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Study Abroad and Immersion

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30.1 Introduction

Intuition tells us that immersion in a host speech community offers second language (L2) learners the best opportunity to enhance their L2 proficiency, intercultural competence, and global-mindedness. While some study abroad (SA) participants experience gains in all of these areas, contemporary researchers are finding that learner outcomes are highly variable. Not only are there significant differences among SA programmes, but a complicated mix of a variety of environmental elements including individual differences can affect the developmental trajectories of students participating in SA programmes. Even when two language learners with similar characteristics (e.g., language proficiency, intercultural competence, international experience) join the same study abroad programme, their development and outcomes may differ greatly. Students develop intercultural competence and L2 competence with idiosyncratic tendencies, which makes this topic valuable for researchers to investigate.

Applied linguists and researchers from related fields (e.g., cross-cultural psychology, international education, sociology, among others) have drawn on various paradigms, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies in an effort to make sense of differences in the developmental patterns and outcomes of study abroad students. In addition to traditional quantitative studies, more and more scholars have been designing mixed-method and interpretive qualitative studies to better understand what actually happens on stays abroad (Jackson, 2012, 2018a; Kinginger, 2009). Detailed case studies of L2 sojourners, for example, are helping to explain the findings of larger-scale, product-oriented studies (e.g., variations in language and intercultural learning outcomes; e.g., Anderson & Lawton, 2011).

In this chapter, we begin by explaining the study abroad terminology used in different parts of the world and describe variations that exist among study abroad programmes. We also discuss various environmental factors that can affect study abroad participants' language and intercultural learning. Drawing on recent research findings, we then identify and explain some of the many individual differences that can result in striking differences in L2 learning in abroad and immersion settings.

30.2 Study Abroad Terminology

Terminology in study abroad varies in different regions of the world. To reduce semantic ambiguity and facilitate comparisons of programmes and research findings, the [Forum on Education Abroad \(2011\)](#) published a glossary for study abroad professionals within and outside the US who work with American students abroad (see <https://forumea.org/resources/glossary/>). They define study abroad as “a subtype of education abroad that results in progress toward an academic degree at a student’s home institution [excluding] the pursuit of a full academic degree at a foreign institution” ([Forum on Education Abroad, 2011](#), p. 12).

The Forum on Education Abroad’s definition of SA is closely aligned with the European term “credit mobility” ([European Commission, 2015](#)). An example of a type of credit mobility is the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) programme, which enables European students to study in another European country for a semester or academic year and transfer credits back to the home institution (European Commission). Europa, the European Commission of Education, Training and Youth (European Commission), and [Coleman \(2009, 2013\)](#) explain the education abroad nomenclature common in European contexts, for example, the term *residence abroad* is widely used in Europe to refer to time spent abroad as a foreign language assistant, on a work placement, or as a student. Even with these first examples, we can see that there are many different terms and types of programmes that characterize the field of study abroad.

30.3 Background and Development of Study Abroad

Study abroad is not new, and to understand contemporary study abroad practices, it is useful to have some familiarity with historical developments. For centuries, students have left their homeland to gain international educational experience. As far back as 500 BCE, ancient centres of learning (e.g., Athens, Alexandria, Rome) were welcoming students from

many parts of the world to study and learn. In Europe, by the eighteenth century, the “European Grand Tour” had become popular, with elite students (e.g., the wealthy offspring of British aristocrats) travelling to Western European countries with the aspiration of acquiring greater cultural and social sophistication (Hoffa, 2007; Medina, 2008). The *wanderjahr* (cf. “the Grand Tour”) also emerged in Europe as an option for students from diverse backgrounds who wished to experience a different linguistic and cultural environment beyond their national boundaries. In this tradition, students took a year or more off from their academic studies to “fend for themselves” with the expectation that their time abroad would help them to become more mature. The *wanderjahr* was the precursor to the “gap year”, a modern-day phenomenon in which students from secondary schools and universities can take some extended time off from their studies with the aim of becoming more independent and mature through explorations in an unfamiliar environment (Hoffa, 2007).

After World War II, the “Junior Year Abroad” scheme became a study abroad option for university-level American students. In this programme, students could study in another country and receive credit towards a degree in their home institution. This programme was especially popular among female undergraduates (e.g., majors in the Arts and Humanities) who wished to enhance their knowledge of another language and culture in the relevant host speech community (Hoffa, 2007). By the 1960s, study abroad had become more accessible for people from various backgrounds and social classes, more diverse (e.g., varied types of programmes), and increasingly focused on disciplinary learning, not just language and cultural enhancement.¹

In recent decades, an unprecedented number of institutions of higher education across the globe have been developing implicit or explicit internationalization policies in light of accelerating globalization (e.g., Hudzik, 2015; Jones et al., 2016). Some of them, for instance, are embedding an international dimension into their teaching and research and creating more opportunities for their students to gain some form of international educational experience, including study abroad (e.g., faculty-led tours, international exchange programmes, summer language immersion, and internships).

In Europe, various internationalization policies are guiding “academic mobility” initiatives at institutional, national, and regional levels. For example, the Erasmus+ programme has been developed to cultivate “European citizenship” and an international outlook in participants (Anquetil, 2006;

¹ For a detailed history of US study abroad from its roots until 1965, see Hoffa (2007), and for an account of developments in academic mobility in Europe, see Coleman (2009), Murphy-Lejeune (2002, 2008), and Welch (2008).

Byram & Dervin, 2008; European Commission, 2015).² This initiative has provided opportunities for around nine million Europeans to study, train, gain experience, and volunteer in another European country.

In other parts of the world, other organizations are promoting study abroad experience, including University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP). Founded in 1993, this association of government and nongovernmental members from the higher education sector in the Pacific Rim countries has sponsored programmes that seek to increase the mobility of university students and educators alike in order to provide opportunities for language and intercultural learning (see <http://umap.org/>).

30.4 The Diversity of Study Abroad Programming

The experiences and learning of study abroad students may differ greatly depending on a wide range of programme characteristics (e.g., aims; amount of preparation and support provided; duration; focus; setting; depth of reflection that is encouraged; amount of contact with locals and other international students; re-entry preparation; debriefings; etc.).

The duration of an international educational experience can vary from a few days or weeks to more than a year. Students may join a micro-sojourn lasting three weeks or less, a short-term sojourn ranging from four to seven weeks, or a semester or year-long international exchange programme (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011; Institute of International Education, 2016; Spencer & Tuma, 2008). At the secondary and tertiary levels, students may opt to enhance their L2 proficiency and intercultural sensitivity by joining a summer language immersion programme (e.g., study Arabic in Cairo or Japanese in Kyoto).

Some students may decide to travel to another country on their own to join a language enhancement programme; others may travel with peers from their home institution and join language classes in the same commercial language centre or other educational institution in the host country. Study abroad participants may study alongside international students from other countries as well as domestic students or they may remain in intact groups, taking specially designed courses (e.g., language enhancement, cultural studies, international business) with co-nationals from their home institution.

Secondary schools and institutions of higher education organize teacher or faculty-led programmes for language learners, with students usually

² We refer the reader to also visit http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en.

remaining together throughout their stay abroad. This option typically consists of short-term or micro-term stays in the host environment, with varying degrees of contact between the leader and students, and, possibly, between the sojourners and a partner institution (e.g., host faculty and/or students). The amount of socio-emotional support and mentoring (guided, critical reflection about language and intercultural experience) provided varies.

Following this model, a secondary school teacher of English in Seoul, Korea, for example, may travel to Melbourne, Australia, with her students for a ten-day intensive English language and cultural enhancement programme. This micro-sojourn may include a homestay (or residence in a dormitory), language lessons with host teachers, cultural site visits, intercultural communication workshops, and informal activities with Australian peers. Later in the year, the Korean delegation may reciprocate by hosting their Australian counterparts in an intercultural exchange programme in Seoul. In another example, a professor of Japanese in Vancouver may accompany a group of students to Kyoto and teach Japanese language, literature, intercultural communication, or cultural studies courses alongside local professors. He may also supervise out-of-class activities (e.g., interview research, service-learning, or ethnographic fieldwork) to encourage active participation in the host culture and promote language and intercultural learning. In some programmes, study abroad students may have formal language enhancement classes in the mornings and be free to practise the host language and explore the host community on their own in afternoons. There may be regular debriefings or no form of guided reflection. As we can see by the previous examples, there are several variations in faculty-led SA programmes.

Internationalization initiatives have also brought about an increase in international exchange programmes for both students and faculty. Often, there is generally reciprocal movement of participants (e.g., faculty, students, staff, or community members) between countries ([Forum on Education Abroad, 2011](#)). In semester- or year-long international exchange programmes, the participants may enroll in language enhancement courses or, if they have an advanced level of proficiency in the host language, may take courses alongside host nationals and transfer credits back to their home institution.

As English has become the de facto language of internationalization, L2 study abroad students who have an advanced level of proficiency in the language no longer need to travel to English-speaking countries to join English language enhancement courses or pursue further academic studies in a target language. Many non-English speaking countries now offer language immersion programmes and English-medium courses (even

offered during the entire degree program), providing exposure to local and global perspectives in a range of disciplines (Altbach, 2016a, 2016b; Knight, 2016). Through interaction with domestic and international students, study abroad students may enhance their language and intercultural communication skills. Some of the participants may also choose to take language enhancement courses in the local language to develop a greater sense of belonging in the host environment and gain more exposure to the local scene. Within these exchange programmes, as in the faculty-led options, the quality and degree of interaction with the host language and culture can vary greatly.

The housing arrangement in study abroad programmes can also have a profound impact on the language and intercultural learning of student sojourners. Accommodation can take many forms (e.g., host family life; independent living in an apartment; residence in a boarding house, youth hostel, or dormitory on campus; and the sharing of an off-campus apartment or house with co-nationals, host nationals, and/or other international students). Students may live close to the host institution and have many chances to participate in communal social activities, whereas others may reside with co-nationals in a less expensive area that is far away from the social scene. Unless the latter are highly motivated, they may miss out on valuable opportunities for language and intercultural learning. Furthermore, other environmental elements that can pose a challenge for student sojourners include an unfamiliar climate, food and diet, pollution (e.g., air, noise, water), congestion (e.g., reduction in personal space), or atmosphere for studying, among others. Transitioning from a rural university setting to an urban campus, or vice versa, can also be unsettling for some, at least initially.

Another factor that can influence the degree of immersion in the host environment is access to and the use of technology to communicate. Advances in communications technology and social media (e.g., the use of e-mail, Skype, Facebook, WeChat) are enabling study abroad students to keep in regular contact with home, if they choose. This can make a stay abroad far different from previous generations (Coleman & Chafer, 2010; Jackson, 2018b).

As this brief review suggests, there are many programme elements that can lead to different outcomes from a study abroad experience. In particular, the quality and amount of pre-sojourn preparation, sojourn support, and re-entry debriefings can vary tremendously, ranging from no support to credit-bearing language and intercultural coursework at all stages. It is, therefore, important to be mindful of programme elements when digesting research that centres on the language and intercultural development of study abroad learners.

30.5 Diverse Environmental Factors in Study Abroad

In addition to the many programme variations described above, we must also consider environmental factors which can result in different experiences and learning of student sojourners. In particular, power-related elements in the host environment can facilitate or hamper language and intercultural learning on stays abroad (Coleman, 2013; Jackson, 2008, 2010, 2018b; Kinginger, 2009, 2013).

Power-related issues (inequality and resistance) and positioning (e.g., status of newcomers) can influence the quality of sojourn learning. When L2 speakers interact with first language (L1) speakers from the host environment, there is a power imbalance. Differing levels of proficiency and variations in the degree of familiarity with sociopragmatic norms in the host environment can result in newcomers feeling disadvantaged and vulnerable, especially if their hosts are impatient and possess limited intercultural communication skills. Hosts who have no international experience and do not speak an additional language may have little understanding of and empathy for study abroad students who are confronting adjustment issues.

With reference to border crossings, Kim (2015a) defines host receptivity as “the degree to which a given host environment is structurally and psychologically accessible and open to a particular group of strangers” (p. 440). The amount of access that newcomers have to local communities of practice can affect their language and intercultural development (Jackson, 2008, 2010, 2018b). When student sojourners are welcomed by host nationals and encouraged to participate in local events (e.g., join social activities, converse with host nationals), they may feel more at home in the new environment; this, in turn, has the potential to enhance their language and intercultural development (Kim, 2015a, 2015b; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). In contrast, student sojourners who feel unwelcomed may have few chances to interact with locals in meaningful ways and have little or no incentive to do so. Low host receptivity can hinder their language and intercultural learning and personal growth (Jackson, 2018b; Kim, 2015b; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Social capital is another environmental factor that may play a role in study abroad and immersion experiences. Many L2 learners view a study abroad experience as an opportunity to “invest” in multiple areas of their lives: personal, economic, social, cultural, and linguistic development (Hellsten, 2002). When an investment is made, a return is often expected. However, unlike other forms of capital that incorporate possession, social capital is focused on relationships that are built among people (Smith, 2011). Bourdieu (1986) argues that the original power of capital is

its capacity to generate value. Individuals and groups are able to obtain and add productive value from the cultural contexts of the networks to which they have access (Clark, 2006). In multilingual communities, the language in which interactions are conducted plays an important role. It seems plausible that individuals who are able to utilize the possibilities of socializing in two or more languages—such as those who participate in SA experiences—may have a unique access to social capital.

According to Field (2003), social capital interprets social networks as a valuable asset in the sense that people interact to build communities and to commit themselves to each other. When connections are maintained and possibly even strengthened over time, people can work together to achieve objectives that otherwise would have been accomplished with great difficulty, if at all. When people make connections and share values with other members of the same network, these networks become capital. Research by Schwieter and Ferreira (2014, 2016) and Schwieter, Ferreira, and Miller (2018), for example, supports the notion that a study abroad experience is a fruitful opportunity for learners to develop social capital and to share similar profiles and learning objectives.

30.6 Individual Differences Among Study Abroad Learners

In addition to the programme elements and other external factors described above, individual differences among student sojourners can result in distinct developmental trajectories and learning outcomes. A number of contemporary scholars from different areas of study (e.g., applied linguistics, cross-cultural psychology) have identified and examined a range of individual characteristics that can influence the language and intercultural learning of students (Benson, 2012; Benson et al., 2013; Dörnyei, 2005; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Jackson, 2018b; Kim, 2015a, 2015b). Their discoveries have resulted in new theoretical insights and understandings that have implications for study abroad scholars.

In the following sections, we review some of the factors that have been found to impact the language and intercultural development of study abroad students. We have organized our discussion around: (1) agency; (2) aspirations and expectations; (3) cognitive and processing effects; and (3) affective and psychological dimensions. We further break down affective and psychological dimensions by looking at language and intercultural attitudes, resilience, motivation, investment, imagined selves and identities, self-confidence, self-efficacy beliefs, willingness to communicate, and anxiety or communication apprehension.

30.6.1 Agency

From an ecological, poststructuralist perspective, study abroad students are viewed as individuals or “social agents” who possess their own aims, desires, concerns, needs, and attributes (e.g., personality traits; [Baxter, 2016](#); [Jackson, 2008](#); [Kirkhart & Kirkhart, 2015](#); [van Lier, 2011](#)). Their openness to other “ways of being” and the actions they take in the host environment can affect the quality of their sojourn experience as well as learning outcomes (e.g., language enhancement, intercultural development, identity expansion).

Some study abroad students constantly seek out opportunities to use the host language. For example, they join extracurricular activities with domestic students and other international students to enhance their language and intercultural communication skills. They actively participate in social activities and make an effort to forge meaningful ties with individuals who have a different cultural background. With a positive frame of mind, these newcomers take advantage of linguistic and cultural affordances in the local speech community (e.g., initiate conversations in the host language) and try to pick up local expressions, while paying attention to local norms of politeness and other pragmatic nuances. By the end of their sojourn, these types of learners may feel very at ease in the host environment and more confident in their L2 skills in both formal and informal settings ([Jackson, 2018b](#); [Kinginger, 2009, 2013](#)).

In contrast, student sojourners who are less motivated and perhaps fearful of cultural difference may avoid intercultural interactions and L2 use. They may limit themselves to formal, academic contexts in the host environment and spend nearly all of their free time with co-nationals, conversing in their L1 about aspects in the host environment that they dislike ([Jackson, 2008, 2018b](#); [Paige & Vande Berg, 2012](#)). When invited to join in activities (e.g., social functions hosted by local students) they decline, preferring the company of co-nationals who provide a safe haven. With limited access to local communities of practice, these newcomers have little exposure to the host language and culture in informal settings, which can curb their language and intercultural development. They may then return to their home institution with heightened ethnocentrism and little or no interest in intercultural interactions or the enhancement of their L2. As the above examples illustrate, agency can bring about differing sojourn outcomes.

30.6.2 Aspirations and Expectations

The aims, expectations, and mindset of students for their stay abroad can also lead to differences in the ways sojourns unfold. A number of study abroad researchers have discovered that students who set specific, realistic

goals for their stay abroad and are positive about their ability to cope in the host environment are better positioned to take advantage of language and intercultural learning affordances in the host environment (Beaven & Spencer-Oatey, 2016; Jackson, 2008, 2010, 2016a, 2018b; Savicki, 2015). Students who have not established clear goals for the sojourn and doubt their ability to cope in a foreign land may experience a higher level of acculturative stress and their negative mindset may hamper their adjustment in the host environment (Kim, 2015a; Savicki, 2015).

In their investigation of the language learning of Chinese study abroad students, Benson et al. (2013) found a clear link between individual expectations (e.g., imagined self-identities) and sojourn experiences. When the research team reviewed the narratives in their data set, they found that “students tend to experience what they expect to experience” (p. 145). In other words, those who imagined themselves possessing “an identity that was not conducive to positive development [were] resistant to the idea that the experience of study abroad would lead to change”, whereas those who “imagined identities that would lead to positive effects [and] saw themselves as willing and enthusiastic participants in study abroad would take advantage of every opportunity to use and develop their English” (p. 145). Similarly, Schwieter and Ferreira’s (2016) study showed that short-term study abroad learners embraced their SA experience by trying to get the most from it—some stating things like “I definitely feel as though I came to do what I wanted: learn Spanish” (Jane) and “I got an in-depth understanding as to what I can do in the future and studying abroad has even clarified my career path” (Ellie; p. 165).

Benson et al.’s (2013) study and those of other study abroad scholars (e.g., Jackson, 2008, 2010, 2017) suggest that positivity has the potential to foster resilience, that is, the ability to press on in the face of adversity and result in a stronger desire to seek out intercultural engagement and language learning opportunities. In contrast, negativity can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy and a poor outcome. While a positive mindset may facilitate study abroad learning, sojourners with unrealistic aspirations (e.g., the attainment of a “native-like” accent after a few weeks in the host country) may become disillusioned when they fail to achieve their goals (Jackson, 2018b; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

30.6.3 Cognitive and Processing Effects

Language learners who study abroad may also experience different outcomes because of cognitive factors such as aptitude. Anderson (2014) posits that cognitive aptitude plays a role in developmental outcomes, specifically oral proficiency gains, of L2 learners abroad, and this, in turn,

can influence their willingness to engage in intercultural interactions in that language. Her study, which included measures of cognitive aptitude (MLAT, WM) and affective aptitude (WTC), put forward four learner profiles which characterize learners in terms of their cognitive and affective aptitude (lower or higher) and word production and fluency (lower or higher) prior to study abroad. Based on combinations of these pre-departure measures, Anderson (2014) argued that study abroad learners can have predictable oral fluency gains. For instance, a learner with high cognitive and affective aptitudes prior to studying abroad “begins the study abroad experience with higher production of words and higher fluency rate. For students who fit this description, higher oral proficiency gains can be predicted during SA due to both higher cognitive and affective aptitudes” (p. 484). Consequently, using these profiles and expected outcomes, scholars who are concerned with the learning trajectories of study abroad participants (e.g., programme directors, teachers, etc.) can identify areas of support and encouragement for language development which might potentially boost self-efficacy and willingness to initiate intercultural interactions.

Other research investigating the role that cognitive factors play in oral proficiency gains during study abroad and immersion experiences shows that language development is significantly related to variation in L2-specific processing speed and efficiency (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004) and L1 phonological working memory (O'Brien et al., 2007). Perhaps one of the first studies to explore cognitive effects on L2 acquisition in study abroad and immersion contexts was Segalowitz & Freed (2004). The researchers administered a battery of oral proficiency measures prior to and at the conclusion of an SA experience to a study abroad learner group and an at-home learner group. The results showed that study abroad learners made more gains in oral proficiency compared to at-home learners and that these gains were related to more efficient and faster L2 cognitive processing skills. The subsequent study by O'Brien et al. (2007) compared the relationship between L2 oral fluency development and L1 phonological working memory among at-home and study abroad learners. The results suggested that both groups improved in oral proficiency but that the study abroad learners did so to a greater degree. Importantly, phonological working memory was significantly related to these gains. These findings are in line with Lord's (2006) study, which also reported preliminary support for the notion that L2 development abroad is facilitated by improved mimicry skills as they relate to heightened abilities in phonological memory.

Lee, Therriault, and Linderholm's (2012) study shows that complex cognitive processes which subserve creative thinking are formulated and developed more so in study abroad experiences compared to at-home

learning contexts. Specifically, the researchers argue that studying abroad “supports cognitive processes involved in developing innovative solutions in response to demands that arise in culturally diverse environments” (pp. 775–776). In addition to these creative thinking abilities being present in culture-specific situations, study abroad learners demonstrated these abilities in domain-free capacities.

Linck, Kroll, and Sunderman (2009) investigated the effects of L2 immersion on the L1. In their comparative analyses of comprehension and production tasks among study abroad and at-home learners, study abroad learners outperformed their at-home counterparts. However, further analyses demonstrated that the study abroad learners, but not the at-home group, demonstrated a loss of access to the L1. The authors explain that immersion experiences can facilitate L2 learning if the L1 is inhibited for an extensive amount of time (see Green’s (1998) Inhibitory Control Model for an explanation of how one language is inhibited to some degree during the production of another language). In other words, the attenuated influence of the L1 on the L2 helped to hasten L2 learning. Linck, Kroll, and Sunderman’s (2009) findings may have some explanatory power for what may happen to a foreign language (i.e., L2) if students are immersed in another foreign language (i.e., L3). In Schwieter’s (2013a) study, L3 study abroad participants rated their L2 abilities significantly lower at the conclusion of a short-term L3 study abroad experience. It is possible that while the reduced influence of the L2 on the L3 may have facilitated L3 learning as in Linck, Kroll, and Sunderman’s (2009) study, such inhibition may have also led learners to believe that their L2 abilities had suffered. Give the problematic nature of relying on self-ratings of proficiency, whether or not this is true is yet to be seen.

In terms of L2 lexical development as a consequence of study abroad, research by Sunderman and Kroll (2009) and Tokowicz, Michael, and Kroll (2004) suggests that working memory resources can play a role.³ Sunderman and Kroll argue that cognitive resources can mediate the learning development attained in a SA experience: for learners who have low working memory capacities, there will be significantly less development of L2 lexical production. However, a subsequent study by Grey et al. (2015) attempted to remedy some methodological limitations in these two studies and asked whether working memory and/or phonological working memory affect L2 grammatical and lexical development during a five-week intensive immersion experience. The results found that working memory did not affect lexical development leading Grey et al. to argue that “the combined effects of the richness of the context derived from

³ Some methodological limitations can be found in these studies. In particular, participants were tested in the L1 environment several months after the study abroad experience. See Grey et al. (2015) for a further discussion.

extensive input and frequency of interaction led to gains in target language grammar and vocabulary that in large part were not constrained by variation in learners' cognitive resources" (p. 153).

Grey et al. (2015) drew attention to the scant work that has been carried out on cognitive factors in L2 learning in study abroad contexts—regardless of the learning domain of interest:

The small number of studies as well as the methodological variability among studies—including the operationalization of SA experience, learner proficiency level, and confounds between measures of cognitive ability administered in the L2 and L2 proficiency—prohibit reliable interpretation of findings. (p. 139)

Their observation underscores the need for further work on the effects of cognitive factors on both language and intercultural development.

30.6.4 Affective and Psychological Dimensions

A number of affective and psychological dimensions play a significant role in the language and intercultural development of study abroad learners. In the next subsections, we review some of these factors.

30.6.4.1 Language and Intercultural Attitudes

The developmental trajectories of study abroad students may be modulated by their language and intercultural attitudes. Language attitudes are the feelings that people have about their own language variety or other language varieties (Garrett, 2010) and may range from favourable to unfavourable. These learned predispositions are influenced by one's linguistic and cultural experiences (e.g., L2 interactions) and socialization within particular cultural, linguistic, and sociopolitical environments. Furthermore, within a specific environment or language situation (e.g., study abroad), individuals may have both positive and negative feelings towards a language or elements of the language (e.g., accents, scripts, local sociopragmatic norms; Baker, 1992; Garrett, 2010).

An individual's language attitudes can influence his or her desire to learn and use the target language, such as in the case of the amount of effort expended to seek out opportunities to practise the host language in social situations (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004; Wanner, 2009). Positive perceptions of the host language and culture can inspire student sojourners to interact with host nationals and use the host language, whereas negative perceptions may curtail their willingness to use their L2 and engage in intercultural interactions (Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2017, 2018b; Schwieter, Ferreira, & Miller, 2018).

With respect to Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, "intercultural attitudes" (*savoir être*) are defined as "curiosity

and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about others cultures and belief about one's own intercultural attitudes" (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, p. 12). These attitudes are viewed as essential for successful language learning. Along similar lines, in Deardorff's (2008) process model of intercultural competence, intercultural attitudes are deemed foundational to the development of intercultural competence.

30.6.4.2 Motivation and Investment

For Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2015), motivation is "the natural human capacity to direct energy in pursuit of a goal" (p. 634). In relation to study abroad, motivation may be described as aspirations, expectations, drives, motives, and/or reasons (Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Kinginger, 2009). Within the context of L2 acquisition, motivation comprises "the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2" (Ellis, 1997, p. 75). This definition may be extended to include an individual's desire to learn another language and enhance his or her degree of intercultural competence.

Psycholinguists maintain that motivation can play an influential role in language and intercultural learning, impacting an individual's degree of investment, persistence, and proficiency attainment (Dörnyei, Alastair, & MacIntyre, 2015; Jackson, 2016a; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2015; Schwieter, 2013b). Investigations of language learners identify several types of motivation, including an instrumental orientation (e.g., the learning of a language to get a high-paying job or to gain admission to an institution of higher education abroad) and an integrative orientation (e.g., the learning of a language to become close to host nationals who speak that language; Gardner, 1985, 2010; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). If study abroad students are largely driven by instrumental aims, they may be less motivated to invest a lot of time and energy in their courses in the host institution if the grades they receive will not count towards their grade-point average in their home institution. Conversely, students who are keen to make the most of their academic experience abroad may continue to work hard and aim to learn as much as possible even if their grades will not be counted. These individuals may take fuller advantage of the opportunities the courses provide for language and intercultural learning (Jackson, 2016b).

Self-determination research has categorized motivation as intrinsic (e.g., the desire to learn a language because it is enjoyable and interesting) or extrinsic (e.g., the learning of another language to benefit from certain rewards such as the fulfillment of a language requirement for admission to postgraduate studies; Gardner, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Ushioda, 2014). Drawing on this theory, personality trait psychology, social cognitive theory, and attribution theory, Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System has illustrated the learner-specific elements (e.g., proficiency

level, personality traits, cognitive ability, emotional state, self-identities) and learning situational factors (e.g., teacher, institutional culture, sociopolitical environment) that can affect an individual's language (and culture) learning motivation and change over time.

Within the context of English as a global lingua franca, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) reframed language learning motivation in terms of "possible/ideal selves". Drawing on psychological theories of the self (Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986), the L2 Motivational Self System encompasses: the "Ideal L2 self"; the "Ought-to L2 self"; and the "L2 learning experience". Dörnyei (2009) defines the former as "the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self", whereas the "Ought-to L2 self" encompasses "the attributes that one believes one ought to possess (i.e., various duties, obligations, or responsibilities) in order to avoid possible negative outcomes" (p. 29). The L2 learning experience refers to "situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience" (p. 29). This framework suggests that language learning motivation is driven by the desire to reduce the discrepancy between one's actual self and ideal possible selves, whether in one's home environment or abroad.

Nowadays, there is more awareness of the dynamic, socially-situated nature of motivation, and recognition that the degree and type of L2 motivation may be self-determined or externally imposed on individuals (Dörnyei, Alastair, & MacIntyre, 2015; Ushioda, 2014). Instead of depicting motivation as a fixed construct, researchers are acknowledging the dynamic, complex nature of this variable. Dörnyei (2009) points out that an individual learner's language learning motivation may be influenced by multiple learner-specific elements (e.g., "Ought-to L2 self", proficiency level, personality traits, cognitive ability, emotional state) and a range of situational factors (e.g., teacher, school culture, sociopolitical environment). Accordingly, the degree and type of motivation may alter over time.

Educators may assume that language learners who join study abroad programmes will be highly motivated to integrate themselves into the host community and, through immersion, gain ample access to local communities of practice and, by the end of the sojourn, experience significant gains in their language proficiency. For a number of individual and environmental reasons, however, learners abroad may gain less exposure to the host language than anticipated and fail to develop meaningful intercultural ties or a more advanced level of L2 proficiency (Coleman, 2013; Jackson, 2017, 2018a).

30.6.4.3 Self-Efficacy and Self-Confidence

Self-efficacy and self-confidence can also impact the quality of the SA experience and lead to differences in learners' developmental trajectories. Bandura (1994) defines the former as "people's beliefs about their

capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 71). For [Graham and Weiner \(1995\)](#), self-efficacy simply refers to “individuals’ beliefs about their capabilities to perform well” (p. 74). Bandura discovered that individuals who possess a high degree of self-efficacy tend to approach problems with a positive mindset and persevere, whereas those who have a low self-efficacy view challenges as threatening and retreat, which then stymies their learning and personal growth.

In relation to L2 learning and use, [Ehrman \(1996\)](#) observes that “enhanced self-efficacy—that is, more expectations of good results—tends to increase motivation. It also increases willingness to take risks” (p. 144). [Mills \(2014\)](#) agrees, noting that confidence in one’s capabilities is a critical ingredient for successful L2 learning. Based on a review of L2 motivation studies, [Mercer and Williams \(2014\)](#) observe that “having a positive sense of self, irrespective of how that is defined, is invaluable for successful learning in terms of reducing anxiety, enhancing motivation, developing persistence and promoting autonomy, self-regulation and an effective, flexible use of strategies” (p. 182). To engage in intercultural interactions in an L2, whether in one’s home environment or abroad, individuals must have sufficient self-confidence and self-efficacy beliefs. A number of study abroad scholars maintain that knowledge of effective language and culture learning strategies and the ability to monitor one’s language use and intercultural communication strategies can help build confidence in L2 learners and bring about more successful outcomes ([Allen, 2013](#); [Mills, 2014](#)).

30.6.4.4 Willingness to Communicate

Research on L2 learning suggests that self-efficacy beliefs are associated with an individual’s degree of investment in language learning as well as his or her willingness to communicate (WTC) in that language. In relation to language learning, [MacIntyre et al. \(1998\)](#) define WTC as an individual’s “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (p. 547). SA participants may have a high level of WTC in the host language ([MacIntyre et al., 1998](#)) but find it difficult to initiate and sustain interactions in their L2. External elements (e.g., host receptivity, amount of access to local communities of practice) can hamper or facilitate an individual’s WTC in the host language (or another L2; [Jackson, 2018b](#)).

In addition to L2 self-efficacy beliefs, a range of other individual differences can influence an individual’s WTC in an additional language, such as the desire to interact or connect with certain individuals (e.g., host nationals), the degree of investment in language proficiency enhancement, level of self-confidence and self-esteem, personality traits, and the degree of anxiety or language/intercultural communication apprehension

(e.g., fear of interacting with people who have a different cultural background; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Sampasivam & Clément, 2014).

30.6.4.5 Language and Intercultural Anxiety

L2 learning in SA and immersion contexts may be affected by learners' degree of anxiety when using the language. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) define language anxiety as "a feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with L2 contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (p. 284). Negative language learning experiences may result in a heightened level of anxiety in intercultural situations and reduce the individual's WTC. Conversely, positive experiences may lower one's anxiety level and enhance an individual's WTC in the L2.

Fearful of cultural differences, language learners with limited intercultural experience may have some anxiety about potential misunderstandings, anticipating a language and/or cultural barrier. Others, who also have limited intercultural experience, may be keen to experience intercultural diversity in real life and feel confident that they will be able to communicate well in their L2. While an elevated WTC and a reduced stress level can foster more L2 use and intercultural learning, "without the decision to act upon those behavioural intentions to communicate, learners may still not use the language, despite their ability and the opportunity to do so" (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 216).

30.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have drawn attention to some of the many external elements (e.g., programme variations, power relations, host receptivity, degree of socio-emotional or intercultural support provided) and individual differences (e.g., motivation, language and intercultural attitudes, cognitive and processing factors, investment, willingness to communicate) that can influence the language and intercultural learning of study abroad students. A complex mix of these factors can lead to very different experiences (e.g., amount of exposure to the host language and culture) and result in differing degrees of language and intercultural learning.

Some SA learners become fully immersed in the host environment, develop meaningful intercultural friendships, and experience significant gains in language and intercultural development, while other participants have little or no exposure to local communities of practice and return home with reinforced stereotypes and little interest in language and intercultural learning. With more awareness about what actually happens on stays abroad, study abroad educators and administrators are increasingly advocating research-driven, theory-based pedagogical interventions to deepen language and intercultural learning at all stages of the study

abroad cycle: pre-sojourn, sojourn, and post-sojourn (Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Paige & Vande Berg, 2012).

The complexity and individual nature of study abroad pose challenges for programme providers, including language educators who seek to enhance the language and intercultural learning and engagement of student sojourners. To address these issues and optimize international educational experience, a growing number of study abroad educators in various parts of the world are devising innovative pedagogical interventions (see Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Plews & Misfeldt, 2018; Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012).

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