions. In other words, it seeks to achieve catharsis for the author herself

rather than clarify what occurred for the sake of the audience. This result corresponds with

outcomes from the previous quantitative analyses (See also "Discussion" in the quantitative

analyses section).

The next and last instances are Mare's language learning experience of preparing for her

presentation and Haruna's experience of giving her presentation. These instances demonstrate

how emotional descriptions in their essays were altered into rhetorical questions in their poems.

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In Mare's essay, she began with analytic deliberation about her American friend's intention to correct her English text. Then, she quite briefly mentioned her conflicted feeling, as if she were repressing the emotion: "These sentences were not mine anymore, so I had complex feelings." By contrast, this self-contradictory sensation appeared in the first line of her poem. Furthermore, she stressed this emotion by utilizing a rhetorical question: "New paper made me confused. Is this my paper?" The discrepancy in her ways of starting the essay and poem reaffirms the tendencies of essay writing to give rise to conscious consideration and poetry writing to produce more intuitive psychological reflection.

Similarly, Haruna's poem about the experience of delivering her presentation raises a rhetorical question in the last line. She begins the poem by answering the critical questions posed in her essay about the results of conditioning from Japanese culture and society, as repeated here from Chapter IV:

I was afraid to say "In my opinion"

Because I am Japanese

But here in America

I don't need to care about others

Even in Japan

How should I do?

(December 13, 2011)

The poem reveals that the core factor in Haruna's nervousness and anxiety was her refusal of Japanese cultural conventions. All of the factual statements and emotional reflections, through which she addressed a myriad of thoughts and feelings during her interview and in her essay, were sorted out and distilled into this fundamental reason for the apprehension that she went

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through during her presentation. This distillation furthermore raised a question, "How should I do?" in the last line. This question also encompasses a rhetorical question about whether individuals can truly cast off acculturated mindsets and behaviors as well as an emotional distillation of her unease about adopting an American mentality in her home country.

    Discussion. The content types elicited through poetry writing—*imaginative representations, symbolizing emotions with lyrical expressions* and *distillations of emotions in different rhetorical forms*—markedly contrast with the characteristics of interviews and essays. Whereas essay writing tended to prompt representations of one's conscious and contemplative thinking in a logical manner, poetry writing led subjects to emphasize personal insight as a central component (Phillips, 1997; Hanauer, 2004). As stated by Colley (2005) and Hanauer (2010), the act of composing poems carries a high likelihood that authors will undertake an emotional journey to explore their most intimate perceptions and feelings. An integral part of the process possibly relies on intuition, but the perspectives elicited are not as spontaneous and instinctive as those of interviews. The nature of poetry writing seems to encourage the writer to practice a different form of cognition. It involves making very deliberate linguistic choices by "moving thoughts and lines around" (Gerrish, 2004, p. 106) and deleting words to arrive at terse yet precise images and descriptions (Hanauer, 2010). Simultaneously, the thoughts in their minds are compressed, polished, and distilled into the quintessence of emotions, regardless of whether the resulting textual representations are figurative or relatively literal. For this reason, subjects possibly experience catharsis, or put in Hanauer's (2010) words, a process of *defamiliarization* wherein they are estranged from taken-for-granted views and generate fresh perspectives. The overall consequence of this analysis comes to echo Hanauer's (2010) assertion that "poetry writing in this sense is a process of cognitive and emotional insight" (p. 15).

The effectiveness of poetry writing can be also reaffirmed by the subjects' comments on their experiences of participating in this task. For example, Noah stressed that poetry writing involves more emotional reflections than essay writing:

> I think it forces you to put your emotions out there a little bit more than an essay does. I think you can write an essay and just write things that have happened to you, but I think you have to put some emotion into a poem. (August 30, 2013)

Additionally, another American female participant, whose case study did not appear in Chapter IV, offered comments that accord closely with Noah's: "My emotions are more in the poem. It's just the way I do poems. I like them to be more emotional and then the journal is just my straightforward thoughts" (Interview, September 19, 2014). Furthermore, Connor's remark illustrates how this genre elicits more intrapersonal understandings: "...the way I write [poems] it's a lot of more like, ah…it's for me. ...And I won't say it's abstract. Because it's not…because I know what it is. But to you it might be, but I don't care…It's for me" (May 30, 2013). More interestingly, feedback from another participant, whose case study was not included in Chapter IV, reveals how a less structured approach to poetry writing can educe deep-seated emotions that had previously lurked at the subconscious level:

> When I got to the end, when I write poetry, I don't write with meter or rhyme, I try to always write in free verse, I just write whatever is there. You know, right off the top of my mind. One thing after the other. A stream of consciousness is the technique that it's called. And I find that it's always so much more visceral and cognitive, because it's what's there. Now, I'm thinking, as I'm writing, I'm not just crafting a poem, I'm writing down the phrases of my mind bit for bit, and I got to the end and it's like I closed my eyes for a second, and it's like I could picture myself looking outside the window of a

plane and seeing the shore of a different place, a different world, somewhere far away. And this feeling came over me, it's almost like returning home after a really long trip, but it's really the opposite. But the feeling that I got was strange. (interview, August 27, 2013)

As such, not solely the outcomes from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses but also the subjects' experiences suggest that the process of composing poetry "faces with oneself" through "exploration of the deepest and most intimate experiences, thoughts, feelings, [and] ideas" (Bolton, 1999, p. 118); by extension, it demystifies the unknown. In this sense, all of these results reaffirm Hanauer's (2004) notion that poetry writing "creates for the reader and writer a new understanding of experience, thoughts or feelings in the text" (p.10).

Another noticeable finding in this analysis concerns the second language poems written by Japanese students. Although their work unmistakably contains a distillation of emotions, their poems consist of relatively simple and straightforward phrases, as opposed to the similes and metaphors often used by American subjects. This disparity could be attributable to subjects' choices of languages in which to write poems. While most American subjects used their first language, Japanese participants uniformly chose their second language. As intermediate level language learners, their knowledge of vocabulary was comparatively restricted, and they had received far fewer opportunities to practice constructing unique figurative expressions in English. Therefore, they were likely to be less familiar and comfortable with crafting similes and metaphors in their poems. Yet, for both Japanese and American students, poetry writing distilled the atomistic ways of thinking evidenced in their prose into more inner feelings, which were lying in wait to be discovered.

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Prior to closing this analysis, it is noteworthy to add the participants' perspectives on poetry writing in their second languages. The investigation of several subjects' comments intimates that the degree to which they felt they were able to achieve accurate and satisfactory representations of their feelings in their L2 poems varied by the individual. Noah, who provided Japanese poems during almost every data collection session, addressed one of its advantages for language learning: "I think it's better… I think it helps you refine your relationship with the second language, learning what relationship you have with it" (August 30, 2013). Hence, the sense of foreignness that he had associated with Japanese shifted to one of intimacy through his second language poetry writing. However, Connor's perception was the opposite of Noah's. He was uncertain that he had expressed what he intended to say as precisely as he wished: "It's also really hard because the way we perceive in English is different from the way we perceive in Japanese" (May 4, 2013). In contrast to Noah, he became suspicious about the degree of accuracy he could attain in his second language poetry. In this sense, writing poetry in different languages can facilitate the construction of new understandings (Hanauer, 2010) on one hand, but it can slightly distort what authors wish to address in their texts on the other.

All in all, each research instrument elicits different characteristics and entails specific advantages and disadvantages. In light of all the content types identified in these analyses, the next section will suggest how these data collection tools can supplement each another and be effectively applied to future research studies.

Implications

Having explored the values and qualities of elicited data from different research instruments in this chapter, it is apparent that each method has advantages and disadvantages. Interviewing in subjects' first language can, in all likelihood, allow researchers to obtain a

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sufficient amount of data due to high rates of participant willingness. Despite the common use and relative ease of interviews, however, the data they yield may not be as rich as expected. In particular, researchers who are investigating psychological phenomena might face struggles to capture subjects' insightful and latent thoughts and feelings, because interviews tend to educe comparatively surface level perceptions of subjects' sociocultural and extrinsic life experiences. Yet, utilizing solely essay or poetry writing might be not as feasible as interviews, since subjects' willingness varies depends upon their familiarity with or interest in each genre or their motivation or mood toward participating in these tasks. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that narrative essay writing can compensate for the shortcomings of interviews, but the current study indicates that interviews and essay writing was the least popular combination among subjects who were willing to provide multiple data types. Providing more language options potentially increases the feasibility of these research instruments, though this may not be an optimal solution because subjects' language proficiency levels or amount of opportunities to practice expressing their thoughts and feelings in their second language through these genres affects their willingness to participate. In this sense, selecting data elicitation tools based on subjects' probable levels of willingness alone might not necessarily be the best approach to research design.

The analysis of subjects' willingness led to further investigation of textual qualities and content values elicited in each genre. The quantitative analyses were conducted at the literal level of the word and yielded characteristics in terms of cognitive process, interpersonal or intrapersonal emphases, and the degree of emotional expressivity. On the other hand, the qualitative analyses allowed for the examination of semantic, content and rhetorical features. The consequences resulted accorded closely with and reinforced the outcomes from the LIWC

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analyses by providing extensive elucidation as to what specific aspects each research instrument brought out. For example, the quantitative analyses suggested that interviews were prone to induce spontaneous and instinctive reflections about interactions with others in society. Then, the results of the qualitative analyses indicated that subjects' reflections were narrated as rudimentary accounts of factual events with occasional and brief impressionistic commentary. The LIWC analyses of subjects' essays demonstrated that they used metacognitive thinking about both interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects. According to the qualitative analyses, this cognitive process extended to their understanding of meanings of the events, causing them to estrange themselves from taken-for-granted perspectives by raising critical questions. Concerning poetry writing, the quantitative analyses revealed that it propelled the subjects to concentrate on emotion-centric aspects. The qualitative analyses intimated that these aspects were engendered through considerable deliberation. Furthermore, the rhetorical features in poetry, such as lyrical descriptions, images, similes or metaphors, can help participants to disentangle themselves from anxiety and struggles to find precise and proper words to articulate their complex feelings. The process of constructing poetic texts can open new perspectives on events as well as the self. As such, the juxtaposition between the quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed the overall features of each data type: interviews elicit sociological aspects; for essay writing, analytical; and concerning poetry writing, psychological.

Considered in tandem all of the analyses in this chapter indicate that a sequence of interviews, essay writing, and poetry writing is a feasible method to obtain data and provide extensive elucidations in regard to psychological aspects of one's life experience. Furthermore, the combination of these three tools apparently enabled subjects to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings recursively to discover their core-underlying perceptions. Table 22 displays a

summary of how each tool elicited different aspects of pre-departure definitions of study abroad that were addressed by Sophie, Dustin, and Connor (the three participants who provided every data type within one session on the same day).

Table 24

Changes in Definitions of Study Abroad by Genre

	Interviews	Essays	Poems
Sophie	For language, culture, experience or to learn a lot about herself	Stepping into adult life	The only way to transition from childhood to adulthood and a gateway to future possibilities for selfhood
Dustin	External measures of success and prestigious career goals	Contradictory emotional states between wishes for success and subliminal doubts about his capacity his capacity to fulfill his admission	Daunting challenge that he inevitably has to overcome to achieve his life goal
Connor	To find a job in Japan	Destination that would guide him to a new life	Finding an answer of what it would mean to live in Japan long-tern by further engaging with the new culture

As can be seen, subjects' meanings of study abroad became more personal and unique when composing their poetry. These meanings are different from the socially putative perceptions that were elicited during interviews. This transitional development of thoughts and feelings can be depicted as a journey of self-inquiry. They gradually demystified inner feelings about the self as if peeling away onionskins to reach the core-underlying mind. Therefore, the combination of these three research instruments created a form of therapeutic self-discovery, which brought some subjects to tears. Furthermore, it built up trust between the researcher and the subjects as time went by. The process of the self-inquiry journey can be theorized by modifying Hanauer's

(2010) graphic representation of the process of poetry writing (p. 20). Typically, three stages are involved in this process, as displayed graphically in Figure 7.
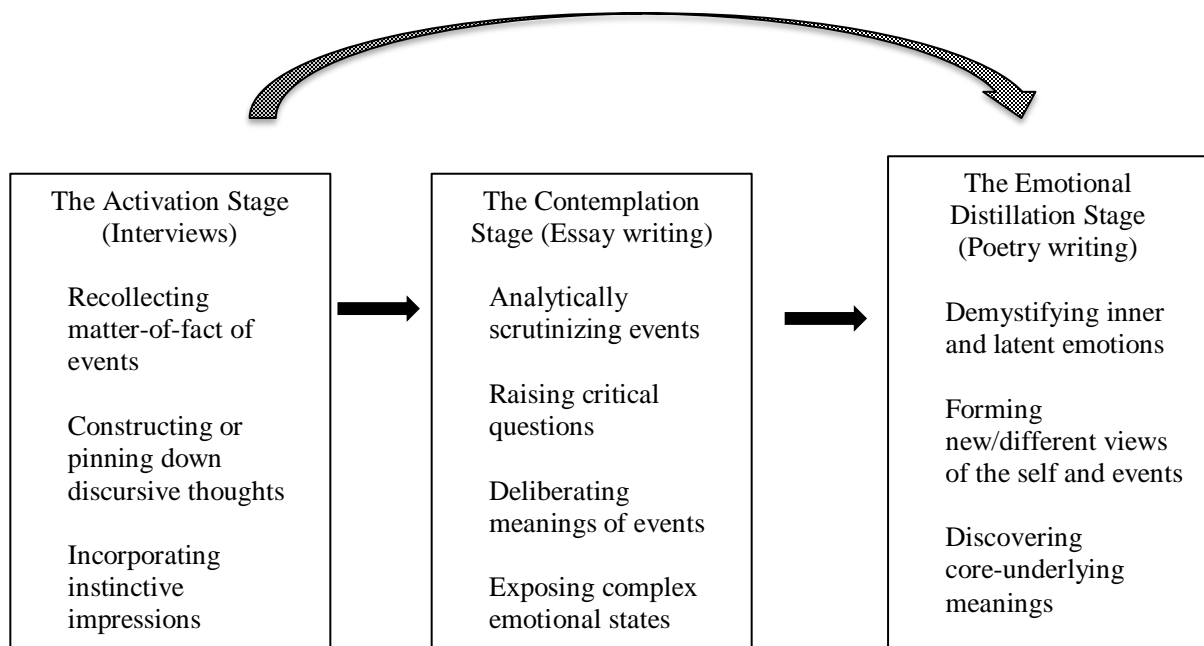
The Activation Stage (Interviews)	The Contemplation Stage (Essay writing)	The Emotional Distillation Stage (Poetry writing)
Recollecting matter-of-fact of events	Analytically scrutinizing events	Demystifying inner and latent emotions
Constructing or pinning down discursive thoughts	Raising critical questions	Forming new/different views of the self and events
Incorporating instinctive impressions	Deliberating meanings of events	Discovering core-underlying meanings
	Exposing complex emotional states	

Figure 7. Process of self-inquiry through three research methods

The first stage is that of Activation, which evokes nascent understandings of subjective meanings of events by establishing chronological sequences of events, the individuals involved, and specific sociocultural settings. The second state is Contemplation, in which the subjects critically analyze the reflections on events that they made during the first stage. The last state is Emotional Distillation. Through the careful selection and permutation of appropriate words, complex thoughts and emotions are distilled to their essence, which crystalizes the subjects' innermost and deepest meanings of events. However, this sequence does not necessarily always occur. As touched upon earlier, the subjects' thoughts and feelings are at times too emotional and complex to be articulated in the structured manner of essay writing, so their poignant memories lead them to skip logical analyses and proceed directly to poetry writing. Hence, the frequency of participation in interviews and poetry writing was also high, as the first analysis represented.

Once again, the combination of the three research instruments seems to evidence their effectiveness in investigating psychological aspects of human life experiences, while all analyses in this chapter reappraised the values and qualities of data elicited in different genres and suggested that each research instrument can elicit different dimensions and could be efficacious depending upon particular research purposes. Although the outcomes in this chapter were derived from limited data sources, it is hoped that this nascent exploration will be a bridge to future investigations of effective research methodology.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

The current study has sought to answer the following two research questions:

1. How do students' subjective understandings of language learning and study abroad experiences involve views of the self?

2. In collecting data on personal experience in different genres (narrative interview, narrative essay writing, and poetry writing), what are the values and qualities of each of the data elicitation methods used?

As for the second research question, thorough analyses of the elicited values were conducted, and findings were examined holistically to generate significant themes and content types in the previous chapter. However, with respect to the first research question, case studies were elucidated at the individual level in Chapter IV. Hence, this chapter is an attempt to look across the cases and synthesize their prominent phenomena in order to reconstruct a more universal understanding. It provides interpretative insights into the findings and a more integrated picture as to what emerges in layered synthesis. As described in Chapter IV, the researcher enquired into psychological dimensions by drawing on Kramsch's (2009) notion of subjectivity. In doing so, the researcher described how identities were inwardly generated: the subjects developed their senses of self through recognition of their emotions, feelings, memories, imagination and desire while abroad. Findings from each case study shed light upon how their subjective understandings of learning language and study abroad were inextricably entwined with self-growth and their life-related future goals, as Hanauer (2012) averred in his notion that language learning is a "significant, potentially life changing event" (p. 105).

Delving into these outcomes collectively will allow for identification of larger

overarching patterns in the data set as well as significant points of divergence among the participants. Furthermore, a holistic approach can seize the quintessence of identity phenomena and scrutinize how and why particular outcomes occurred. This discussion will also take into consideration the literature on SLA in study abroad contexts, which was discussed in Chapter II. By doing so, current issues and limitations of the literature will be thrown into relief, pedagogical implications of the present study will be explored, and recommendations for future research on study abroad and language learning will be made in order to conclude this entire study.

To this purpose, this chapter begins by employing Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber's (1988) narrative analysis methodology to visually depict the contours of participants' shifting perceptions over time. The four major concepts investigated in Chapter IV—perceptions of self-positionality, study abroad, language learning and future plans—were charted along an axis to graphically represent how changes in each did or did not correlate with one another. The goal is to expound upon how subjectivity fuels intricate relations between participants' sojourning abroad experiences and the development of personal and life-related future goals to grow possibilities for selfhood.

Interrelations Among Key Perceptions

To perform a holistic analysis regarding the first research question, it is firstly necessary to reiterate how each participant's views of the abovementioned concepts evolved chronologically and the relations of causality among them. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber's (1988) narrative analysis methodology fulfills this purpose because identifying alternations and charting them as graphs can divulge salient features at the individual level and also extend to the holistic level by allowing for comparison of patterns of progressions. The

graphs in this analysis were created by drawing from the tables that were included at the end of

each case study to recapitulate participants' perspectives and attitudes towards self-positionality,

study abroad, language learning and future goals. Positive developments in participants' outlooks

on these notions are represented with a line slanting upward, while negative developments are

represented with a line slanting downward. Additionally, the slope of the lines reflects the degree

of intensity or volatility associated with participants' emotions; for example, a slight

disappointment would be depicted with a gentle downward slope, whereas a severe

disappointment would appear as a sharp decline. Figure 8 below shows the outcomes for each

participant placed side by side.
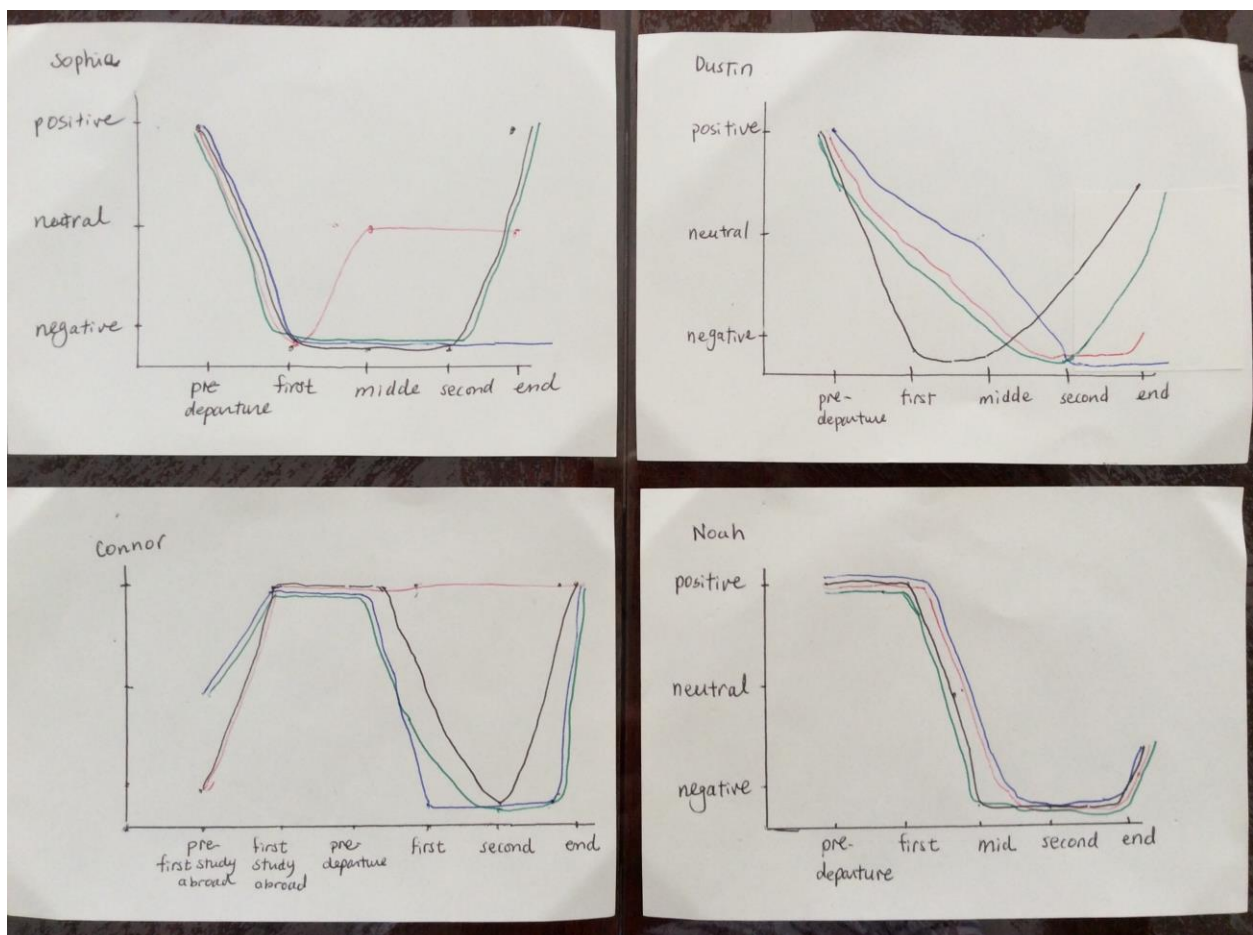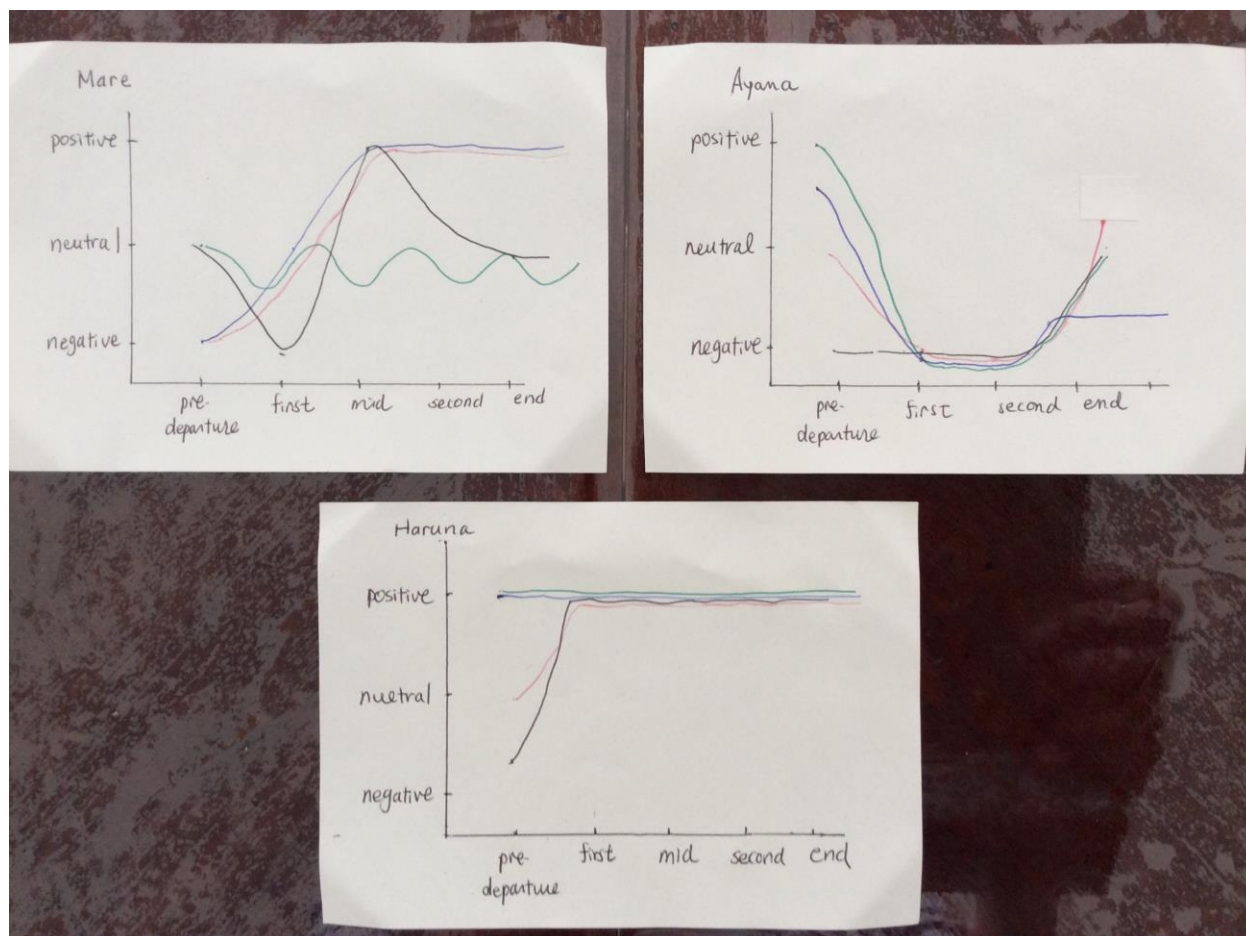
Figure 8. Transitions of perspectives on self-positionality, Study Abroad, language learning and future goals. (Line color coding is as follows: black demonstrates perceptions of the self; red, perceptions of study abroad; blue, perceptions of language learning; green, perceptions of future goals.)

As demonstrated by these graphs, participants' perceptions of their experiences abroad changed according to dynamics that were principally eccentric, unique, and idiosyncratic, although some meaningful patterns can be identified. Sophie, Dustin and Ayana's cases all unfolded in a U-shaped pattern, with initial positivity and optimism descending into some form of despondency or frustration before an eventual recovery. However, the particularities of these cases are still slightly different from one another. In each case, one or two of their perceptions

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did not align with the general U-shaped pattern. For instance, Sophie's positive views of study abroad and language learning at the beginning of her study abroad became neutral or negative and did not recover as her perceptions of self and future goals did. Dustin's highly passionate ambition towards language learning faded into apathy in the end. Ayana's views of herself did not become notably more positive while abroad. Therefore, this analysis reaffirmed the overall results in Chapter IV—i.e., that associations among identity reformation and language learning during study abroad were highly individualized phenomena.

While the precise patterns of sequential change diverge from one another, perceptible relations emerged between perspectives on self-positionality and the other three categories. Of particular note is that the patterns of change between views of self-positionality and future goals are directly correlated. In other words, when the participants' conceptions of self became more positive or negative, their abilities to identify clear future ambitions grew stronger or weaker, and vice versa, as can seen in Figure 9.

Most graphs demonstrate that the mobility of both perceptions is U-shaped: they start with a high level of positivity, decline into pessimism either gently or sharply, and conclude with some degree of retrieval. However, there are three exceptions to this general progression. In Mare's graph, waves can be noticed—her perceptions of herself unfold in the pattern of a single mountainous wave, while that of her future goals fluctuates in a small repeated curve. In Ayana and Haruna's cases, each perception begins at different levels of emotions and attitudes, but the lines flow into each other as their initial periods of study abroad commence and then maintain the same trajectory. As such, these perceptions also have fundamentally positive correlations in Mare, Ayana and Haruna's cases.
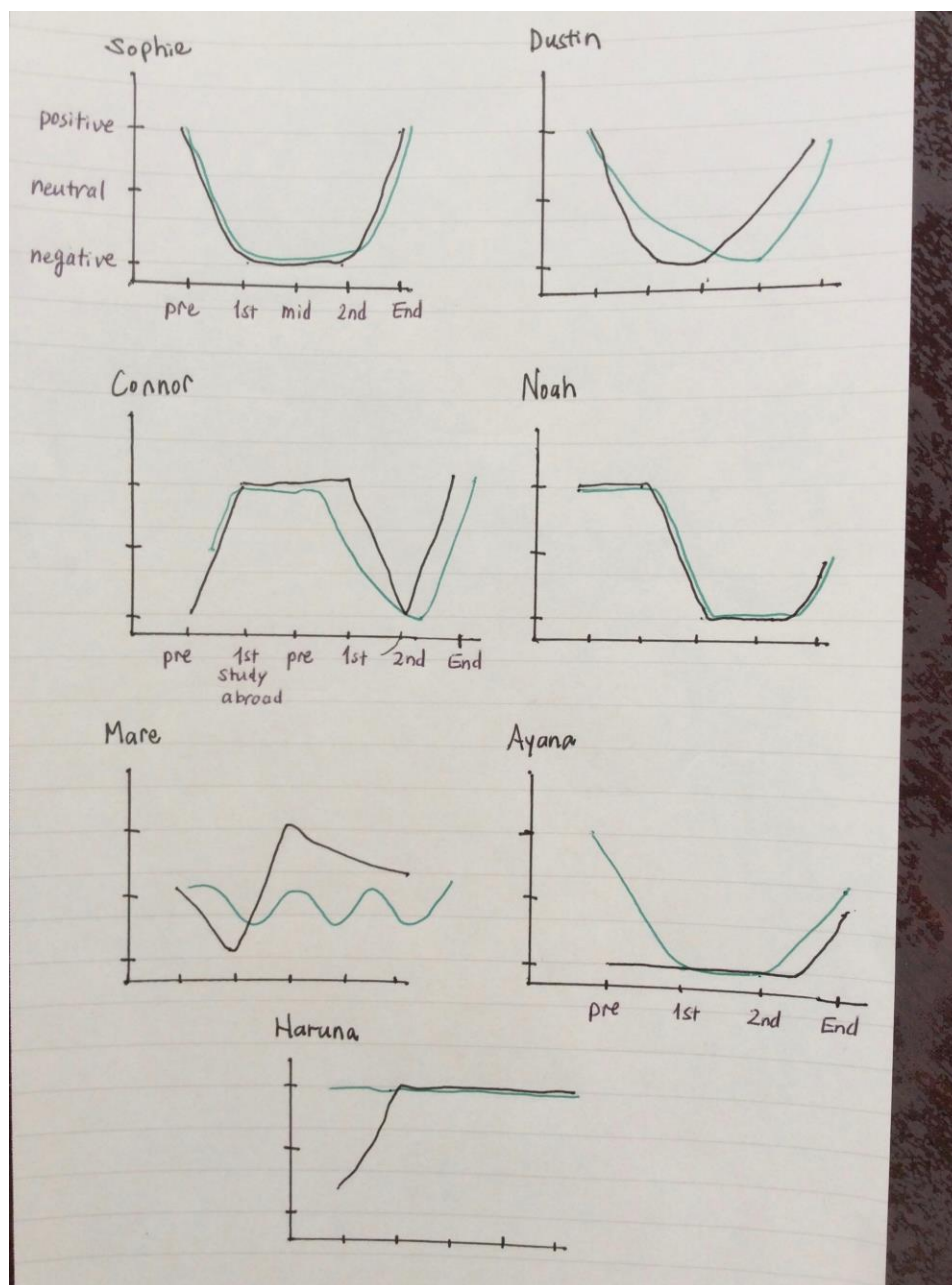
Figure 9. Correlation between perceptions of self-positionality and future goals

More interestingly, participants' ways of viewing themselves do not render as considerable an influence on their perceptions of study abroad and language learning. Regarding the former perception, solely two graphs (i.e., Noah and Haruna's cases) represent a remarkable correlation, in which both lines lie entirely parallel to each other (see Figure 10).
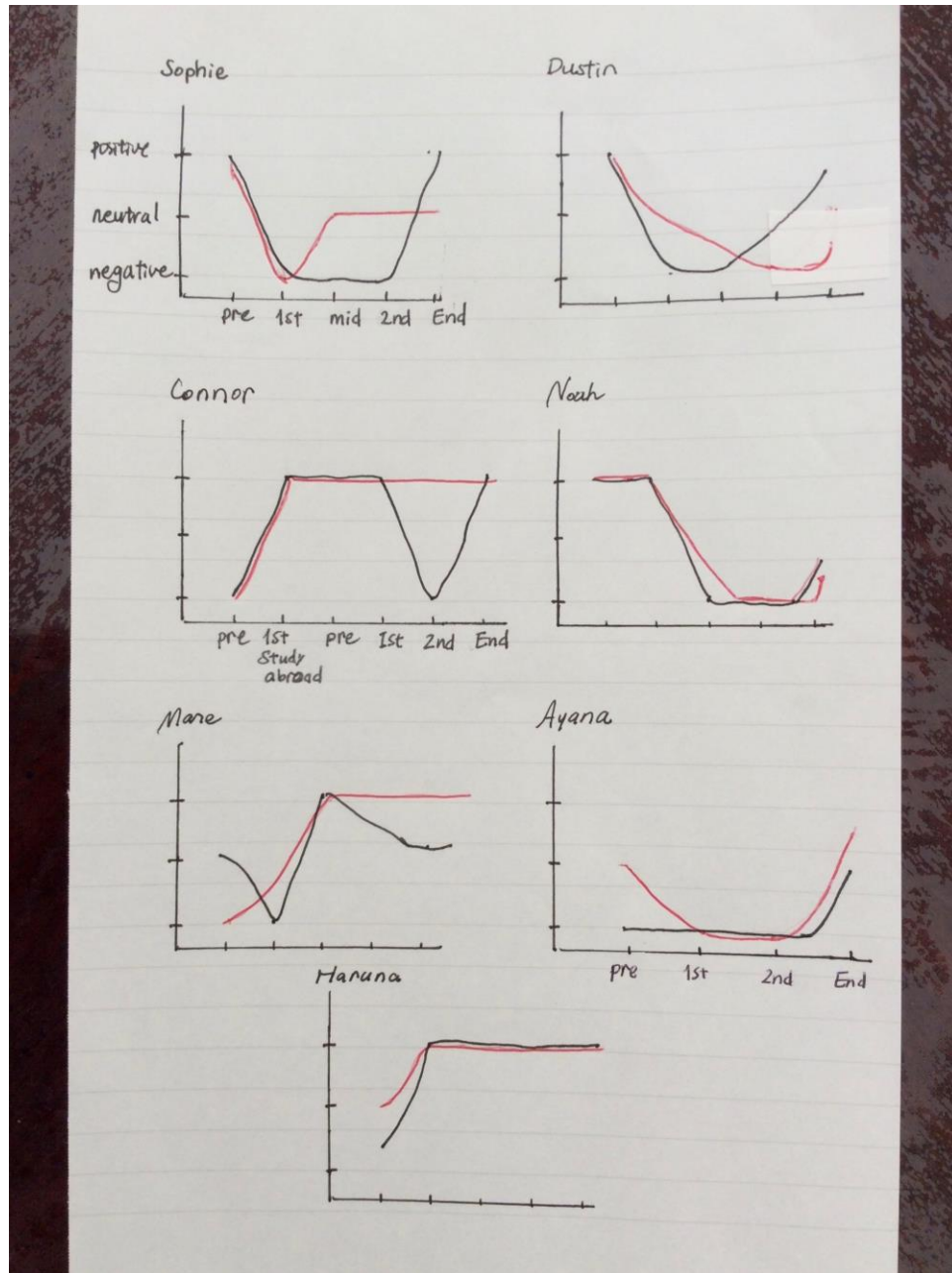
Figure 10. Correlation between perceptions of self-positionality and Study Abroad

Although Ayana's graph shows some degree of correlation, it is not as strong as that

demonstrated in Noah and Haruna's cases. For Ayana, each line starts at a different level, flows

into the other at a low point during the first half of her study abroad, and slants upwards to

different degrees: her perceptions of study abroad were revived to a greater degree than her

views of herself. More importantly, the remaining graphs display patterns in which the lines for perceptions of study abroad differ from the general U-shaped pattern for perceptions of self. More specifically, their study abroad views involve permanent unidirectional changes. For example, as opposed to the U-shaped pattern for self-perceptions, Sophie's initial senses of positivity regarding study abroad slant down steeply during the first period and then rise back somewhat only to level off at the point of neutrality. Additionally, Dustin's graph exhibits a U-shaped pattern similar to Sophie's regarding perceptions of self, whereas the plot of the study abroad line resembles an outline of a ladle: it begins high, keeps leaning down, hits the bottom and slightly bounds back up. In Connor and Mare's cases, while their views of self-positionality involve major volatile shifts, the lines representing views of study abroad launch at the neutral level of enthusiasm, escalate to their highest points in the early stage, and stay there constantly.

On the whole, all of the graphs highlight a less significant correlation than the previously discussed relations between perceptions of self-positionality and future goals, and yet there are still some similarities within the data set. In three cases (Noah, Ayana, and Haruna), the lines flow into each other and maintain parallel trajectories. The other cases contain greater degrees of individual variance, but they conclude with lines staying constantly positive or slanting upward, though different levels of eventual recovery appear. As such, the participants' meanings of study abroad correlate to some degree with their ways of viewing themselves. This outcome suggests that study abroad, while significant, was less important to self-reinvention in and of itself than as a catalyst for the creation of individualized future goals, some of which were totally unrelated to the original purposes of their sojourns.

In regard to perceptions of language learning, the correlation with self-positionality is much weaker than the other two categories. Whereas Connor, Noah, and Haruna's charts yield

close correlations, the others exhibit sharp divergences in their views. For example, in Sophie, Dustin and Ayana's graphs, sharp descents unmistakably occur, and the participants scarcely recover from their pessimism. In Mare's case, the language learning line shows a unidirectional change, though it collides with the wave-shaped self-perception line at times. Hence, the correlation between her views of language learning and self-perception is relatively low compared to the other two key perceptions. Collectively, these graphs reaffirm a significant limitation in the literature on language learning during study abroad: through a great number of studies investigate study abroad outcomes predominantly by measuring the degree of linguistic gains achieved (Block, 2007b; Hanauer, 2010; Kinginger, 2008), the present study supports emerging contentions that language learning may have little to no effect on the meanings participants ultimately associate with their sojourns and their determinations of whether studying abroad was valuable (Hanauer, 2012; Kramsch, 2009).
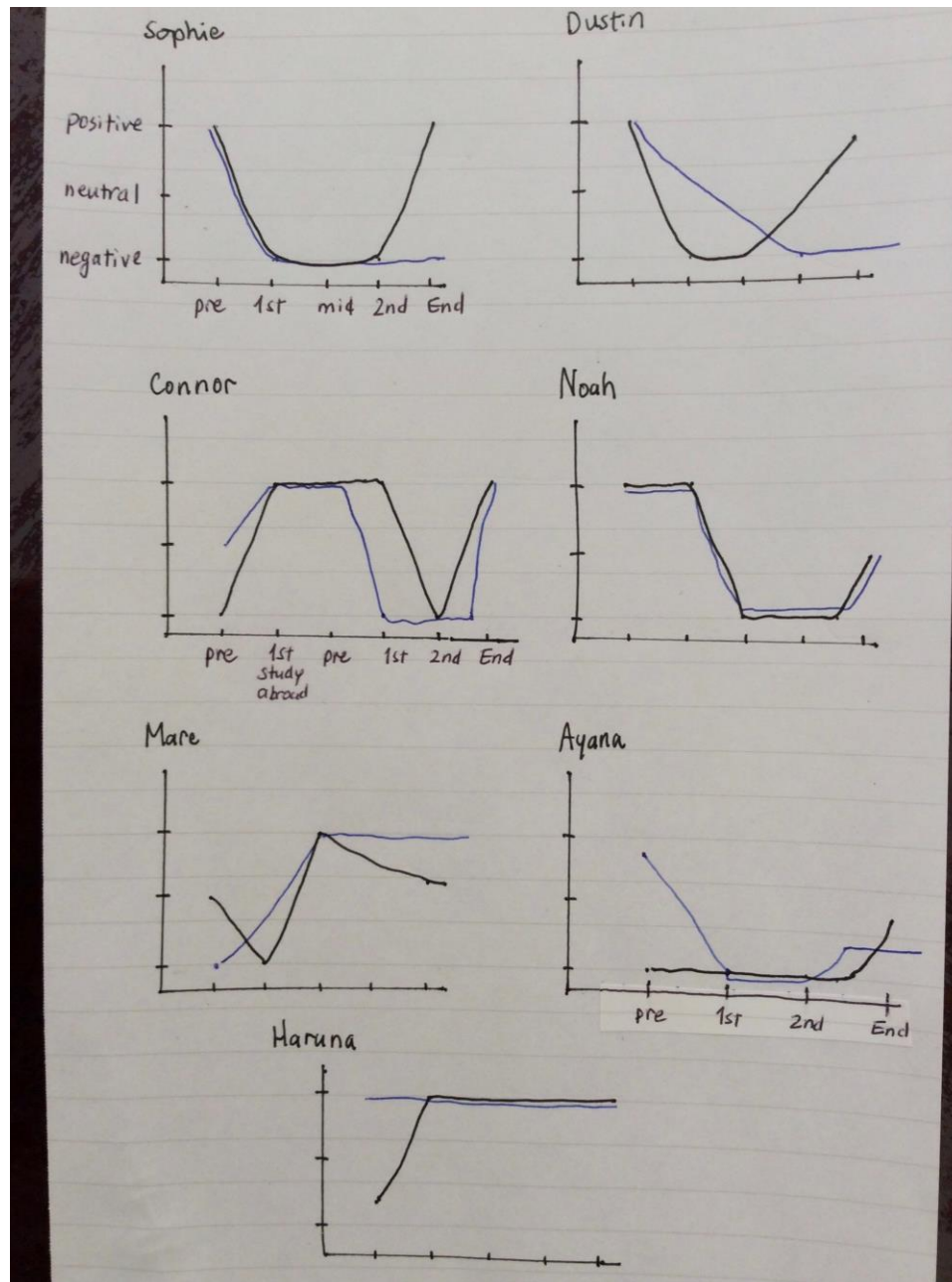
Figure 11. Correlation between perceptions of self-positionality and language learning

Having analyzed and interpreted how identity transformation interrelates with participants' ways of understanding and attitudes toward study abroad, language learning, and future goals, shared models can be rendered. However, it bears repeating that such models

emphasize generalization of the phenomena without accounting for unique details and dynamics
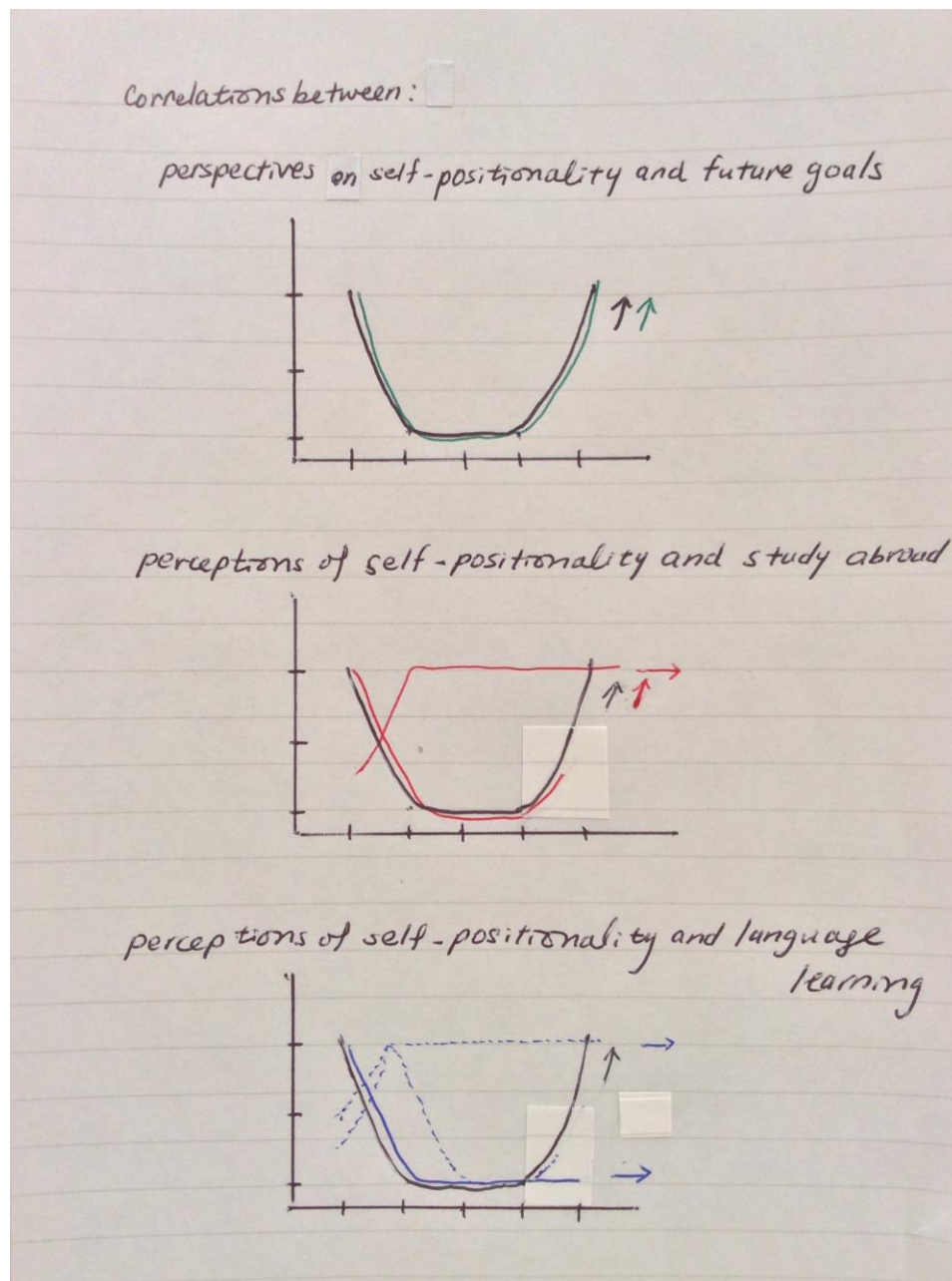
(see Figure 12).

Figure 12. General propensity of relations between perceptions of self-positionality and the other

key concepts

Each individual graph signifies the general propensity of relations between perceptions of self-positionality and one of the other key concepts. As the first chart represents, the perspective on self inextricably correlates with that of future goals because each line lies entirely parallel to the other. On the other hand, the relations between views of self and study abroad fundamentally characterize two types of change: one type of study abroad line contains a similar pattern to the general U-shaped form for the perception of self-positionality, but it does not recover to the same extent. In the other type, perspectives on study abroad involve a dynamic change from a low to high level in the initial stage, and this degree of positivity is maintained until the end. Although these different patterns emerge, there is a commonality: each contour ends on an optimistic note, with a slight or dramatic upswing. This shows that sojourning abroad experiences substantially or modestly enhanced positivity regarding their views of self, and by extension, affected their identity construction. With respect to the relation between views of self and language learning, the graph shows multiple perforated lines for language learning because each commences at a different level of positivity and either undergoes a unidirectional shift or eventually recovers from an earlier decline. Of the key concepts examined, language learning is the only category in which some participants (i.e., Sophie, and Dustin) exhibited a perpetual negative change; their graphs reveal a sharp descent to a flat line of pessimism and discontentment, whereas negative shifts for all of the participants in every other category were alleviated by at least a minor positive change in the end. While some graphs demonstrate negative changes in views of language learning, others show that participants maintained or grew their ambition toward learning their L2. Thus, it has become clear that the correlation between the views of self-positionality and language learning is relatively less significant. In this sense, the most
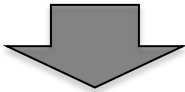
significant correlation with perspectives on self-positionality is that of future goals, the second

most significant is study abroad, and the least significant is language learning.

Changes in Subjective Definitions of Language Learning Abroad

Table 23 below reaffirms the outcomes of the aforementioned analyses. It displays a

comparison between participants' pre-departure perspectives on study abroad, language learning,

and future goals and those held at the end of their study abroad. It also illustrates how they came

to value future-related matters, including self-growth and searching for new possibilities of

selfhood, towards the final period of their sojourning abroad experiences. Perceptions in each

category are drawn from the tables that appeared at the end of individuals' case studies in

Chapter IV, and some similar perceptions have been combined into single entries.

Table 25

Comparison of Participants' Pre- and Post-sojourn Perceptions of Study Abroad, Language Learning, and Future Goals

Pre-Departure

Study abroad	Language learning	Future goals
• Changing oneself (e.g., by overcoming detestation of studying and a tendency to procrastinate, or alleviating a sense of misery and inferiority) • Becoming elite, enhancing the feasibility of academic or future career plans • A passage for dreams to bear fruit; to find a meaningful life and achieve self-discovery as an independent adult	• Bringing about a dynamic life-change • Instrumental and mechanical means of achieving career goals, such as obtaining high scores on standardized tests, or completing college successfully • Gateway to immersing oneself into a new culture • Exhibiting fluency in a second language to be seen as fashionable and glamorous	• Finding a future direction • Obtaining marketable skills and academic qualifications to achieve future career goals (e.g., becoming an engineer who engages in international business, an international lawyer; an English teacher in Japan, or a fluent speaker) • Achieving academic success

End of study abroad

Study abroad	Language learning	Future goals
• Learning about who one is and how one wants to live one's life • Finding possibilities of selfhood • Creating autonomy • Significant milestone to establish a new life path, learn meaningful life lessons, and realize the importance of overcoming boundaries	• Peripheral endeavor to study of more important topics • A tool to expand leisure activities and enrich one's life • Deepening intercultural competence • Improving senses of reciprocity with other cultures • Understanding what is valuable to one's life by going through unexpected excruciating experiences • Opening up more possibilities to immerse one's self in the host society	• Finding one's own niche or a new life direction • Inducing confusion and senses of loss about future directions • Enhancing self-esteem

There are similarities between participants' perceptions of study abroad before departing for their host countries and during the end of their study abroad: at both points, the participants conceived

of it as a means of changing the self or bringing about meaningful experiences related to their future. However, each definition addressed before their departure was too abstract to seize exact and specific meanings. Thus, analyzing their views of language learning and future goals allows for the clarification of their individual definitions of study abroad. As can be seen, before the participants departed their home countries, they considered language learning as an instrumental and practical endeavor related to academic success or their future careers, and they had optimistically believed that acquiring their second language skills would occur as a stable and predictable process. They also envisaged that their learning efforts would surely move them closer to attaining their overarching goals. Some participants had ambitions for specific occupations, such as engineer, lawyer and teacher; others had vague but unrealistic objectives such as becoming fluent speakers of their second languages within short periods of time. Contrary to their expectations, these illusory images disappeared as the end of their sojourn experiences approached. Their meanings of language learning shifted away from the domain of careers and placed more emphasis on intercultural understandings, which enhance feelings of reciprocity with different cultures, or, to a certain extent, enable the discovery of common humanity across cultural categorizations through interactions at the individual level. Because their definitions of study abroad and language learning came to connect with what it means to be human at this point, the perceptions of their future became more philosophical and personalized.

Delving into the Analyses: Rationales for the Outcomes

All in all, the data sets analyzed in this chapter reconfirmed Kramsch's (2009) notion that acquiring new language skills does not solely link to learners' usage of language as an instrumental means of communication, but rather reflects their search for "a way of generating an identity for themselves, of finding personal significance" (p. 15). In other words, participants

ultimately understood their experiences of learning language abroad as the pursuit of self-expansion and self-reinvention through inquiry as to how they could possibly move forward on their life paths. To varying degrees and at various points, all participants eventually considered their experiences abroad as a significant life transition during which they stepped out of adolescence and into independent adulthood.

The outcome that self-perspectives were more significantly correlated with views of future goals than other categories can be understood by scrutinizing how the sequential changes took place from psychological dimensions. Before departure, most participants carried excessive expectations for their upcoming experiences and believed that studying abroad would bring dynamic life or identity revolutions, which they hoped would relate to bright futures or brilliant achievements. This misguided and naive optimism was rooted in their conviction that personal growth could not result from merely learning a foreign language and accruing ordinary life experiences in their home countries. In this regard, Kramsch (2009) explicated upon what drew them to study abroad: "Many adolescents and young adults are not satisfied with the convenient answers given by the slogans that surround them in their mother tongue, not by the ready-made, identities offered by the marketing identity" (p. 15). Because participants had already become disillusioned with limited opportunities for the development of their linguistic abilities or personal growth in their familiar home settings, they felt that doors to self-transformation could be opened solely by immersing themselves in a new cultural and linguistic environment. Therefore, the allure of prominent socially structured discourses about the purposes and benefits of study abroad (e.g., becoming part of the well-traveled, sophisticated, and cosmopolitan elite; achieving near native-like fluency in a short period of time; and so on) distorted their subjective understandings as to what it means to learn a language. They had been very eager to find a better

way of compensating for things or concepts that were perceived to be lacking in their lives. Thus, once starting learning a foreign language, they were immediately attracted by something exotic and different. As Kramsch (2009) stated, a new mode of expression induces a sensation of freedom from the confines of social and cultural conventions or norms. As participants resisted being shaped into mere cogs in a mechanism, social discourses insinuated themselves into participants' desires and became the catalyst for their decisions to seek new possibilities for selfhood in different cultural contexts.

Contrary to participants' expectations of enjoying a quick and dramatic transformation by being exposed to a new linguistic and cultural environment, they discovered that acquiring a second language is a life-long endeavor and cannot be achieved within a short time period. Once they encountered this reality, their discourse-governed illusions were shattered, and they experienced periods of bewilderment, frustration, and bitter disappointment. In the course of their struggles, they gradually discerned that the path to a rewarding study abroad experience laid in casting aside putative discourses and creating their own personalized understandings of what it means to sojourn abroad and learn a language.

During the early periods of their sojourns, their feelings oscillated between senses of love and hate toward their home and host countries. As such, they attributed their feelings of frustration, discontentment, and abjection to external sources. As their experiences progressed, however, they came to realize that their struggles did not genuinely stem from outer factors. Rather, they were derived from inner and personal concerns, which also led them to profoundly scrutinize and contemplate their own selfhood, or their identities—who they are. Some participants could redefine their subjective and personal meanings of study abroad and language

learning while others could not, as demonstrated by Noah's difficulties with depression while abroad.

However, they eventually understood that their experiences were part of the overall process of traversing one's life path, which they had already being going through and would continuously go through during the rest of their lives. For this reason, as the end of their study abroad approached, ruminations on life experiences were much more prominent in their subjective definitions than desires to improve linguistic knowledge. In this regard, this psychological shift can be expounded upon by drawing on Ruti's (2012) remark: the participants came to perceive "a world in which loss is reinscribed as potential, one's destiny can always be rewritten, and the fragmentary and fragile nature of existence is embraced as a bright motif in the art of living" (para. 2). Even though some participants encountered unexpectedly difficult experiences, their overall impressions of study abroad were ultimately positive because they could derive rewarding life lessons from their tribulations. However, these levels of positivity varied depending upon individuals, as the previous analysis demonstrated. In this sense, the present study has produced additional empirical evidence for Hanauer's notion that language learning is a "significant, potentially life changing event" (2012, p. 105) and further emphasized how prominent structuralist paradigms in research on SLA in study abroad contexts result in dehumanization of participants, with the result that essential elements of second and foreign language education are diminished or dismissed.

In order to close discussion of the collective contours of participants' study abroad experiences, I adapted Paul's (2016) technique of depicting her autobiographical experiences in the form of a map with visual metaphors (see Figure 13).
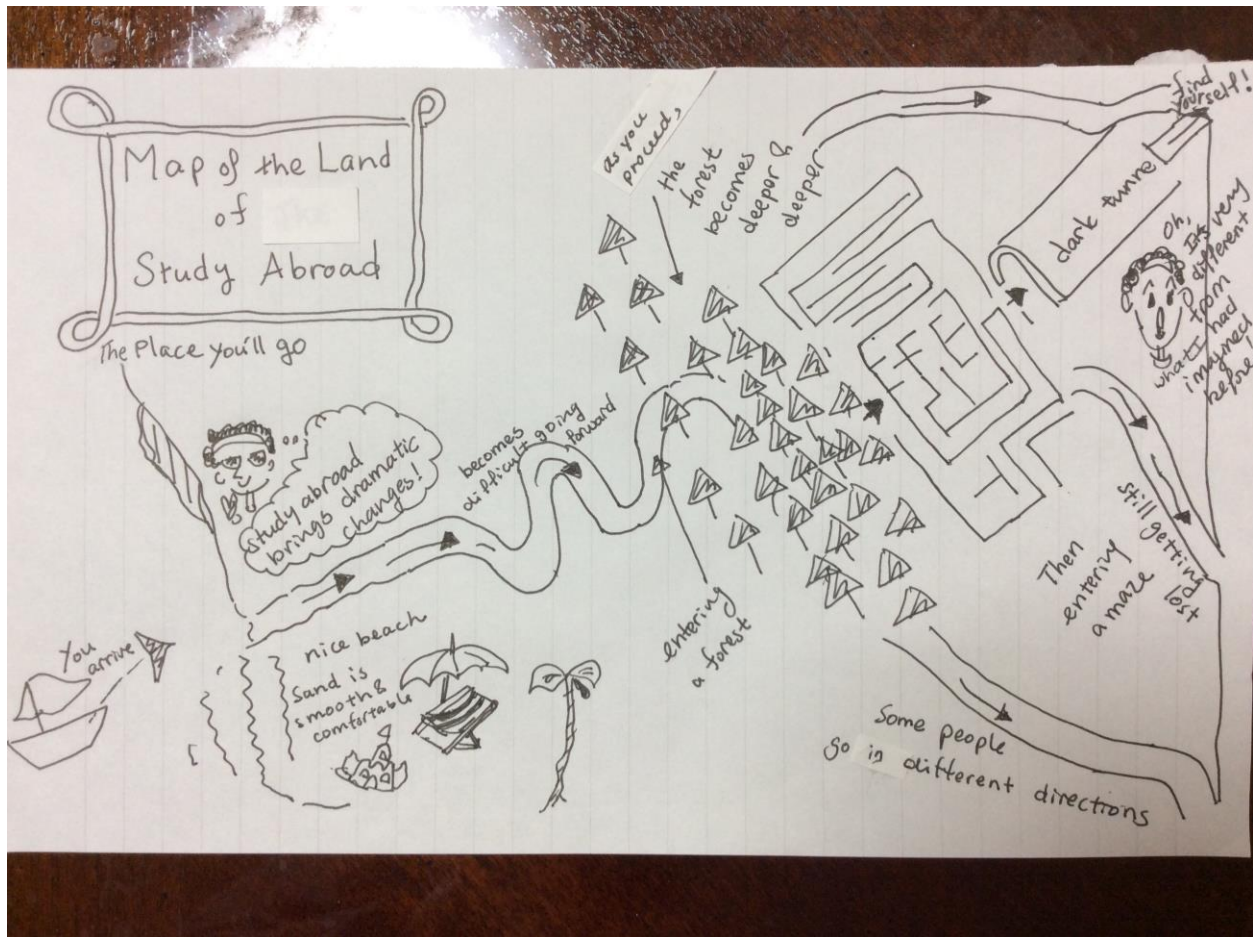
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Figure 13. Map of the Land of Study Abroad

The journey starts when the adventurer arrives at the island. The place she reaches could be a

high cliff that is hit by high waves as a wild wind tears through the grass. Alternatively, it could

be a beautiful beach with soft and warm sand enveloping her feet. Regardless of which side she

lands on, she has a driving ambition to get started. The road seems straight and easy to navigate,

but as she moves forward, she encounters zigzagging paths and steep slopes. Hoping in vain that

these perilous trails will eventually lead back to smooth roads, she instead finds herself into at

the mouth of a forest. The verdant trees inspire awe but make her wonder where she is going.

The forest becomes deeper and deeper. The moisture-laden air brings her discomfort and

difficulties, eventually leading her into a marshland. She muddles through it, but the place she approaches at last is a maze, which induces senses of loss, bewilderment, irritation, and bitter disappointment. After what feels like an eternity of aimless wandering, she loses all hope and resigns herself to the belief that her journey will be a failure. In a fit of desperation, she enters a dark tunnel. Engulfed by absolute darkness, her mind races:

> This is the only way to reach the destination
>
> Stepping into the tunnel and moving forward slowly,
>
> "Am I blind?"
>
> I cannot see anything but I hear bats screeching
>
> "How many are there?"
>
> I finally muddle through the shrill crowd
>
> I rustle a candle in my bag and light it up
>
> Still I have no idea how far I've gone
>
> Then, I kick something, rolling and clanging on the floor
>
> When I put the candlelight close to it—
>
> a skeleton!
>
> It strikes me with terror, and my legs cannot move anymore
>
> but all I can do is keep walking
>
> After a long walk, I faintly see a light in the far distance
>
> But it fades away
>
> "Did I have a dream?"
>
> Where am I going on this endless path?

However, just as she feels that this cruel illusion is the last straw, she sees another, lasting light

at the end of the tunnel and passes through. The destination is an unexpectedly and utterly different from the one she imagined before her adventure. Rather than an idyllic beach or dramatic landscape, her environment is an ordinary clearing unadorned save for a simple dirt path. Yet, her mundane surroundings seem beautiful because of the obstacles she had to overcome in order to arrive. Falling to her knees with an exhausted sigh, the traveler feels a warm sense of contentment swell within her—she now knows that she will be able to cross any path life places in front of her.

Recommendations for Second and Foreign Language Education and Future Research

This concluding section focuses on several suggestions centered on the notion of integrating mentoring sessions or conferences into second and foreign language education programs. Possible training methods and concrete implementation strategies are addressed, and related recommendations for future research on language learning in study abroad contexts are provided.

Establishing a system of routine mentoring sessions or conferences is significant because language learners can be provided with more opportunities to scrutinize their ongoing experiences and contemplate what it means for them to learn a language. Such efforts should be regularly implemented and carefully sequenced from the time that learners express an initial desire to study abroad, extending until the end of their experiences. By completing this process, learners can gain conscious awareness of how enduring challenges abroad brought about transitions in their values, academic priorities, and overarching life goals. In other words, when they reach the end of their sojourns, they might be able to see how their experiences fostered a capability to glean edifying lessons from the hardships and struggles that they went through while outside their home countries.

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The following remarks describe a series of efforts that could be undertaken by instructors or mentors. As the semester or program proceeds, they can invite learners to participate in a process of deep reflection through the elicitation of striking memories. The aim of this approach is to lead learners to the goal of refining or altering their understandings or perceptions of their language learning and study abroad. Through the use of reflective prompts, instructors or mentors should compel learners' undivided attention in order to enhance their reconsideration of how the event in question unfolded and why they felt and reacted in particular ways. Possible prompts that the present study applied are: "Think back to a specific moment that strikes you or interests you. As you recall it, close your eyes and put yourself back in the moment. Please describe the moment in as much detail as you can in order for the audience to envision the scene of the event. To do so, you can ask yourself questions, such as: where are you, or what are your surroundings? Were you alone or with someone? What are you and the other people involved saying and doing? What emotions do you feel as the event unfolds?" (adapted from Hanauer, 2010). Instead of straightforward prompts such as "why did you decide to study abroad" or "what has happened to you recently," this type of detailed prompt can encourage learners to extract sensory and picturesque descriptions in order to review the emotions, thoughts and reactions that they had during the event. By doing so, learners can be guided to contemplate why they felt or react in particular manners and how their emotional sensations or thoughts influenced the meanings they attributed to their experiences abroad or, by extension, their life on the whole.

However, using such prompts to elicit oral descriptions of events alone can result in limited understandings, as discussed in Figure 6 in Chapter V. Therefore, the integration of writing tasks as an additional or alternative approach into mentoring or conference sessions can guide learners to deepen and scrutinize their ideas and feelings toward events or allow for

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potentially unexpected self-discoveries (as some participants in the present study experienced through their poetry writing). As established in Chapter V, narrative or poetry writing helps learners to exact different aspects of their underlying thoughts or emotions. Furthermore, Bolton (1999) argued that writing either reflective narratives or poems is an innately therapeutic process that can result in the development of more profound and personalized perspectives than oral conversation alone: "Writing is a kind and comparatively gentle way of facing whatever is there to be faced. You can trust it to pace itself to your needs and wants rather than to anyone else, such as a therapist. It can be private until you decide to share it" (p. 12). In this sense, when learners reach the point where they are willing to share their texts, instructors or mentors can develop meaningful rapport with them by reading and reflecting on their pieces together, though it should be stressed that mentors must refer students to fully qualified professionals in the event that evidence of serious mental health concerns arises.

Intriguingly, writing as a therapeutic approach is a relatively new and innovative technique even in the psychology field (Wright & Chung, 2001). Therefore, there is a need for further investigation of the potential benefits of using prompt-based reflective writing in combination with personable and compassionate guidance from mentors. Moreover, methods of conducting productive conferences could be discussed more frequently in order to establish effective training programs in teacher education as well.

Lastly, there is one concern that should be addressed. Due to extensive diversity in ways of organizing and administrating second and foreign language education in study abroad contexts, there is a high possibility of difficulty in establishing a universal method of implementing mentoring or conference sessions. The time required to collaboratively design and carry out a conference system could be an excessive burden for instructors in light of their normal teaching

obligations. Therefore, other qualified individuals could be recruited to serve as mentors, including international student support service coordinators, volunteers who have previously studied abroad, and so forth. Regardless of who assumes responsibility for this role, teacher education or mentor training will be needed. By extension, the improvement of teacher education pedagogies is also needed.

Closing Remarks

As I came to the end of the current study, my thoughts turned back to the moments of its inception. Journeying once again to my past ESL and Japanese as a foreign language classrooms, I re-envisioned the students who persisted in their language learning endeavors abroad and those who seemed to abandon their goals by simply retreating to familiar cultural and linguistic identities. Having completed a mixed method, longitudinal inquiry encompassing both qualitative and quantitative approaches on the factors influencing these behaviors and the profound, complex, and conflicted meanings that learners associate with their experiences, I am truly humbled to realize how limited my former understandings were. I hope that the research methods and findings described in this study will aid future efforts to capture ever more nuanced, compassionate, and individualized understandings of language learning during study abroad.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Procedure

Narrative Interview Protocol

- *Interview questions in the first meeting*

  1. How long have you been learning your target language?

  2. Where do you study your target language (school, tutoring sessions, etc.)?

  3. What are the purposes of your study abroad?

  4. What are your goals for language learning?

  5. Please describe your current feelings about your upcoming study abroad.

  6. What do you think you will be like after finishing your study abroad?

- *In regular meetings (multiple times)*

  1. Please tell me about a recent, emotionally significant moment or event related to your study abroad as vividly and visually as possible.

  2. What does language learning mean to you?

  3. What does study abroad mean to you?

  4. What do you think your experiences will be like during the rest of your study abroad?

- *In the last meeting*

  1. (After reviewing the statements participants made during the entire period of study abroad,) What was your most pleasurable/hardest moment during study abroad?

  2. What did you learn from your study abroad experiences?

  3. What does learning language mean to you?

Narrative writing protocol

Introductory remark: You will write a journal entry about your personal experiences learning language while studying abroad.

1. Before you start writing, please close your eyes for a minute in order to think about a recent, emotionally significant moment or event related to your study abroad: for instance, learning Japanese in class or outside the classroom, interacting with local people, homesickness, making friends, adjusting to cultural differences, and so forth.

2. Please start writing a journal entry. In your journal entry, please write your emotional descriptions as vividly as possible, so that the reader can visualize the emotional nature of your experience, whether it is positive (happiness, satisfaction) or negative (frustration, anxiety, isolation).

Note: *[To give more specific instructions, I add the following remarks]* You can write as many pages as it takes to tell a complete, detailed, descriptive story. For this task, at least one single-spaced page for each journal entry would be great. You also can use your first language, your second language, or a combination of both to complete your journal entry. If you decide to use your second language, I will assist you with your writing process as requested.

Poetry writing protocol

If participants are willing to continue to the third task, poetry writing, they will be given the following instructions:

Introductory remark: You will write a poem based on the statements that you made in your journal entry.

1. Please read your journal entry very carefully. While reading it, please underline the words and phrases that seem to be the most powerful from an emotional point of view. You may also write notes beside those words or phrases about what emotions you had at that moment.

2. Now, you will write a poem. Please use the underlined words and phrases from the previous stage as the basis for the poem about the significant event. You can start by thinking about the title of the poem. Or, you can just put those words together randomly as a start. Please play around with those words by adding or removing words. Then, you will try to create a poetic representation of your experience.

3. *[After participants write poems in their first language, I will suggest that they translate their poems into their second language. If they are willing to do so, I will give given them the following instructions.]* Please translate your poem into Japanese/English. You can use a dictionary to look up words. When combining words into sentences, please do your best to use creative expressions and correct Japanese grammar structures, but do not worry about translating your poem perfectly. I will help you to translate it if needed. The purpose of this task is to write poems for fun!

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form for American Students

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to understand second language learning experiences during study abroad. By understanding your experiences (e.g., positive experiences or struggles, frustrations and anxieties), this study seeks to improve second/foreign language teaching methods. This study will require you to submit poems and journal entries about your language learning experiences to the researcher. You will be required to submit these items once every two to three weeks. Writing each poem and journal entry will take approximately 60 minutes of your time. Additionally, you will be required to participate in a face-to-face or online meeting with the researcher approximately once per month. Participation or non-participation will not effect any academic evaluations of your performance during study abroad. During your first meeting with the researcher, you will be asked questions about your personal information (gender, age, and academic year), your learning experiences in your home country, your purposes of study abroad, and your goals for language learning. After the initial meeting, you will begin the process of submitting poems and journal entries and participating in online meetings. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss the content of your poems and journal entries. During the last online meeting, the researcher will ask you to reflect on your overall experiences by comparing your current perspectives with the statements you made during your first meeting with the researcher. These reflections will be the topic of your last journal entry and poem in this study.

With your permission, I would like to audio-record the meetings so that I can have an accurate record of what occurred. Then, I will transcribe the recordings and send you the transcriptions so that you will be able to check whether the translations accurately match your statements. The collected data will be saved in a file and locked in a cabinet. If you do not wish for your meetings to be audio-recorded, I will only take notes during the interview session. Please indicate below whether or not you give permission to audio-record the meetings.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the institution that you belong to. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying me. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence. The information obtained in the study may be published in scientific journals and/or my dissertation manuscript or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and take the extra-unsigned copy with you. If you are unable to have a face-to-face meeting with me because of geographical distance, I will mail you the consent form and a self-addressed stamped envelope. You will return it to me after signing the consent form.

Researcher:	Project Director:
Tomoko Oda Nuske	Dr. David Hanauer
Ph.D Candidate	Professor
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English Department	English Department
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This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

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Appendix C

Informed Consent Form for Japanese Students

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to understand second language learning experiences during study abroad. By understanding your experiences (e.g.,positive experiences or struggles, frustrations and anxieties), this study seeks to improve second/foreign language teaching methods. This study will require you to participate in a face-to-face meeting with the researcher once every two to three weeks. Each interview session will take approximately 60 minutes. Participation or non-participation will not affect any academic evaluations of your performance during study abroad. During your first meeting with the researcher, you will be asked questions about your personal information (gender, age, and academic year), your learning experiences in your home country, your purposes of study abroad, and your goals for language learning. After the initial meeting, you will complete a series of sequential tasks during each meeting. First, you and the researcher will have a brief conversation about your recent experiences with adapting to cultural differences, coursework, language learning and so forth. Then, you will be asked to write a journal entry about a significant experience in terms of language learning. After discussing your entry, you will be asked to write a poem based on what you wrote in their entries. The researcher will assist you with the process of writing poetry if necessary. During the last meeting, the researcher will ask you to reflect on your overall experiences by comparing your current perspectives with the statements you made during your first meeting with the researcher. These reflections will be the topic of your last journal entry and poem in this study.

With your permission, I would like to audio-record the meetings so that I can have an accurate record of what occurred. Then, I will transcribe the recordings and send you the transcriptions so that you will be able to check whether the translations accurately match your statements. The collected data will be saved in a file and locked in a cabinet. If you do not wish for your meetings to be audio-recorded, I will only take notes during the interview session. Please indicate below whether or not you give permission to audio-record the meetings. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in your target language during the interviews, you may use your native language.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the institution that you belong to. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying me. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence. The information obtained in the study may be published in scientific journals and/or my dissertation manuscript or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and take the extra-unsigned copy with you.

Researcher:	Project Director:
Tomoko Oda Nuske	Dr. David Hanauer
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This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form for Japanese Students (translated into Japanese)

　　　　調査ご協力をいただき、ありがとうございます。これは調査についての説明書です。一読を頂いた上で、参加を決めてください。拝読の際、質問がありましたら、調査員にご遠慮なくお尋ねください。

　　　　この調査の目的は、あなたの留学における第二外国語習得の心の経験を理解するものです。留学には楽しい経験もあれば、語学力が伸びないという葛藤があったり、不安になったりすることもあるでしょう。そのような心の経験を理解することにより、将来のより深い語学教育の向上を目指すものです。

　　　　調査の内容は、２、３週間に一回、調査員と約６０分の面談をします。一回目の面会では、学年や年齢、また日本での学習経験、留学の目的、第二外国語の習得の目的などあなた自身のことを知る為の内容の質問があります。２回目からの面談からは、あなたの最近の留学経験（文化の違い、学校生活、語学習得）などを話した後に、語学習得に関して感じていることを書いてもらいます。それから、書いたものを元に詩を作ってもらいます。希望により調査員と一緒に詩を作ることもできます。最後の面談では、あなたの留学経験について最初にお話した内容と照らし合わしながら、全体の留学経験を一緒に振り返ります。なお、調査の参加、不参加については、大学における成績には全く関係がありません。

　　　　面談では、あなたの承諾の上で、内容をテープに録音されます。テープ録音の目的は、あくまでも正確に内容を把握する為のものですので、面談後、内容が正確かどうかを確認してもらうために書き起こし文章が調査員から届きます。テープや書き起こした内容を保存したファイルは鍵のある保管場所に保存されます。面談で録音をされたくなければ、調査員はメモを取りますので、遠慮なく言って下さい。また、面談では、英語と日本語どちらで話して頂いても構いません。

　　　　この調査の参加は、参加者の意思に基づくものであり、決して強制ではありません。もし、止むを得なく、参加を中断しなければならない場合、調査員へお知らせください。中断が学業成績などに影響することは一切ありません。その際、希望により、収集した情報をすべて処分させて頂きます。また、この調査を学会や博士論文などで発表する際は、プライバシーを守るために個人に関わる情報は一切変更し、厳密にさせていただきます。

　　　　この調査に参加決定をして頂けましたら、この書類の最後のページをお願いします。ご参加を心からお礼を申し上げます。

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