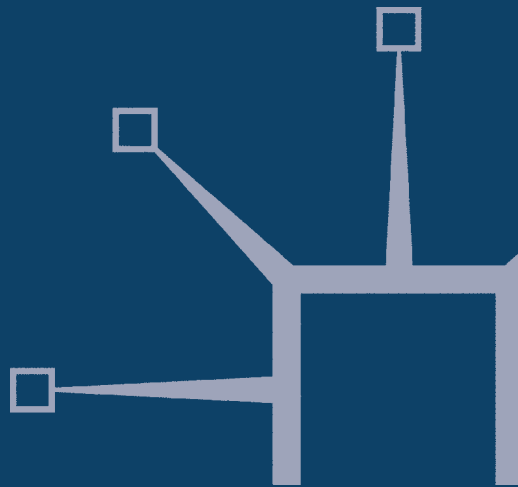# Second Language Identity in Narratives of Study Abroad

Phil Benson, Peter Bodycott and Jill Brown

Second Language Identity in Narratives of Study Abroad

Also by Phil Benson

NARRATIVE INQUIRY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING RESEARCH (*co-author*)

THE APPLIED LINGUISTIC INDIVIDUAL: Social Approaches to Identity, Agency and Autonomy (*co-editor*)

BEYOND THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM (*co-editor*)

TEACHING AND RESEARCHING AUTONOMY

LEARNER AUTONOMY 8. Teacher and Learner Perspectives (*editor*)

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ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY

AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING (*co-editor*)

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL IMMERSION: Perspectives on Short-Term Study and Residence Abroad (*co-editor*)

Also by Jill Brown

VOICES FROM THE MARGINS: School Experiences of Indigenous, Refugee and Migrant Children (*co-editor*)

Second Language Identity in Narratives of Study Abroad

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Acknowledgements

1
Introduction: Narrative, Second Language Identity and Study Abroad

The title of this book includes three terms that have opened up new and exciting areas in second language learning research: *narrative, second language identity*, and *study abroad*. In this introduction, we explain how these three concepts come together in the book. Second language identity and study abroad are discussed briefly here and in more detail in Chapters 2–3. In this chapter, we also outline the range of study abroad programmes available to Hong Kong students. Our discussion of narrative is situated first within the idea of second language identity and, later, in the context of the design of the *Second language identities and study abroad* research project on which this book is based. The chapter concludes with a brief outline of the structure and content of the book.

Second language identity and study abroad

Second language identity and study abroad are relatively new areas of interest in second language learning research. Second language identity, the main focus of this book, is an especially important area in which researchers have begun to reconceptualize the processes and outcomes of second language learning. Research on second language identity explores the ways in which learning a new language changes the learner as a person. This is in contrast to approaches that emphasize the acquisition and accumulation of language knowledge and skills. A person who knows something of a second language is a different person to the one who previously knew nothing of it. Knowing a second language influences both the learner's sense of self and the possibilities for self-representation through language use. From this perspective, the acquisition of language knowledge and skills remain important, but it

is viewed not as the end point of second language learning, but as the starting point for the identity developments that second language learning entails.

There is still a good deal of debate on what exactly 'identity' and 'second language identity' mean. In this book, we begin from a social view of identity as a dialectical relationship between the 'inner' and 'outer' aspects of the self, involving our own sense of who we are, the ways in which we represent ourselves, and how we are represented and positioned by others. Our working definition of second language identity incorporates this view of identity and covers any aspect of it that is related to the knowledge and use of a second language. This implies that second language identity is a complex, multidimensional construct and that what we see of a person's identities varies according to the context. We have multiple identities, and knowledge of a second language adds to the possibilities for being, or being seen as, a different person in different contexts. Nevertheless, we believe that people strive for coherence in the development of their identities. The development of second language identity is, therefore, largely a matter of incorporating experiences of second language learning and use into an ongoing sense of who we are. Second language learning is often a long-term process. Therefore, we are mainly interested in the ways in which second language identities develop over time and in response to new contexts of language learning and use. The main aims of this book are, first, to identify and model the different dimensions of second language identity (Chapter 3) and, second, to examine developments along these dimensions that can be observed in study abroad (Chapters 4–8).

Interest in study abroad is growing rapidly and, seemingly, in proportion to the growth of opportunities for overseas travel. In a recent overview, Kinginger (2009) describes how approaches to study abroad research have evolved from quantitative comparisons of the language learning gains of study abroad and 'at home' students to qualitative investigations of language learning and use in study abroad settings. In recent work, an interest in issues of identity has emerged alongside the shift in focus from study abroad participants 'in the mass' to the situated experiences of individual students in particular contexts of study abroad. For the most part this work has looked at how factors of social identity, notably gender, influence language learning process and outcomes. Our research builds on this work, but shifts the emphasis to the influence of study abroad experiences on students' identities. Our research began from the observation that a period of study abroad often transforms students' views of themselves as learners and users of

a second language. Many of the Hong Kong students whom we have worked with, for example, return from a semester at an overseas university with the feeling that they are no longer 'learners' of English. They feel that they have become 'users' of English, who can best improve their competence not by studying, but simply by continuing to use the language in their everyday lives. From our perspective, this represents a significant development in their second language identities: a shift from one way of being a person who knows a second language to another. The long-term influence of such identity developments may also be much greater than any increase in the students' language knowledge and skills if it leads to new ways of learning and using the second language.

Comparative studies of language gains treat study abroad as a context for second language acquisition and are mainly concerned with the extent to which this context facilitates acquisition. Our research also treats study abroad as a context for second language learning and use, but it is more concerned with the *change* in context that study abroad implies. From this perspective, the influence of study abroad has a historical aspect and can only be fully understood in the context of a student's longer-term experiences of language learning. For students who study abroad after many years of learning a second language in the classroom in their home country, the question of which context best facilitates acquisition is of less interest than the potential impact of studying in a *new* and very different context to the one they are accustomed to. We are, in other words, interested in study abroad as a potentially 'critical' experience that opens up second language identities to change.

Like second language identity, study abroad is a difficult term to define. Our working definition covers any period spent overseas, for which study is part of the purpose. As study abroad does not necessarily involve the use of a second language (as, for example, when English-speaking students from the United States study abroad in the United Kingdom), we are more narrowly interested in study abroad where the main purpose is either the study *of* a second language or study *through* the medium of a second language. The idea that study need only be a part of the purpose of study abroad, however, highlights other possible purposes, including the personal, intercultural and academic developments that are emphasized in programmes that do not involve a second language. For second language study abroad programmes, we therefore posit a continuum of outcomes ranging from improvements in language competence to personal development. This continuum is the basis of the model of second language identity development that we propose in Chapter 3. In Chapters 4–6, we endeavour to show that a

good part of this continuum is occupied by developments that involve second language identity development.

Research on study abroad tends to be shaped by the kinds of programme that are most typical of the region where the research is located. Much of the research to date has been conducted in North America and Europe and involves English-speaking students of foreign languages from these parts of the world. This study redresses the balance by focusing on Hong Kong students, for whom study abroad is most often a matter of studying or studying through the medium of English, which is not simply a foreign language but also a local and international language which is vital to progress in their academic and professional careers. There is a growing range of study abroad opportunities for Hong Kong students of all ages, including organized programmes that last from one or two weeks to individually arranged programmes lasting several years. Longer periods of study abroad are usually undertaken in order to obtain academic or professional qualifications, but there are now also many shorter programmes organized by commercial providers and education institutions.

The inclusion of case study narratives that represent the variety of study abroad opportunities for Hong Kong students is a unique feature of this book, which allows us to investigate both the influence of study abroad on second language identities and the ways in which it varies according to programme type and individual differences. Relationships between programme type and second language identity development are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, while Chapter 8 examines how individual differences may lead to very different outcomes for students who participate in the same programme.

Study abroad in Hong Kong

It is often observed that the knowledge base on study abroad is limited by the range of programme types that appear in published research. In her comprehensive review of literature on language learning and study, Kinginger (2009: 9) points to the preponderance of North American studies and to the exclusion of students for whom 'cross-border education is driven less by a mutual understanding approach than by economic striving or by a dearth of opportunity for higher education at home'. For students from the Asia-Pacific region, Kinginger argues, 'the main modality of cross-border education is the acquisition of a full degree on a fee-paying basis'. While this book aims to expand the range of contexts in which experiences of language learning in study abroad

have been investigated into this area, we believe that Kinginger's view of study abroad in the Asia-Pacific region needs to be approached with a degree of caution.

Research on study abroad and language learning has, in fact, focused on three main contexts. The North American studies that Kinginger (2009) refers to are mainly programmes of one semester or less, designed for university students who travel overseas either in groups or individually. Programmes studied in the language learning literature are mainly for foreign language students or students who take a second language study abroad programme as part of a non-language degree. Although much of this research focuses on language outcomes, cultural goals may also be important, as university-level foreign language education is often driven more by goals of cultural understanding than it is by any pressing need for the students to know the languages they learn. As Kolb (2009: 49) puts it, the promotion of study abroad in the United States is largely a matter of 'countering tendencies towards U.S. isolationism and an attitude that foreigners "can do everything *our* way and in *our* language"'.

The second context appears mainly in European literature that discusses various kinds of university exchange programmes that have been developed in the context of policies to promote educational mobility, multilingualism and European integration. European research on study abroad originates in studies of one-year 'residence abroad' programmes for modern language students from the United Kingdom (Alred and Byram, 2002, 2006; Coleman, 1997, 2005) and has evolved into studies of a variety of cross-European exchange arrangements (Coleman, 1998; King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). The goals of these programmes are often similar to those of North American programmes, although the literature conveys a sense that the purpose of European study abroad is often the acquisition of advanced linguistic and intercultural skills that are highly valued in the new integrated Europe. In contrast to the North American literature, there is also more emphasis on intercultural outcomes, which are often seen as being interwoven with linguistic and intercultural outcomes.

The third context mainly involves speakers of English as a second language who travel overseas either to study English or to obtain academic qualifications through the medium of English. Research in this area is perhaps most characteristic of the Asia-Pacific region, as Kinginger (2009) suggests, although this type of study abroad is characteristic of many parts of the world in which English is used as a second language, including Europe. There have been a number of studies of English

language study abroad for Hong Kong students (Barkhuizen and Feryok, 2006; Benson, 2012; Bodycott and Crew, 2001; Chik and Benson, 2008; Crew and Bodycott, 2002; Jackson, 2008, 2010; Lee, 2009; Tang and Choi, 2004). These studies tend to show that, while study abroad to gain academic qualifications is part of the picture (Chik and Benson, 2008), most Hong Kong-based research deals with programmes that are similar to those in the North American and European literature in most respects other than the target language. We would argue, therefore, that the imbalance in research on study abroad is not only geographical; it is also a matter of focus, which has mainly fallen on university-based programmes in various parts of the world. There is a corresponding lack of research on shorter programmes for younger learners and on study abroad programmes that are organized by individual students themselves, whether at university or school level.

A wide range of study abroad programmes is available to Hong Kong students. A recent household survey report showed that 75,000 Hong Kong students below the age of 25 were attending courses of one year or longer overseas in 2009–10, with the vast majority studying in English-speaking countries. Of these students, 68 per cent were studying at post-secondary level and 30.4 per cent at secondary level. Improving English proficiency was the most frequently cited reason for studying abroad by family members (40.5 per cent), followed by becoming more independent (35.6 per cent) (Census and Statistics Department, 2011). These results were similar to those reported in an earlier survey (Census and Statistics Department, 2002) which suggests that numbers for long-term overseas education have remained stable over the last 10 years, probably due to its cost relative to local incomes. A separate survey showed that 68,000 Hong Kong students travelled overseas in 2002; 11,900 travelled on educational tours, including 3,800 on tours arranged by schools (Census and Statistics Department, 2003).

There are now a number of overseas study 'agencies' operating in Hong Kong which help to place students in school and university programmes overseas and also offer overseas language courses and study tours. One of these organizations claims to represent more than 2,000 overseas institutions and to place more than 1,500 students every year. Most local universities now encourage their students to participate in credit-bearing exchange semesters in overseas universities and offer various kinds of non-credit-bearing overseas experience programmes. The American Field Service places more than 100 secondary school students in one-year overseas exchanges annually. Many secondary schools and some primary schools offer short-term exchanges with partner

schools, or encourage their students to participate in overseas study tours. Many of the shorter programmes have more focus on cultural activities than language learning. Recently advertised short programmes included a 'Hong Kong Certificate of Education oral examination study tour' in London and Cambridge, an 'English language and culture tour' in Oxford, a 'university English camp' in Toronto, a 'European culture and English learning tour' in Malta, a 'Boston hip-hop dance camp', and a 'Manchester United soccer flying to your dream tour'. In view of these observations, Hong Kong appears to be an ideal site for research on study abroad, and in the study on which this book is based we examine narratives of students involved in a wide range of different study abroad programmes.

Narrative inquiry

The idea of narrative is central to this book as it informs both the methodology of the research on which it is based and the way in which we report its findings. We describe the study as a narrative inquiry study because it uses students' narratives of study abroad experiences as data and also because the writing of case study narratives was a crucial stage in the data analysis. The importance of narrative in the research process is also reflected in our decision to begin each of Chapters 4–8 with two complete case study narratives.

Bruner (1986: 11) writes of two basic modes of thought, each providing a distinctive way of ordering experience: 'a good story and a well-formed argument'. Each mode convinces in its own way. Arguments appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical proof, while stories convince the reader or listener of their 'lifelikeness' by appealing to criteria of verisimilitude. Bruner calls these two modes of thought 'paradigmatic' and 'narrative'. The narrative mode is older and more deeply rooted in everyday thinking. The paradigmatic mode is more recent and is closely associated with the development of European rationality and intellectuality. Academic research typically leans towards paradigmatic thinking, but there are also traditions in the psychological and social sciences in which narrative appears both as an object of research and as a way of presenting research findings. Freud's psychoanalytical studies and the early work of the Chicago School of Sociology are notable instances of early 20th century narrative research. More recently, there has been a considerable growth of interest in narrative inquiry in a variety of academic disciplines (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008; Webster and Mertova, 2007),

including second language teaching and learning research (Barkhuizen, 2011; Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik, 2013; Benson and Nunan, 2005; Johnson and Golombek, 2002; Kalaja, Menezes and Barcelos, 2007; Nunan and Choi, 2010).

This turn to narrative methods reflects a view that paradigmatic methods often lead to conclusions that are divorced from lived reality and conveyed through forms of argument that fail to convince because they lack the quality of 'lifelikeness' that we expect of a good story. Narrative methods are especially valuable when we want to capture the nature and meaning of experiences that are difficult to observe directly and are best understood from the perspectives of those who experience them. Narratives played an important role in the study on which this book is based because experiences of second language identity development in study abroad cannot be observed directly. Our decision to rely upon students' narratives of their experiences, rather than observational methods, was, therefore, also a decision to focus on the meaning of these experiences for the students themselves.

Identity is a prominent theme in narrative research because of the links that have been made between 'self-making' narratives (Bruner, 2001) and the development of personal identities. The stories we tell about our lives, both to ourselves and to others, define who we are and they are largely constructed out of interpreted experience. The importance of narrative to identity was recently highlighted in S.J. Watson's best-selling novel *Before I Go to Sleep* (Watson, 2011). Its narrator and central character Christine suffers from a rare form of amnesia which causes her to wake each morning with no memory of her adult life. She retains memories as long as she is awake, but they are erased whenever she sleeps. As Christine loses her memories, she also loses her sense of identity. Waking each day without a life story to tell her who she is, she reconstructs her identity daily in response to other people's accounts of her life. By recording the fragments of her life in a journal, however, she begins to build a lasting and coherent sense of self and agency. Christine is a fictional character, but her fictional predicament highlights the sense in which the stories we tell about our lives are crucial to our sense of who we are.

If narrative plays an important role in the construction of personal identities, its role may be even more important in the construction of second language identities. One school of thought holds that any engagement with a second language has an impact on identity, while another holds that this is only true of the deeper levels of engagement that occur; for example, as a consequence of migration. More generally,

we might say that deep engagement in second language learning and use entails a certain 'destabilization' of established language identities which is likely to provoke narrative identity work. In our research, we have found that people very often have quite detailed and complex stories to tell about how they have learned a second language. The significance of these stories appears to lie in the coherence and sense of direction they lend to what might otherwise be myriad unconnected events. Learners' stories also often weave the experience of learning a second language into the tellers' personal lives and identities. Through narrative research, we have also learned to question the assumption that anyone who happens to find themselves in a language class is automatically a 'language learner'. People who have stories to tell about how they have learned a second language, however, are second language learners and users in a subjective sense, and their stories define the particular and individual senses in which they subscribe to language 'learner' and 'user' identities. They also help define their broader identities as people who know more than one language in contrast to those (including their previous selves) who know only one.

At its fullest extent, the story of how a person has learned a second language is the story of their 'language learning career' (Benson, 2011), which is invariably a complex composite of smaller stories that focus on particular phases, processes and events. A period of study abroad, for example, is often seen as a phase or event (depending on its duration) within a much longer process of learning a second language. From a narrative perspective, however, the significance of a period of study abroad often lies in its difference from the period of study at home that has led up to it. In most cases, it signifies not only a new setting and new social relations, but also different ways of learning and using language, which give cause for reflection and narrative identity work. In this sense, a period of study abroad often represents a 'critical experience' within the story of a language learning career, or a story within a story that signals a change in self-understanding. If self-narratives play an important role in the construction of second language identities, narratives of critical experiences can also be seen as key points in their development.

The second language identities and study abroad project

This book is based on a three-year research project that investigated the development of Hong Kong students' second language identities through individual case studies of their study abroad experiences.

The project produced 48 individual case study narratives, of which 10 are included in this book. The participants in the study fell into six main categories:

1. Secondary school students participating in two 10-day overseas exchange programmes organized by their school
2. First-year university undergraduates participating in a six-week overseas study tour
3. Second-year university English teacher education majors participating in a credit-bearing overseas 'immersion semester'
4. University students who independently organized exchange semesters in overseas universities
5. Students who were studying for undergraduate degrees overseas
6. Students who were studying for postgraduate degrees overseas

Reflecting the value of English in Hong Kong, all the participants were studying abroad in order to improve their English or to study through the medium of English, although this was often not their only reason for studying abroad. Their destinations included Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, as well as Germany, Norway and Korea.

Narrative plays a double role in the case studies. First, the aim of the data collection was to elicit narratives of each student's experiences through interviews and written accounts. Second, in the first phase of the data analysis, these narratives were written up more formally by the researchers, who then verified their versions of the participants' stories with the participants. These 1,500–2,000-word narratives then became data for the second phase of analysis, in which themes related to second language identity were identified and a model of second language identity constructed. In a third phase of analysis, comparisons were made among the narratives, in order to draw conclusions about the impact of different kinds of programmes and individual differences.

Data collection

Allowing for some variation according to the length of period abroad and the availability of participants, the procedures for data collection for each participant were as follows.

1. An interview with the project research assistant before they departed. The interview lasted around one hour and covered the participant's language learning history and expectations for study abroad.

All interviews were conducted by bilingual research assistants in the language of the interviewee's choice, which was in most cases Cantonese or a mixture of English and Cantonese.

2. Correspondence with the project research assistant while overseas, via a regular summary of experiences and feelings (the regularity depending partly on the length of stay). The participants decided individually on the form of this correspondence. In the early part of the project, most used blogs or email, while MSN and Facebook were more often used in the later part. Most participants chose to use English for this, and many included photographs in the correspondence.

3. An interview with the project research assistant shortly after returning to Hong Kong. The interview was conducted under the same circumstances as the pre-departure interview and covered the participant's experiences during study abroad. Where relevant, transcripts of the pre-departure interview and the on-site correspondence were referred to in order to stimulate the participant's recollections.

With a few exceptions, the amount of data collected tended to be in proportion to the participant's age and the length of stay abroad. Interviews tended to be longer if the participant was older and the stay abroad longer. The amount of on-site data varied considerably, with some participants writing almost daily and accompanying their text with photographs, while others wrote very little. This also depended partly on whether the participants were sharing messages with the research team that were mainly intended for friends and family, or whether they were for the research team alone. The secondary students who participated in 10-day study exchanges wrote written reflections on return from their study tour.

Data analysis

In order to clarify how the three phases of data analysis are represented in this book, it may be helpful to refer to Polkinghorne's (1995) distinction between two approaches to narrative inquiry, namely 'narrative analysis' and 'analysis of narratives'. According to this distinction, 'narrative analysis' refers to research in which storytelling is used as a means of analysing data and presenting findings. 'Analysis of narratives' refers to research in which stories are used as data and the analysis itself does not necessarily involve storytelling. The first phase of our data analysis, therefore, involved 'narrative analysis'; we took data that had a rudimentary narrative structure and turned them into formal written narratives. Narrative writing (Ely, 2007; Richardson, 1994) is understood,

here, as both a method of data analysis and a method of communicating findings to readers. For this reason, we begin each of the data-based chapters with two case study narratives.

The second phase of data analysis took the form of 'analysis of narratives', which essentially consisted of the application of more conventional qualitative data analysis techniques to the case study narratives. This phase is represented in the commentaries that follow the case study narratives in Chapters 4–6. The aim of these commentaries is to highlight and discuss evidence for developments along three dimensions of second language identity: sociopragmatic competence, linguistic self-concept and second language-mediated personal competence. The narratives that begin each chapter are selected because they exemplify the developments on the particular dimension of second language identity in focus, and the commentary focuses on these narratives. The evidence they provide, however, is also manifest in different ways in other case study narratives, which we refer to from time to time.

The third phase of data analysis also involved 'analysis of narratives', or what Josselson (2007: 13) calls the analysis of multiple narratives to identify 'repeated patterns that remain situated rather than generalized'. Here, we looked more closely at what the narratives have in common and at the differences among them in order to understand some of the factors that lead to different second language identity outcomes for different students. This phase is represented in Chapters 7–8, which explore these commonalities and differences in terms of programme type and individuality of study abroad experiences. Again, each chapter focuses on two narratives, which exemplify the issues in focus rather than attempt to account for them in a comprehensive manner.

Structure of the book

This remainder of this book is divided into three main parts.

Part I traces the development of our ideas on second language identity (Chapter 2) and the potential influence of study abroad on its development (Chapter 3) through a review of previously published research. Chapter 3 concludes with an outline of the model of second language identity development that has grown out of our reading and research and informs the presentation of research findings in later chapters.

Part II identifies and discusses evidence in our data for developments along three dimensions of second language identity. Research on study abroad points to three main outcomes: students may improve their second language competence, they may change their attitudes and approaches to

language learning, and they may develop intercultural and personal competences. The main argument of this book is that these should not be considered separate outcomes. Rather they should be considered as dimensions of the broader construct of second language identity development. In Chapter 4, we argue that the most important linguistic outcomes in study abroad lie in the development of sociopragmatic competence, which helps students to present themselves as a fully functioning person in their second language. Chapter 5 focuses on developments in linguistic self-concept, or the ways in which students see themselves as language learners or users. Chapter 6 focuses on personal development and explores the degree to which developments in personal independence, intercultural competence and academic competence are related to second language identity when they are mediated by second language use. As we noted above, each of these chapters focuses on two case study narratives, which are preceded by questions to guide readers to their own analyses and followed by our own commentary.

Part III looks at second language identity development from the perspectives of programme type and individual difference. Chapter 7 begins with narratives from two very different study abroad programmes: a semester exchange programme in Australia for a university undergraduate English major, and a 10-day exchange in the United States for a secondary school student. The fact that both programmes led to positive second language identity outcomes points to the importance of individual preparation and engagement in the outcomes of study abroad. In Chapter 8, the role of individual factors is explored further through a comparison of the narratives of two university English teacher education majors who participated in the same semester immersion programme, but reported very different second language identity outcomes. Chapter 9, the concluding chapter in this part of the book, draws on insights from the previous chapters in order to offer advice on how institutionally organized study abroad programmes might be oriented towards achieving positive second language identity outcomes.

Part I
Second Language Identity and Study Abroad

2
Second Language Identity

In this chapter we look at what research has to say about second language identity, the central theme of this book. According to our working definition, second language identity refers to any aspect of a person's identity that is related to their knowledge and use of a second language. We begin, therefore, with a discussion of the wider construct of identity and its links to narrative and second language learning. We then look more closely at the concept of second language identity itself and conclude with a brief discussion of the role of 'critical experiences', such as study abroad, in the development of second language identities.

Identity

The idea of identity is now so ubiquitous in social and psychological research that it is difficult to write about second language identity without preceding what we have to say with a lengthy literature review on the topic of identity itself. We will, therefore, focus on three important questions underlying our research:

- What do researchers mean by 'identity'?
- What does narrative have to do with identity?
- What does second language learning have to do with identity?

We will argue that: identity is an historically evolving, multifaceted concept with particular relevance to ways of thinking about the 'self' and its relations to a changing world; narratives of the self play an important role in the development of individual identities; second language learning is crucial to the identities of the growing numbers of people around the world for whom multilingualism is a fact of life.

A poststructuralist view of identity

Identity is now a keyword in a variety of academic disciplines, where it is defined in many different ways. The difficulty of pinning the concept of identity down is partly a matter of distinguishing it from related concepts involving the self, subjectivity, and social roles. Views of identity also vary according to broad theoretical stances that cut across disciplines and terminologies. Our stance is broadly 'poststructuralist'. We view identities as socially conditioned and constrained, but also recognize the part that individuals play in their construction. Identities are ultimately both social and individual. Identities also develop over time in a variety of contexts and are, consequently, dynamic, multiple and complex.

Within this framework, we favour an inclusive view of identity. There is some debate, for example, over whether identity properly refers to how people see themselves, how they represent themselves to others, how they are seen and represented by others, or how they are positioned by social forces beyond their control. In our view, these debates often centre on false dichotomies, because the word 'identity' legitimately refers to several facets of our relations to our selves and the world, involving both the 'inner' and 'outer' self, the self and others, and the individual and the social. Later in this chapter, we will outline a model of six interrelated *facets of identity* that we incorporate into our view of second language identity. First, we will outline what we mean by a poststructuralist view of identity in a little more detail.

The concept of identity has a history of little more than 50 years. Attributes of class, gender and occupation, which previously assigned individuals to relatively fixed positions in the social world, are now treated as more flexible categories of identity and new identity categories have proliferated. In his historical treatment of the concept, Hall (1996: 596) foregrounds the idea that new ways of thinking about identity have emerged from a decline of the 'old identities which stabilized the social world', which is 'fragmenting the modern individual as a unified subject'. Identity has become an issue across the disciplines, because it is in crisis in what Hall calls the 'postmodern world'. In 17th and 18th-century European thought, the person was seen as 'a fully centred, unified individual', whose 'inner core' of identity emerges at birth and unfolds as the person grows into adulthood. In the later 'sociological' period of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the inner core of the subject remained, but was 'formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds "outside" and the identities which they offer'. In the 'postmodern' period, we find ourselves in an era in which 'the process of identification, through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities, has become more

open-ended, variable, and problematic' (p. 597). In social worlds that are now described by terms such as 'discontinuity', 'rupture' and 'dislocation', socialization becomes a problematic concept as identities are 'formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us' (p. 598).

The poststructuralist view of identity, which corresponds to Hall's view of identity in the postmodern world, informs our research in two main ways. First, if identities are neither immanent nor entirely socially determined, identity becomes a task that individuals must work upon. Second language learning thus becomes a kind of 'identity work', through which the learner becomes a different kind of person to the one who previously had no knowledge of the second language. The poststructuralist perspective, thus, opens up the lived experience of learning a second language – over weeks, months, years – as a field of inquiry for research on identity development. It also allows us to see how particular segments of this experience, such as a period of study abroad, may have particular significance for identity development. Second, this conception of identity allows us to turn around the direction of inquiry in research on identity and study abroad, and to investigate the impact of experiences of study abroad on identity development, as well as the impact of already formed identities on experiences in study abroad.

Facets of identity

Working from a poststructuralist perspective, we adopt a multifaceted conception of identity which acknowledges six different ways of using the term (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1   Facets of identity

Facet 1	Embodied identity	The self as a mobile point of perception located in a particular body
Facet 2	Reflexive identity	The self's view of the self, incorporating self-concept and attributes and capacities
Facet 3	Projected identity	The self as it is semiotically represented to others in interaction
Facet 4	Recognized identity	The self as it is preconceived and recognized by others in the course of interaction
Facet 5	Imagined identity	The self's view of its future possibilities
Facet 6	Identity categories and resources	The self as it is represented (by self or others) using established social categories and semiotic resources

In Table 2.1, Facets 1, 2 and 3 correspond to three conceptions of the self (labelled Self 1, 2 and 3) outlined by Harré (2001). Harré's Self 1 is the self conceived as a 'point of perception' and corresponds to what we call 'embodied identity' (Facet 1). It is the self that we locate somewhere inside our body, without knowing exactly what or where it is. The idea of embodied identity recognizes that the self is attached to a particular body and that it is through this attachment that we recognize people as individuals who inhabit a particular body. Beyond this identifying function, it tells us little about who a person 'is'. For Harré, Self 1 is singular and invariant, because it is no more than a point of perspective. But it is also mobile, because it is 'always related to where the body is in space and strictly contemporary' (p. 61). Second language learning, therefore, has no direct impact on the embodiment of identity, but the relocation of the embodied self as a consequence of second language learning may lead to new experiences of place, people, and patterns of language and cultural practice. Second language learning opens up opportunities for the mobility of the embodied self, among which study abroad is one.

In contrast to Self 1, Harré's (2001) Self 2 and Self 3 are multiple and variable. Self 2 represents the self's view of the self and corresponds to what we call 'reflexive identity' (Facet 2). It includes the 'self-concept' (who we think we are) as well as the actual attributes on which the self-concept is based. The reflexive self is, therefore, 'a complicated mesh of very different attributes, some occurrent, such as images, feelings and private dialogues, but most are dispositional, like skills, capacities, and powers' (p. 61). For second language learners, therefore, reflexive identity includes both the learner's conceptions of their second language ability and their actual capacity to use the language in various contexts of interaction. This means that the relocation of the embodied self in study abroad is likely to challenge reflexive identities in two ways: first, by testing the student's capacity to use a second language in unfamiliar situations; second, by destabilizing the student's conceptions of these capacities.

Harré's (2001) Self 3 refers to 'the way that certain aspects of a person's actual or self-attributed Self 2 are manifested to others in the course of some life episode' (p. 61) and corresponds to what we call 'projected identity' (Facet 3). This facet of identity is highlighted in the psychological literature on 'impression management' and 'strategic self-presentation', which focuses on the conscious construction of 'identities or reputational characteristics which serve as power bases to attempt influence' (Tedeschi, 1989: 301; also Goffman, 1990). Tedeschi discusses both the longer-term self-presentation 'strategies' through which people build

'reputations' or 'identities' and the shorter-term 'tactics' they use to embellish and protect them. The distinction between reflexive and projected identity is essentially one of point of view. Reflexive identity refers to the 'inner' self, while projected identity refers to public representations of the 'outer' self. Because people typically strive to conceal what they see as their 'real selves' for strategic reasons, there is often a gap between their projected and reflexive identities. Nevertheless, projected identities must in some sense be grounded in reflexive identity. Language is important here, because identities must be projected using semiotic resources such as appearance, gesture, dress and, crucially, words. Social interaction necessarily involves articulations of reflexive and projected identity, and in this respect the challenges that study abroad poses are likely to be considerable. Not only do students have to project identities to new people in new environments, but these identities must also be projected through a second language and other, culturally variable, semiotic modes.

'Recognized identity' (Facet 4) is the counterpart of projected identity and it refers to the ways that projected identities are understood and acted upon by others. For Blommaert (2006: 238), this is a matter of the identities that others 'ascribe or attribute' to us, as opposed to those that we 'inhabit or achieve' (in our terms, 'reflexive' and 'projected' identities). Projected identities are always projected to *specific* others in *specific* settings and contexts. As Goffman (1990: 14) puts it, 'the individual will have to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally *expresses* himself, and the others will in turn have to be *impressed* in some way by him'. At the same time, these others project their own identities, such that interaction can be seen as an ongoing exchange of identity-related signs and signals. In the context of study abroad, the potential gap between the student's intention to project certain identities through a second language and the recognition of these by others (which Goffman describes as a gap between the intended expression that a person 'gives' and the unintended expression that he 'gives off') is particularly important. This gap may be widened by inadequate second language performance or by others' assumptions about the identities that the student ought to project. Projected identities may fail to achieve recognition, for example, because they contradict what others already know, or believe they know, of the student. For Tedeschi (1989), identity recognition also has implications for reflexive identity, because successes in self-presentation reinforce self-concept, whereas failures undermine it. In study abroad, the challenge of achieving recognition increases the risks involved in projecting desired identities through a second language, and these

risks are multiplied by the difficulty of interpreting feedback conveyed through the second language.

'Imagined identity' (Facet 5) is based on the psychological concept of 'possible selves', or 'the ideal selves that we would very much like to become and the selves we are afraid of becoming' (Markus and Nurius, 1986: 954). According to Markus and Nurius, these possible selves 'derive from representations of the self in the past and they include representations of the self in the future'. Goals, ambitions or fears for the future become a matter of identity when they are incorporated into the self-concept. Imagined identity is, in this sense, closely linked to reflexive identity. It can be understood as a conception of who we might become that is overlaid across our conception of who we are now. The notion of imagined identity has found a place in second language learning research in two ways: first, through work on 'imagined communities', which discusses learners' 'participation' in larger and/or distant target language communities through the imagination (Kanno and Norton, 2003), and, more recently, in work on 'the ideal L2 self' (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009), which has drawn on 'self-discrepancy theory' (Higgins, 1987) to develop a view of motivation that involves learners' orientations towards images of themselves as members of imagined target language communities (Ryan, 2006; Yashima, 2013). In study abroad, imagined identities are linked to goals and expectations, and can be understood as representations of who the student expects or would like to become in the study abroad setting. The idea of imagined identities, therefore, adds a layer to our understanding of what students bring to the experience of study abroad. We assume that students will aim to project and achieve recognition for identities that correspond to their reflexive sense of self, but at the same time we recognize that they may also want to take the opportunity to be seen as a different person when they use their second language. For this reason, we will often use the term 'reflexive/imagined identity' to refer to the 'inner' aspect of identity that underlies and is potentially modified by the 'outer' aspect of identity negotiation in second language interaction.

Lastly, we use the term 'identity categories and resources' to refer to the terms in which individual and social identity are discussed. From a post-structuralist perspective, identities are never constructed from scratch, but always make use of culturally embedded categories and resources. Markus and Nurius (1986: 954) express this succinctly when they write that 'the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by

the individual's immediate social experiences'. These include categories that describe people in terms of gender, age, social class, nationality and ethnicity, together with categories that define professional, social and family roles. In the context of second language learning, categories such as 'native' and 'non-native speaker', 'monolingual' and 'bilingual', 'learner' and 'user' also become culturally salient. Study abroad has its own set of roles, notably that of the 'overseas' or 'international' student and the various roles associated with 'visitors' and 'hosts'.

By identity resources, we refer to the poststructuralist conception of identities as 'free-floating' or detached from culturally embedded categories. Viewed in this way, a second language can become an identity resource, or as Ros i Solé and Fenoulhet (2010: 11) describe it, a luxury product. Second language learning may be 'shaped by a desire to acquire cultural capital for a new aspirational lifestyle which will allow individuals to be part of different social and cultural groups'. In this sense, study abroad can be an opportunity to draw on the linguistic and cultural resources of a new environment in order to 'try on' new identities for a while. An additional consideration, however, is the use of identity categories and resources to 'position' individuals, or assign them to categories to which they may not wish to be assigned (Davies and Harré, 1990). In study abroad, non-recognition of projected identities often takes the form of 'repositioning'. Chik and Benson (2008), for example, show how a young Hong Kong student, who studied for an undergraduate degree in England with the intention of becoming a 'native speaker' of English, was frustrated by the ways in which she was consistently positioned as a 'Chinese', 'Asian' and 'ESL' student.

In our research, identity serves a multifaceted conceptual lens that can help us see how selves are situated in the social, cultural and linguistic worlds they inhabit. An inclusive view of identity calls for attention to identity in all of its facets. Taylor's (1994: 25) often quoted definition of identity as a 'person's understanding of who they are', for example, is, from our point of view, concise but incomplete. It describes what we have called 'reflexive identity', but it does not touch upon how we represent this understanding to other people ('projected identity'), other people's interpretations of these representations ('recognized identity'), who we think we may become in the future ('imagined identity'), or how these different facets of identity are shaped by culturally embedded categories and resources. In this respect, we also share Wenger's (2000: 241–2) view that identity is 'an intersection of many relationships that you hold into the experience of being a person'. The 'dislocation',

'fragmentation' and 'multiplicity' of postmodern identities constitutes an ongoing problem that we are constantly working upon but never entirely resolve. In the next section, we will look at how some theorists see autobiographical narrative as the key to this identity work.

Identity and narrative

Narrative is a means of organizing pieces of information that would otherwise lack coherence into meaningful sequences of events. The narrative representation of lives in autobiographies and biographies is, therefore, based on the assumption that a 'life' is best represented sequentially from birth to death, or up to the present day if the subject is still alive. An (auto)biographical narrative does not simply represent a life, however, because the sequential coherence of the life is constituted within the life story. The pieces of information that go into the narrative are selected and arranged in order to represent the subject's life as a coherent and meaningful sequence of events. By describing the sources, directions and purposes of individual lives, (auto)biographies also produce identities. The identities of the subject of an (auto)biography are, in effect, contained within the story of their life.

This link between (auto)biographical narrative and identity has long been recognized. The 19th-century German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, for example, wrote of autobiography that 'the person who seeks the connecting threads in the history of his life has already, from different points of view, created a coherence in that life which he is now putting into word' (cited in Thompson, 2000: 54). Yet until relatively recently, the subjects of (auto)biography were a minority of notable men (and occasionally women) whose identities were grounded in their notable achievements. The idea that (auto)biographical narrative is characteristic of everyday thinking is a poststructuralist notion that is linked to the idea that we live in a world in which traditional anchors for identity have been undermined.

This idea is most developed in the field of narrative psychology, which has built especially on the work of Jerome Bruner. Summarizing Bruner (1990), Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001: 11) argue that 'whenever it comes to matters of identity and, inextricably interwoven with it, autobiographical memory, story-telling is needed'. Stories, they continue, 'organize our senses of who we are, who others are, and how we are to be related'. As Brockmeier and Harré (2001: 50) argue in the same volume, in narrative, 'we are primarily dealing not with a mode of representing but with a specific mode of constructing and constituting reality'. Today, Bruner (2001: 28) writes, we have 'come to reject the view that a "life" is

anything in itself and to believe that it is all in the constructing, in the text, or the text making'.

In terms of the facets of identity outlined earlier in this chapter, the work that goes into the everyday construction of (auto)biographical narrative belongs to the domains of reflexive/imagined and projected identity. It is this narrative work that pulls and holds our dislocated, fragmented and multiple identities together. The coherence of our identities lies in the coherence of the stories of our past, present and future that we tell to ourselves and to others. This view of self-narrative has been criticized for underplaying the role of social and discursive forces in the construction of identities. Hall (1996: 598), for example, suggests that we may feel that our identities are coherent 'only because we construct a comforting story or "narrative of the self" about ourselves'. From this perspective, the narrative coherence of identities is largely a matter of self-delusion. For narrative psychologists, however, self-narratives are not constructed by the subject alone. They are part of a social process of 'self-making' that is 'powerfully affected not only by your own interpretations of yourself, but by the interpretations others offer of your version' (Bruner, 2001: 34). Writing from a very different, sociological, position, Layder (2004: 128) also argues that 'the extent to which the self-narrative is revisable is always limited, conditioned and constrained by external circumstances' and 'never simply a reflexive project at the behest of the desires and transformative powers of the individual' (p. 130). Social and discursive forces come into play both in the striving for recognition of narrated identities and the need to draw upon culturally salient identity categories and resources in their narration.

The recognition that (auto)biographical narratives play an important role in the construction of identities does not depend, however, on the precise degree to which they are shaped by individual agency or social circumstances. The implication of this recognition for our research lies simply in the assumption that students' study abroad narratives will provide some insight into the development of their identities. When we examine these narratives, our aim is not to look *through* them in search of experiences that have had an impact on their identity before the telling, but to look *at* them in search of processes of identity development that are inseparable from their narration.

Identity, language and global mobility

We have already pointed to some of the ways in which second language learning involves different facets of identity. But we also take the view that second language learning plays an increasingly important role in

the construction of identities in the postmodern world. The 'crisis of identity' that was first recognized by Erikson (1968) is associated with the era of 'post', 'high' or 'late modernity', although it is not always clear when this era began or how exactly it differs from the era of 'modernity'. One group of sociologically oriented researchers, however, associates this crisis of identity with the impact of late 20th-century globalization on the mobility of people and things (Bauman, 2001; Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991; Urry, 2000). For Giddens (1991: 5), 'the more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options'. It is in this context that self-identity becomes 'a reflexively organized endeavour', or 'a reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives'. In the context of geographical and social mobility, the development of identity becomes what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 3) call 'do-it-yourself biography'.

There are a number of critics of this view, including Skeggs (2004), who criticizes Beck and Giddens for having prematurely removed traditional identity categories, especially class, from sociological theory. Skeggs sees mobility as 'a social good, a resource, not equally available to all' (p. 50). Beck's (1992) idea of 'individuals who live out, biographically, the complexity and diversity of the social relations that surround them' is, she argues, based on 'an incredibly voluntarist individual who can choose which structural forces to take into account and which to act upon' (Skeggs, 2004: 52). Giddens, meanwhile, is guilty of treating the construction of biographical narratives as a '*neutral method*, something that one just does, rather than something … dependent upon access to discourse and resources'. The plausibility of these accounts of identity rests, moreover, on their resonance with middle-class experiences of mobility: they are, in effect, 'a re-legitimation and justification of the habitus of the middle-class that does not want to name itself, be recognized or accept responsibility for its own power' (p. 60).

The core of these criticisms lies in the question of whether the 'problem' of 'disembedded identities' (Hall, 1996: 622) is a universal one, and whether the key to its 'solution', (auto)biographical narrative, is available to all. On the one side are the protagonists of globalization, such as Giddens and Beck, who appear to universalize the mobility of a relatively small and privileged proportion of the world's population; while on the other are the critics such as Skeggs, whose argument that traditional sociological categories have been prematurely abandoned

may fail to acknowledge new ways of experiencing identity, albeit they are the experiences of the privileged minority. In the context of this study, therefore, we need to ask where second language learners are positioned in relation to this dichotomy.

Much of the work on globalization and language tends to treat second language learning as the subordinate partner to globalization. Block and Cameron (2002), for example, introduce their book on the topic by quoting Giddens's (1990: 64) definition of globalization as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'. This intensification of worldwide social relations, they argue, 'intensifies the need for members of global networks to develop competence in one or more additional languages, and/or to master new ways of using languages they know already' (pp. 1–2). There are evidently strong links between globalization and the massive worldwide growth in second language learning since the 1960s, but from this perspective mass second language learning is seen simply as an effect of globalization. The view that we adopt here, on the other hand, treats second language learning as part and parcel, both cause and effect, of the 'economic, military, technological, ecological, migratory, political, and cultural flows' that collectively constitute globalization (Held et al., 1999: 7). This view is broadly shared by, for example, Graddol (2006: 22), who writes of a 'new world order' in which English is 'accelerating globalisation' while globalization is 'accelerating the use of English', and Blommaert (2010: 2), who argues for new approaches to sociolinguistics that are concerned with 'globalization as a sociolinguistic subject matter and language as something intrinsically connected to processes of globalization'.

That idea that second language learners are at the frontline of new experiences of identity associated with globalization and modernity is, therefore, key to this book. The acquisition of an additional second language does not necessarily lead to geographical or social mobility. There is growing evidence, however, that imagined participation in a globalized world can be an important motivation for second language learners who are yet to experience mobility in practice (Kinginger, 2010; Ros i Solé and Fenoulhet, 2010; Ryan, 2006; Yashima, 2013). For many people around the world, study abroad is a first experience of global mobility and the opportunity to study abroad is often the direct consequence of learning a second language. While it is true that students who study abroad remain a minority of the global population, they are growing in number. More importantly, their experiences are worthy of investigation because

they illustrate how second language learning and study abroad provide many individuals with a kind of 'entry ticket' to the postmodern world and the new ways in which identity is experienced in it.

Second language identity

Adopting a poststructuralist perspective, we have argued that, for those who get to participate in the experience of postmodernity, identity is an ongoing task in which narratives of the self-play an important part. We also argue that this is especially true for second language learners, whose identities are liable to be problematized by experiences of imagined and actual global mobility that arise from second language learning. It is also true, however, that globally mobile individuals tend to engage in second language learning, which means that the identity work in the postmodern world increasingly involves *second language* identity work. In concluding this chapter, we will explain what we mean by this term and how it informs our interest in study abroad.

Identity has become an increasingly important concept in language teaching and learning research, as it has in many other academic fields, and Block (2007) provides a clear and detailed account of this research in his book entitled *Second Language Identities*. The concept of second language identity is not well defined, however, and even Block does not offer a clear definition of the term in his work. According to our working definition, second language identity refers to any aspect of a person's identity that is connected to their knowledge or use of a second language. This definition is far from adequate because it does not explain what these aspects of identity are. We find it useful, nevertheless, in two ways. It suggests that second language identities are a part of people's personal or social identities, and not distinct from them. At the same time, it suggests that there is something specific about identities that have been influenced by second language learning. For people who acquire a second language, second language identity work becomes an integral part of the wider task of the construction of narrative identities.

In this sense, second language identity differs from what Block (2007: 40) describes as 'language identity', or the 'relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication', which implies indexical relationships to specific languages and language varieties and membership of specific language communities. This is, in other words, a sociological conception, according to which a person's identities are, in part, fixed by the languages and language varieties that they use and by their membership of corresponding language communities. In the sense

that we use the term, 'second language identity' not only refers to a person's relationship to a particular second language. It refers more widely to the identities of people who know more than one language, which incorporates, but is not quite the same as, their relationships to each of the languages they know. Second language identity implies, first of all, bilingualism or multilingualism, and a specific set of identity issues that arise from having expanded the categories and resources available for identity work beyond those that are available to people who speak only one language. What we have in mind here are, for example: the kinds of identity issues that surround different levels of second language competence and performance; the sense of being a 'learner' or 'user' of a second language; the various identity terms that are used to describe multilingual individuals in various contexts (first, second and foreign language speaker, language learner and user, native and non-native speaker, etc.); and the identity resources that are associated with specific languages and the cultures associated with them. In contrast to the sociological concept of language identity, second language identity also represents a more fluid, poststructuralist understanding of language affiliations (Leung, Harris and Rampton, 1997). It is not a matter of distinct indexical relationships to distinct languages within a person's language repertoire, but a more complex relationship to all the languages a person knows and the relationships among them. A second language identity is not simply a second 'language identity'; it is, instead, an aspect of an individual's personal and social identity that derives from the potential that knowledge of more than one language implies.

Our approach to second language identity also involves a relatively strong version of the contested hypothesis that second language learning necessarily impinges on the learner's identity. Following Benveniste (1966), Wolf (2006: 17) argues that 'language is the very foundation upon which the concept of "self" is based'. Kramsch (2009: 2) argues that because language is not only a code but also a meaning-making system, it 'constructs the historical sedimentation of meanings that we call our "selves"'. In support of his argument, Wolf describes how French grammatical structures force second language users to express 'subjectivities' in their use of pronouns, tense and aspect, reported speech, and argumentative discourse. The differences between the grammatical structures of, for example, French and English mean that an English-speaking user of French necessarily confronts the problem of enacting identities anew in the second language. Koven (2007) makes a similar argument in her work on 'selves in two languages' among French-Portuguese bilinguals. Byram (1997: 22) also argues that one consequence of 'the acquisition of

the cultural practices and beliefs [a second language] embodies for par-
ticular social groups' is 'the relativisation of what seems to the learner to
be the natural language of their identities, and the realisation that these
are cultural, and socially constructed'.

Although he cites a number of formulations of the hypothesis that
second language learning necessarily has an impact on identities, Block
(2007) doubts that it necessarily involves the development of *new* identi-
ties, or what he calls 'target language-mediated subject positions'. Block
describes target language-mediated subject positions as substantially
new personal identities that are enacted through a second language.
These emerge most clearly when individuals move across geographical
and sociocultural borders, where they 'often find that any feelings they
might have of a stable self are upset' as new and varied input disturbs
taken-for-granted points of reference (p. 20). 'Critical experiences' of this
kind are characterized by states of 'ambivalence', which are ultimately
only resolved by the construction of new identities. Although border-
crossings do not necessarily involve second language learning, those
that do involve learning and using a new language pose the additional
problem of the potential loss of first language identities and the need
to reconstruct them through the medium of the second language. Block
uses the emergence of target language-mediated subject positions as a
kind of index for identity development in three broad contexts: migra-
tion, the foreign language classroom and study abroad. He concludes
that the experience of migration is often 'one in which critical experi-
ences, leading to the emergence of new subject positions, are likely to
occur' (p. 109), while the prospects for their emergence in the foreign
language learning classroom are 'minimal to non-existent' (p. 137).
Pavlenko (2005: 9) makes a similar argument for classroom language
learning, which she sees as being a matter of 'mapping of new linguis-
tic items onto the pre-existing conceptual system' which does not lead
to major transformation (for a contrary view, see Kramsch, 2009: 4).
Block's conclusions on study abroad are more cautious, however, and he
calls for more research to reveal the full potential of study abroad expe-
riences as 'contexts replete with emerging target language-mediated
subject positions' (p. 185).

Block's (2007) comments on study abroad provide an incentive
for deeper investigation of the influence of study abroad on second
language identity, but they also raise several problems. Block's work
suggests not only that second language learning may destabilize the
learner's identity, but also that the more deeply learners are engaged in
learning a second language, the more problematic their learning may

become. This raises the question of what might constitute 'positive' development in regard to second language identity. Block sees the emergence of a 'target language-mediated subject position' as one solution to the problem of the destabilization, but this seems to set the bar for second language identity development rather high. Moreover, although we agree that second language learning can lead to certain kinds of identity crisis, we do not see this as a necessary condition for second language identity development.

In trying to understand the sense in which second language identity development may be 'positive', or otherwise, we return to Wenger's (2000: 241–2) view of identity as 'an intersection of many relationships that you hold into the experience of being a person'. In citing this view earlier, we were referring to the ways in which narrative identity work strives for coherence in the face of the 'dislocation', 'fragmentation' and 'multiplicity' of postmodern identities. In this context, identity development can be seen as the ongoing achievement of coherence, or a sense that one is, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the person that one recognizes oneself to be. This implies, on the one hand, a sense that projected identities are both recognized by others and in accordance with reflexive identities; and, on the other hand, that separate strands of identity are interwoven into a single thread of personal identity. From this perspective, second language learning potentially destabilizes identity: first, by presenting the kinds of problems for the projection of identities that were discussed earlier in this chapter; second, by adding a new strand of identity to 'hold into the experience of being a person', as Wenger puts it.

Critical experiences

The main aim of this book is to elaborate the notions of second language identity and second language identity development by examining evidence from students' study abroad narratives. In Chapter 3, we will look at study abroad in more detail, but before we do so, we need to explain why we are particularly interested in study abroad as a context for identity development.

The achievement of proficiency in a second language is often a long-term or lifelong process, in which experiences of language learning and use are intertwined with experiences of life. Benson (2011) uses the metaphor of a 'language learning career' to describe the entirety of this process, and here we make the assumption that second language identity is also something that develops over the course of a language

learning career. With the act of beginning to learn a second language, the learner also begins the process of becoming a different person, and this process continues in tandem with the development of second language knowledge and skills. Our earlier discussion of the role of self-narratives in identity development suggested that our identities are largely contained within the stories we tell about ourselves. In turn, this suggests that individuals' stories of their language learning careers will provide important clues to the development of their second language identities. Narrative research in the field of second language learning has often been based on the collection of 'language learning histories' (Oxford, 1996), covering all or part of individuals' language learning careers, and there has often been a focus on aspects of identity in this research.

Our interest in study abroad, therefore, is largely related to its position within students' language learning careers and to the notion of 'critical experiences' (sometimes called critical 'incidents' or 'events') in identity development. Layder (2004: 139) describes critical events as 'non-routine and often unpredictable' events that require 'substantial modifications of self-identity to enable the person to adjust to the changed circumstances'. To this, however, we want to add that experiences are not 'critical' in and of themselves, but only in the context of narratives of the self. As Webster and Mertova (2007: 73) put it, it is the impact on the storyteller that makes critical experiences 'critical' and, because critical experiences are properties of narrative, we can only gain access to them through narratives. In a similar context, Bruner (2001: 31) writes of 'turning points' in autobiographical narratives, which he sees as being 'crucial to the effort to *individualize* a life'. For Bruner, these turning points are narrative devices: they are marked by mental verbs and signal 'inside' transformation and a change in intentional state. 'Had the autobiography been written before the break', he suggests, 'you sense it would have been a different autobiography' (p. 33).

Block (2002: 4) uses the term critical experiences to refer to 'periods of time during which prolonged contact with an L2 and a new and different cultural setting causes irreversible destabilization of the individual's sense of self'. Critical experiences in second language learning, in this sense, are experiences that destabilize second language identities, though we believe that they are not only the consequence of prolonged experiences leading to irreversible change. In our view, the notion of critical experience can be usefully applied to any change in the contexts in which a second language is learned and used, of which there may be many over the course of a language learning career. The important

point is that there is both a sequential relationship to previous experiences in other contexts and the potential for subsequent development as the learner resolves the destabilization of identity that the change brings about.

Although we take the view that second language identity development occurs continuously over the course of language learning careers, we also believe that it is an uneven process in which critical experiences inhibit or accelerate development. We are interested in study abroad, therefore, as a potentially critical experience in students' language learning careers, or as a moment at which second language identity development is likely to be observable in students' narratives of their experiences. As we will explain in more detail in Chapter 3, this also means that we are interested in study abroad not simply as a context for language learning and use, but also as a *new* context in the sequential development of a language learning career in which identity development may be triggered by the need to come to terms with new ways of learning and using languages.

3
Study Abroad

Following our identification of study abroad as a potentially critical experience in second language identity development in Chapter 2, this chapter looks more closely at previous research on study abroad and the ways in which it has viewed questions of identity. We will also outline the model of second language identity development and its key dimensions of sociopragmatic competence, linguistic self-concept and second language-mediated personal competence, on which we base the analysis of our study abroad narratives in Part II.

Definitions and types of study abroad

In a comprehensive review of research on study abroad and language learning, Kinginger (2009: 11) defines study abroad as 'a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes'. This definition highlights the differences between study abroad and migration (temporary vs permanent) and study abroad and tourism (education vs leisure), although these differences are not always clear-cut in practice. Three additional features of study abroad are important to its contribution to second language identity development: (1) study abroad is usually part of a longer term educational process; (2) it is temporary in the sense that the student intends, or is expected to, return home when it is over; (3) formal study is one, but often not the only, purpose. Viewed in this way, study abroad overlaps with migration, when, for example, students travel overseas for higher education without knowing whether they will return home or not. It also overlaps with tourism when, for example, students sign up for a short-term commercial programme that combines study with cultural tourism or when they go overseas to improve their language skills without enrolling in a formal programme of study.

In practice, therefore, study abroad stands on a continuum from tourism to migration, and its position on this continuum highlights the role that educational travel now plays in global mobility. In a study of a degree programme based in three European countries, Murphy-Lejeune (2002) refers to student travel as a new mode of migration, in which the student gains 'mobility capital' from the experience of living abroad. Larzén-Östermark (2011: 455) notes that 'the capability to live and work in different linguistic and cultural environments is highly valued in today's society' and that residence abroad is often linked to better employability. One of the main outcomes of study abroad for the Finnish students taking on a semester programme in the United Kingdom was the newly found 'integrity' of being 'someone who has lived abroad' (p. 468). This view links study abroad to the work on global mobility and identity discussed in Chapter 2. In a mobile world, migration no longer implies a permanent move from one place to another. Study abroad may be seen, then, as a temporary form of migration for young people, similar in kind to periods of employment abroad for working adults. In this sense, study abroad is increasingly becoming a first experience of global mobility for young people in many parts of the world.

Within this broad view of study abroad, significant dimensions of variation include: (1) duration – periods of study abroad can vary from one or two weeks to several years; (2) educational level – participants can range from primary school children to adults enrolled on university postgraduate courses; (3) organization – study abroad can be organized by the student's educational institution, by a commercial or voluntary organization, or by the participants themselves; (4) the opportunities for integration and interaction that the programme provides; (5) its purpose, which, by definition, includes education, although the nature of the educational goals may vary. In this book, we use the term study abroad 'programme' to refer to specific combinations of these factors. Programmes differ from each other mainly by being longer or shorter, by serving students of different educational levels, in their modes of organization, and in their purposes.

In the literature on study abroad and language learning, there is often an implicit assumption that the improvement of second language skills is the main purpose of study abroad. Yet there is also a rich literature on study abroad programmes that do not involve second language learning or use (e.g., Lewin, 2009). For English-speaking North American students, for example, the United Kingdom is one of the more popular study abroad destinations. Even when students travel to destinations where English is mainly used as a foreign language, they are not

necessarily expected to use the first languages of their hosts. Other than the improvement of language skills, the purposes of study abroad include enhanced personal independence, intercultural competence, and academic knowledge and skills. This does not mean, however, that there are essentially two types of study abroad programmes – those that do or do not involve second language use – and that each has its own specific goals. Second language-based programmes often incorporate personal, intercultural and academic goals with language goals. There is also an argument that programmes that mainly aim at non-language goals would be enhanced by the challenge of requiring students to use a second language (Falk and Kanach, 2002; Kolb, 2009; Wanner, 2009). The various purposes of study abroad are not, therefore, easily separated. The non-linguistic purposes of study abroad are generally identity-related; they are concerned with development of the student as a person. When the same outcomes occur in the context of a second language programme they may also be second language identity-related, if they are mediated by second language use or concern the development of the student as a language-using person.

An added layer of complexity concerns the perspectives of different stakeholders on the purposes of study abroad programmes. This arises when the stated purposes of a programme differ from those of the participants, either collectively or individually. It is often observed, for example, that students tend to take study abroad less seriously than the programme organizers would like them to, and treat their time abroad more as a holiday. Kinginger (2009: 5) observes that, although study abroad is often considered to be 'a crucial step in the development of ability to use a language in a range of communicative settings', students abroad 'may or may not position themselves wholly or in part as language learners'. In this context, participants' purposes and goals count for a great deal, although they are often discounted in research on learning outcomes. Tarp's (2006) study of Danish secondary-school students who participated in short study abroad programmes is an exception to this rule. Tarp found that individual students' agendas influenced intervening conditions, such as access to and interaction with the foreign culture, and ultimately led to individual differences in learning outcomes. In a study of US university students on a six-week programme in France, Allen (2010) also found that individual differences in motivation outcomes were related to students' purposes and goals; motivation to continue studying French was enhanced for linguistically oriented students who viewed study abroad as a language learning experience, but not for those with more pragmatic reasons for participating in study abroad.

These studies point to the risks involved in inferring participants' purposes from those of the programmes they participate in. Studies that aim to assess language learning outcomes, for example, run this risk if they do not inquire into the degree to which the participants subscribe to the language learning goals of the programme. For this reason, we tend to view programme purposes from participants' perspectives and pay particular attention to their individual goals and expectations. It is ultimately the students themselves who determine the nature of their individual programmes within frameworks set up by the programme organizers. As we observed in Chapter 2, students' goals and expectations also condition the imagined identities that they carry into the study abroad setting.

Study abroad as a context for language learning

Kinginger (2011) identifies three main types of research on language learning and study abroad. The first focuses on language outcomes and often uses quantitative research methods to compare study abroad students with groups of students who stay 'at home' during the same period. This research is designed to test the assumption that language learning is more effective when students are immersed in a target language environment than when their learning is mainly confined to the classroom. From this perspective, study abroad is a 'context' that potentially influences language learning, or an 'experimental' condition that can be compared with the 'control' condition of staying at home (Collentine, 2009; Collentine and Freed, 2004). Studies in this tradition tend to support claims for the effectiveness of study abroad, although Kinginger (2009: 68) observes that 'striking individual differences' are a recurrent finding (see also Allen, 2010; Tarp, 2006). We find this type of research problematic for two additional reasons. It isolates second language proficiency outcomes from other language-related outcomes that might be equally or more important to students; and it isolates periods of study abroad from the temporal context of the students' longer term language learning careers.

The second type of research tries to explain differential outcomes by identifying specific variables that correlate with language proficiency gains. This type includes both quantitative and qualitative studies that focus on learning processes in study abroad. The assumption that target language immersion is beneficial to learning remains, but the quantity and quality of immersion is brought into question. Studies have investigated, for example, the amount of time that students actually spend using the target language and the quality of interactions with native speakers.

Kinginger's third type of research is mostly qualitative, often involves ethnographic or individual case study approaches, and aims to understand the experience of study abroad from the perspective of those who participate in it. Kinginger observes that studies of this type 'reveal that language learning in study abroad is a complex, dialogic, situated affair in which the subjectivities of students and hosts are deeply implicated' (Kinginger, 2011: 64). This observation supports our view of study abroad as a potentially critical experience that is likely to trigger second language identity development, and a number of studies of this type have explored questions of identity. When identity is at issue, however, the focus often falls on the ways in which identity variables either hinder or facilitate language learning during study abroad. A number of studies have suggested that female North American students are often discouraged from interacting with their hosts in study abroad settings by experiences of sexual harassment (Anderson, 2003; Polanyi, 1995; Talburt and Stewart, 1999; Twombly, 1995), while others have offered more nuanced views of gender-linked study abroad experiences (Churchill, 2009; Kinginger, 2008; Kinginger and Whitworth, 2004; Patron, 2007; Piller and Takahashi, 2006). While studies of this kind have highlighted identity as a key issue, they share a concern with language proficiency outcomes with the first two types of study abroad research. Study abroad continues to be treated as a contextual variable, while identity is treated as a variable that may be especially salient to individual differences in proficiency outcomes.

In our view, this focus on language learning outcomes often comes at the expense of opportunities to understand study abroad as a holistic experience with multiple language and identity-related outcomes. Study abroad is viewed as a context for language learning only in the most abstract sense. It is not seen as a context of individual experience that is, in turn, embedded in the context of individual students' lives. Similarly, the tendency to treat identity itself as an individual difference variable deflects attention from the influence of study abroad on identity. Identity is often seen as a fixed quantity and not as something that is itself subject to development and change. For this reason, we believe that it is important to tease out a fourth strand of study abroad research, in which there is a focus on identity as outcome of study abroad in its own right.

Study abroad and identity

In recent years, a number of studies have been published that share our interest in the influence of study abroad on participants' identities

(Alred and Byram, 2002; Chik and Benson, 2008; Coleman, 2007; Crawshaw, Callen and Tusting, 2001; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2004; Larzén-Östermark, 2011; Patron, 2007; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005, 2007; Stewart, 2010). For Kinginger (2009: 155) identity in study abroad is a matter of 'what kinds of people learners take themselves to be and to become, and how they are welcomed and assisted, or not, in the social settings where they are involved'. Pellegrino Aveni (2005: 7) adopts a similar perspective when she refers to identity in study abroad as an 'overarching experience of self-presentation in a second language and the maintenance of security (i.e., status, validation, safety, and control) in a second culture'. These perspectives accord with our view of the way in which study abroad challenges the various facets of identity discussed in Chapter 2. Study abroad is typically an experience in which embodied identities are relocated and reflexive/imagined identities are challenged by the need to achieve recognition for identities in an unfamiliar cultural setting. This challenge to identity may be characteristic of all study abroad experiences, but when study abroad involves a second language, it is heightened by the need to do identity work in the second language, which poses particular challenges to students' second language identities. From this perspective, the development of second language identity is not independent of the development of language skills. It is a natural consequence of any serious attempt to engage in second language interaction in a study abroad setting.

Several recent studies have argued that the development of identity is a primary outcome of study abroad for many students. Alred and Byram (2002, 2006), observe how participants in European 'year abroad' programmes sometimes describe them as a major episode in their lives, affecting self-understanding and outlook on life, with many reporting lasting changes in self-perception, personal development and maturity. Stewart (2010) explored the identity outcomes of a semester programme for US students in Mexico, describing them in terms of identification with the target language community. One student, for example, 'developed an identity as a member of the target language community', while another developed a 'social identity as a Spanish-speaking American'. Larzén-Östermark's (2011: 455) narrative study of two Finnish teacher education students studying in London and Scotland concludes that 'the intercultural sojourn begins as a trip abroad – to learn the language and discover another culture – but ends in learning most about oneself'.

Pellegrino Aveni's (2005, 2007) studies of North American students in Russia offer particular insights into the ways in which reflexive/imagined identities are deconstructed and reconstructed within the experience

of study abroad. Pellegrino Aveni (2007: 99) tells the story of Leila, a 'normally gregarious energetic young woman', who on arrival in a study abroad setting 'found herself feeling timid, allowing others to speak for her or avoiding conversations that she would normally enjoy in her own language or even in her language classroom'. By the end of the first month, Leila felt 'misunderstood not only linguistically, but personally' and she felt that 'others thought her to be stupid, childish, or inadequate in some way because she could not express her true thoughts, ideas, and charming sense of humor succinctly and accurately'. 'The person she believed herself to be in her everyday life', Pellegrino Aveni observes, 'was not the person she could present to others in her new language and new culture'. For Pellegrino Aveni, Leila's experience of 'compromised sense of self' is a familiar one in study abroad and arises from conflicts between the 'ideal selves' that students want to convey through their second language and the 'real selves' that they are actually able to convey. As time goes by, Pellegrino Aveni finds that students' ability to project desired identities 'continues to fluctuate and improve with experience and growth, and, ultimately, many learners come to rely more consistently on intrinsic self-construction and less on the opinions and behaviors of others' (pp. 106–7). Factors that contribute to developments in what we would call their second language identities include improvement in second language competence, a realization that the consequences of making mistakes are not as serious as they first seemed, and the development of strategies and techniques to minimize threats to their identities.

Second language identity development is not an automatic consequence of study abroad, however, as the projection of desired identities can easily be frustrated by hosts' perceptions of the identity categories to which the student belongs. This has been noted, for example, in studies of North American women in Japan, who experience difficulty in integrating into Japanese-speaking communities because they are often positioned as outsiders in interaction (Siegal, 1996; see also Cook, 2006; Iino, 2006). Studies of gender and study abroad have also shown how taken-for-granted assumptions about identity categories can be challenged by experiences of study abroad. Kinginger (2008: 96), for example, discusses the case of a female US student in France who found that she was unable to 'project herself into the gender roles that she perceived as typically French'. Relating this student's discomfort to US discourses on the 'stylishness' of French women, Kinginger observes that the student's response was 'to recoil into national superiority' by citing images of US women as being more athletic and relaxed about their dress. In her

study of Hong Kong students in the United Kingdom, Jackson (2008: 216) describes how two students 'clung more tightly' to their Hong Kong Chinese identities when they felt that their 'preferred' identities as English speakers had not been validated in homestay environments where they felt unwelcome. While the outcome appears to be less than positive in this case, as we will see in Chapter 6, a strengthening of first language or culture attachments can also go hand in hand with positive attachments to the second language.

There is evidence, therefore, that second identity development is both an important and problematic outcome of study abroad for many students. Even though development often falls short of Block's (2007) emergence of 'target language-mediated subject positions' (Chapter 2), it is often evident in participants' accounts of their experiences. One of the problems which researchers face in this area, however, is the lack of an adequate model that would account for the more fine-grained developments that might ultimately lead to a sense that one has become 'another person' as result of learning and using a second language. In order to address this problem, we turn to a number of studies (in addition to those explicitly treating identity development as an outcome of study abroad) that have examined aspects of student development that might reasonably be linked to second language identity.

Dimensions of second language identity development in study abroad

In this chapter, we have highlighted the idea that study abroad is a holistic educational experience with a variety of potential benefits. Coleman (2001) places these benefits under the headings of linguistic, cultural, personal, professional, academic, and intercultural outcomes. Some researchers would also include identity development among these outcomes, or perhaps view it is an overarching category for developments under other headings. We have also observed that some study abroad programmes involve second language learning and use, while others do not. This suggests that linguistic outcomes are specific to second language-based programmes, while non-linguistic outcomes are shared by both types. But because we view study abroad as a holistic experience, linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes are not so easily separated in second language programmes. On the one hand, linguistic outcomes tend to be connected to the broader personal development of the participants; on the other hand, non-linguistic outcomes tend to be mediated by participants' use of a second language.

As a framework for analysing participants' accounts of their experiences of second language study abroad programmes, therefore, we have developed a model of potential outcomes in which second language identity is the overarching category. In this model, outcomes are ranged along a continuum from second language proficiency to personal competence, with second language identity development occupying much of the space between the two extremes (Benson et al., 2012) (Figure 3.1).
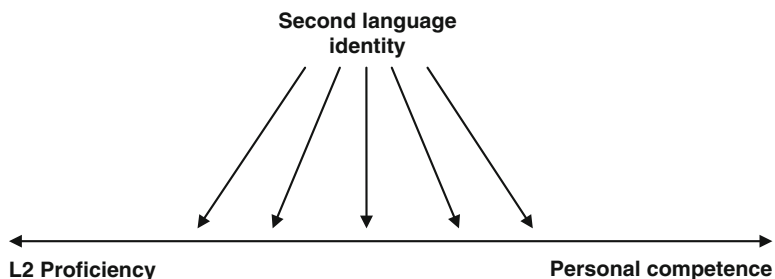
Figure 3.1   Potential outcomes of study abroad

Figure 3.1 suggests that language proficiency gains and developments in personal competence may be unrelated to second language identity. Figure 3.2, however, which shows only the central portion of the continuum, suggests that language proficiency outcomes can often be interpreted in terms of identity development, while personal competence outcomes can be interpreted in terms of language development.
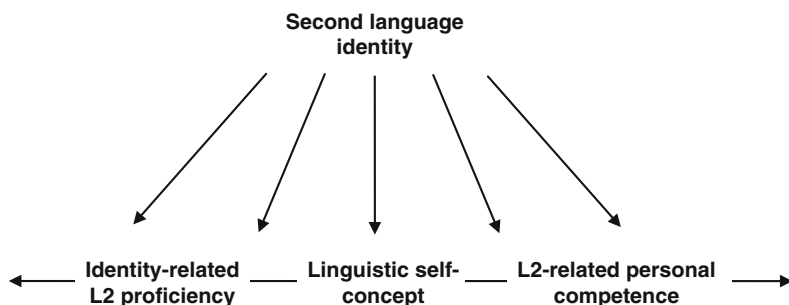
Figure 3.2   Potential second language outcomes of study abroad

In the interpretation of students' experiences of study abroad, this model encourages us to attend to three possible dimensions of second language identity development. Around the middle of the continuum lie outcomes that are transparently related to second language identity

in that they are concerned with the participant's self-concept as a language learner or user. Moving towards the ends of the continuum we find outcomes that are less transparently related to identity, but in each case the outcomes involve the intersections of language and personal development. On the left-hand side of the continuum we are concerned with language developments that influence students' capacity to project identities, and on the right-hand side we are concerned with personal developments that arise from the use of language in interaction. In the remainder of this chapter, we will look briefly at these three dimensions of second language identity development, which will be discussed in Part II in more detail in the light of evidence from our own data.

Identity-related second language competence

As we have noted, comparison of the language proficiency gains of study abroad and 'at home' students is a frequently used strategy in study abroad research. One of the problems that we have noted with this strategy, however, is that it tends to separate proficiency from other language-related outcomes. Proficiency outcomes are also typically evaluated outside the context of language use in the study abroad setting. A general test of vocabulary knowledge or grammatical competence, for example, will not necessarily capture the kinds of language development that are particular to study abroad as an experience that challenges participants' identities. Some proficiency developments are clearly more closely related to identity than others. While we leave open the possibility that all improvements in proficiency are potentially identity-related, we highlight those which are more clearly so in that they involve sociopragmatic competence and the ability to project desired identities.

Thomas (1983) introduced the notion of sociopragmatic competence in the context of a discussion of 'cross-cultural pragmatic failure'. According to Thomas, pragmatic competence, or the ability to use language in order to achieve specific purposes or to understand language in context, has two components for which she uses the terms 'pragmalinguistic' and 'sociopragmatic'. Pragmalinguistic competence is essentially linguistic and involves knowledge of conventionalized language usages (the knowledge that, for example, 'How are you?' or 'How do you do?' are not questions but forms of greeting in British English). Sociopragmatic competence, on the other hand, 'involves the student's system of beliefs as much as his/her knowledge of the language' (p. 91). Sociopragmatic decisions, Thomas argued, are 'social before they are linguistic' (p. 104) and sociopragmatic 'failure' stems from 'cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes

appropriate linguistic behaviour' (p. 99). More recently, Holmes and Riddiford (2011: 377) have defined sociopragmatic competence as 'the ability to accurately interpret and appropriately express social meaning in interaction' and the 'ability to analyse the sociocultural dimensions of social interaction in order to select appropriate forms'. In their study of non-native speakers of English interacting with colleagues in New Zealand workplaces, they see sociopragmatic competence as being both 'empowering' and 'crucial to satisfactory participation in workplace interaction'. We would argue that sociopragmatic competence is equally crucial to participation in study abroad, and that in both contexts its importance lies in its role in the projection of identities that will be recognized in a linguistically and culturally unfamiliar setting.

In study abroad, sociopragmatic competence is essentially a matter of being able to do things with words. It includes both the ability to use a second language to solve everyday problems and the ability to negotiate sociolinguistic norms of politeness and intimacy. Pellegrino Aveni's (2005, 2007) research points to the reduced sense of self that many students experience when they begin study abroad. For students who begin study abroad with low levels of second language proficiency, this may simply be a matter of the amount of the language that they know. For more advanced students, it may be more a matter of sociopragmatic competence. The ability to get things done in a study abroad setting is often related to the ability to use a second language to achieve certain effects. The ability to negotiate sociolinguistic norms is related to the ability to project and achieve recognition for desired identities, which ultimately influences the students' ability to make friends and establish satisfactory relationships with others. In this sense, sociopragmatic competence is largely a matter of using the second language to represent oneself as a fully functioning person in transactional and interactional encounters.

In study abroad research, the kinds of development that we place under sociopragmatic competence have largely been addressed in terms of 'sociolinguistic competence'. For Regan, Howard and Lemée (2009), sociolinguistic competence is represented by students' development of a native-like ability to manipulate certain variable features. In French, this involves contextually appropriate choices of non-standard grammatical features, such as the deletion of *ne* in negative constructions and the use of the third person singular impersonal pronoun *on* to represent the first person plural subject. These choices are important in study abroad, because they signal the student's integration into the host community. Sociolinguistic competence is also likely to be enhanced by

participation in study abroad. Schauer (2009), for example, found that German students' ability to formulate appropriate English-language requests and to recognize pragmatically inappropriate requests was enhanced by study abroad in the United Kingdom (see also Taguchi, 2008, on comprehension of indirect opinions and refusals).

We use the word 'negotiate' in relation to sociolinguistic norms, however, because sociopragmatic competence is not simply a matter of conforming to the norms of native-speaker interactants in the study abroad setting. In a study of apology behaviour among US students of Russian, for example, Shardakova (2005: 423) observed that students do not blindly copy native-speaker norms but 'create their own interlanguage and an accompanying identity in the learning process'. In her commentary on Shardakova's study, Kinginger (2009: 85) observes that the extent to which students achieve native-like performance is 'a question of how much their experience permits them to see things from the point of view of natives, and how much they choose to adopt these perspectives as their own'. Study abroad participants 'may opt to assimilate, or they may cling to familiar forms of self-expression conceived as elements of their personal identity' (p. 89). Iwasaki's (2010) investigation of male English-speaking students who spent a year in Japan arrived at similar conclusions. As the students gained understanding of the social meanings of 'plain' and 'polite' styles in Japanese, they also became 'more active social agents who make decisions to shift the styles' (p. 45). In Larzén-Östermark's (2011) study, a Finnish student studying in Scotland recalled that she gradually began to 'switch on another kind of politeness mode' and learnt to downplay 'her Finnish tendency to be quite direct and to the point in verbal expression'. At the same time, she remained irritated by the British style of 'overpoliteness', which she found superficial.

These studies suggest that sociopragmatic competence is related to second language identity in two ways. First, it is a matter of the ability to do things with a second language, to function as a competent person and achieve recognition for desired identities in the study abroad setting. Second, it is a matter of articulating individual second language identities that are not only appropriate to the norms of interaction in the study abroad setting but are also in balance with students' reflexive identities.

Linguistic self-concept

In Chapter 2, we used the term 'reflexive identity' to refer to 'the self's view of the self'. This corresponds to what people often call their 'real'

selves. Reflexive identity also incorporates both 'self-concept' and the actual attributes and capacities on which it is based. In the context of second language identity development, we use the term 'linguistic self-concept' to refer to reflexive identity insofar as it is concerned with the knowledge and use of a second language. Ellis (2004: 543) uses the same term to refer to 'how learners perceive their ability as language learners and their progress in relation to the particular context in which they are learning', which we may assume is more or less related to their actual abilities and progress. Mercer (2011: 336) also uses this term, suggesting that 'language learner self-concept' represents a holistic set of beliefs and feelings related to the domain of language learning across a range of contexts. For Mercer, self-concept focuses on 'the self-beliefs that a learner holds and takes with them into any encounter, not just in respect to one specific context'.

In our model, the aspect of reflexive identity that consists of actual attributes and capacities is largely covered by language proficiency and sociopragmatic competence. These provide a warrant for the student's linguistic self-concept, which refers more to students' affiliations to the languages they know and their conceptions of their capacities as they are articulated in, for example, self-assessments of proficiency, goals, self-efficacy, motivation and beliefs. There are a number of studies relevant to linguistic self-concept in the study abroad literature. These include studies of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Juhasz and Walker, 1987), self-confidence and willingness to communicate (Archangeli, 1999), motivation (Allen, 2010; Bacon, 2002; Douglass, 2007; Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner, 2000), communicative anxiety (Allen and Herron, 2003), beliefs (Amuzie and Winke, 2009; Yang and Kim, 2011) and language awareness (Stewart, 2010). These studies have generally reported positive effects for study abroad in all of these areas. There has been less research on the influence of study abroad on language affiliations, however, which is highlighted (alongside beliefs and emotional factors) as one of the three main aspects of linguistic self-concept that emerge from the narratives discussed in Chapter 5.

Developments in linguistic self-concept are also concerned with the participants' reflexive sense of their identities as second language 'learners' or 'users', which may have strong implications for the ways in which they approach the language in future. In some cases, there is a significant change in the learner's orientation to the second language within the study abroad setting. Bacon's (2002) case study of a British university student's first semester in a Mexican university, for example, showed how her Spanish proficiency improved dramatically as she

overcame an initial resistance to the language and culture of the study abroad setting. She began not only 'to understand the "rules", but also learn how to play the game, or perform in the culture' (p. 645). Douglass's (2007) case study of a US student in France also showed how her motivations for learning French were re-shaped by experiences during study abroad, as her inability to 'gain access to certain French communities of practice' led her to adopt an 'outsider' identity, spending much of her time with US friends while continuing to learn French largely through independent study and observation (pp. 127–8). Stewart's (2010) study of US students in Mexico also illustrates how linguistic self-concept is negotiated situationally, in the context of interactions with different groups in the study abroad setting. We observed above how one of the students developed an identity as a 'member of the target language community' while another described himself as 'a Spanish-speaking American'. These kinds of comments illustrate how students tend to monitor their identities as part of the process of studying abroad.

Second language-mediated personal competence

Larzén-Östermark (2011: 457) observes that:

> … although enhanced linguistic competence, such as fluency, sociolinguistic competence, and a more native-like accent, often constitute the primary incentive for FL [foreign language] students going abroad, the sojourners themselves tend to trace the major outcomes of their stay abroad to other areas.

She lists a variety of potential non-linguistic outcomes, including increased cognitive understanding of cultural differences, greater understanding of the intellectual life and traditions of the host culture, personal growth (independence, self-reliance, and decision-making ability), increased tolerance and understanding of other people and their views, and higher levels of intercultural sensitivity. Jackson's (2008) study of Hong Kong students in the United Kingdom also identified a variety of non-linguistic outcomes: 'enhanced personal growth, self-confidence, and maturity; a higher degree of independence; a broader world view; more awareness and acceptance of cultural differences; enhanced intercultural communication/social skills; and a greater appreciation of their own culture and identity' (p. 214). As we have noted, outcomes of these kinds tend to be shared by second language and non-second language programmes, and the question to be asked here is whether such developments can be

considered as aspects of second language identity development when they are mediated by second language use. One way of approaching this question is to divide the broad area of personal development into two sub-areas, according to whether outcomes are mainly related to the fact that the students are away from home or whether they are specific to the study abroad setting.

The first of these sub-areas includes outcomes such as personal growth, self-confidence, maturity, independence and global awareness. These kinds of outcomes are somewhat problematic from the perspective of second language identity development, as they may not be directly related to experiences of the language and culture of the study abroad setting. In many cases, study abroad is the students' first experience of being away from home without their family for an extended period of time. As a result, they may learn to get around an unfamiliar city, to feed themselves, to manage their own living arrangements, and so on. These kinds of outcomes may not be mediated by second language use at all, but in many cases they are. In their study of Hong Kong students visiting the United Kingdom, for example, Crew and Bodycott (2002) found that personal growth and maturity were the major outcomes from the students' perspectives. But they observed that although the difficulties they overcame during the visit were not language-based, they were 'capable of being resolved or significantly ameliorated by the use of language' (p. 431). This observation also ties in with what we have said about sociopragmatic competence. The ability to deal with problems in a second language, and consequently the ability to develop as a person in a study abroad setting, implies sociopragmatic competence. Similarly, sociopragmatic successes are likely to fuel the students' self-efficacy and self-confidence as a second language user, which may carry over into greater self-efficacy and self-confidence in other aspects of the student's life during study abroad.

The second sub-area is concerned mainly with development in the area of intercultural competence, or 'the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own' (Guilherme, 2000: 297). The development of intercultural competence in study abroad arises from participants' experiences of unfamiliar cultural practices and norms and their reflections upon them, rather than their experience of using a second language. But in second language programmes, this experience of unfamiliarity is woven into the second language experience through verbal interactions in which cultural identities are enacted, explained and negotiated. Byram (1997) argues that linguistic competence and intercultural competence are closely intertwined, and

makes a distinction between 'intercultural competence' and 'intercultural communicative competence' – the latter referring specifically to the ability to interact with people from other cultures in a second language. Intercultural competence is also represented in terms of the development of identity: becoming an 'intercultural speaker' means becoming a person who 'crosses frontiers, and who is to some extent a specialist in the transit of cultural property' (Byram and Zarate, 1997: 11). From this perspective, there is a clear relationship between intercultural competence and second language identity as developments in participants' sense of themselves as culturally situated persons are mediated through second language use.

Lastly, under the heading of second language–mediated personal development, we may consider the academic development of students who travel overseas to study and obtain academic qualifications through the medium of a second language. For these students, study abroad may involve both the use of a new language and a transition to a new stage of education – as, for example, when a student graduates from school at home and moves to a new country to study for a university degree. For these students, problems of personal growth and intercultural competence are compounded by the broader problem of developing academic competence, while using a second language to study either for the first time or at a higher level. While little attention has been paid to the mediation of academic development through a second language in the study abroad literature, we see it as an important aspect of second language identity development for some students, which will be discussed alongside the development of personal independence and intercultural competence in Chapter 6.

Part II
Dimensions of Second Language Identity

4

Identity-Related Second Language Competence

In the next three chapters, we shift the focus from theory based on previous research to the application of theory to our own data. Each chapter covers one dimension of the model of second language identity outlined in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.2). In this chapter, we focus on identity-related second language competence. Chapter 5 focuses on linguistic self-concept, while Chapter 6 focuses on second language-mediated personal competence. Each chapter has a similar structure, which we hope will help readers track our interpretations of the data and, perhaps, make their own interpretations. Each chapter begins with two narratives of study abroad experiences, which highlight the dimension of second language identity in focus (on the process of writing the narratives, see Chapter 1). While these narratives speak for themselves, we have also included some introductory questions to guide readers towards the analysis which follows them. The section headings in the analysis correspond to these questions, and we hope that they will help readers test our interpretations against their own.

Identity-related second language competence, or sociopragmatic competence, is the first dimension of our model of second language identity development. This chapter explores narratives of two students' experiences of study abroad that we believe contain interesting evidence of sociopragmatic development. The first student is Joey, an undergraduate English-language teacher education student, who spent five months on an immersion programme at a university in Australia. The second is Cindy, a Hong Kong secondary school student who spent 10 days on a school exchange visit to the United States. While reading their stories, consider the following questions:

- What were Joey's and Cindy's goals and expectations for study abroad?
- What opportunities did they have to communicate with English speakers?
- What strategies did they use to enhance communication?
- What challenges and successes did they experience during their experiences of communication?
- How did their sociopragmatic competences develop during study abroad?

Joey's story

Although Joey attended an English-medium secondary school in Hong Kong, for a long time she did not enjoy English because she was told that her English was not very good. However, inspired by movies, she began to take more interest in English in the last couple of years of school. Because she watched a lot of movies, her oral skills improved. She recorded dialogues, listened to them, and imitated them silently. She began to love English, and her academic results improved. Before her departure to Australia, Joey believed that English was simply 'a very useful and practical tool internationally'. How she would describe herself as a user of English depended on whom she was communicating with: a Korean, for example, might see her as a native speaker, but a real native speaker would not. In Hong Kong, she would describe herself as at least upper-immediate, but she had different abilities in different skills: good at speaking but fair at listening.

Although Joey had learned some facts about Australia from the previous year's students, she felt that she had to go there herself to really know about it. She decided that it was best to go to Australia with no expectations at all and 'just embrace it as what it is'. She was looking forward to experiencing another way of life, which she thought would be 180 degrees different from Hong Kong. She expected Australia to be freer, where people were self-centred and very motivated to do things according to their wishes. She looked forward to a close relationship with her hosts, if they were comfortable with it, and hoped they would take her to different places, although she appreciated that they had their own work to do. Joey wanted to learn more about Australia, its politics and social issues through conversation with her hosts.

Joey expected that her English proficiency would improve during her visit, including her fluency and her listening skills, and especially her everyday vocabulary: 'For example, the English terms for "toilet seat" or "water flushing tank", we don't learn these things in Hong Kong in our

daily life'. She also expected that the trip would widen her horizons a little and she might gain some insights into whether she should take the chance to study or work overseas, or even migrate. In Hong Kong, she thought, her attitude is like a typical Hong Kong person, but when she returned from Australia, she might see Hong Kong from a foreigner's perspective.

Joey arrived in Australia in late February. Her host family were a father (a businessman), a mother (a therapist) and two young children. She appreciated their friendliness and kindness, as well as their spacious house and garden and her comfortable bedroom. Joey's birthday came a few days after her arrival, and although she was gloomy that she would spend it away from her family and friends, she was delighted to find a card and present waiting for her when she got up in the morning. Her friends organized a little party in class, and when she got back home, her host family had also prepared a party with birthday cake and candles. A couple of weeks after her arrival, Joey and her friend were the first in the group to take a trip to Sydney, where they saw the sights, enjoyed the art and music on the streets, and stayed overnight with an old school friend who had been in Sydney for five years. In these early days, Joey was very impressed by Australia, its easy-going lifestyle and the openness of Australians.

In the third week of her stay, the first of a series of incidents occurred that dampened some of her optimism. A female international student was harassed by a man after getting off her bus. At the end of Week Four, Joey recorded a second disturbing incident: an early morning argument between her host father and mother. Not daring to leave her bedroom while the 'battle' was still in progress, Joey came down after the father had left for work. The mother was in tears and Joey found herself in the difficult role of comforter. In a sense, this brought them closer together, but Joey also noted that the mother was tired and so busy that sometimes she did not dare to start a conversation with her. To help out, she decided to vacuum the floor. In the fifth week, the most serious incident for the group occurred, when three girls were attacked and robbed by a woman while waiting for the train. On a more positive note, Joey enjoyed life with her host family. On one afternoon she managed to vacuum the whole house before they came home and was delighted at the thanks she received.

In Weeks Six and Seven, Joey and a friend booked a trip to Tasmania and were surprised to find that it was a 'self-help' tour with a single driver/cook/tour guide. Although she was not too impressed with Tasmania, she especially enjoyed the company of the mixed group of Asian students and European tourists, which she contrasted to the

situation at the university. One complaint, however, was that the Europeans seemed to expect the Asian women to do the washing-up every night: 'All the dishes were done by us Asians – Koreans, Japanese – and a few from Hong Kong too'. At the end of this trip, Joey surprised herself by taking a plane to Melbourne to stay for a few days with a student she had met on the Tasmania tour before returning to her university.

Back at university, Joey's classmates were homesick, but she says that she was one of the rare independent ones who wished that she could extend the immersion rather than cut it short. A few weeks later, there were two more short trips, to Canberra and a local market town, but once again there was an unpleasant incident on the train on the way home. This time Joey and two friends were surrounded by around 10 young men who had been drinking beer. Joey solved the problem by suggesting to her friends that they 'pretend that we don't know English'. Although nothing serious happened on this occasion, she was disappointed that their conversation had to turn to safety and the 'silly guys' they met in Australia on the way home.

And then a couple of weeks later, 'I was called a bitch by two young boys. I guessed they are about 13. They are stupid'. Now Joey wanted to leave as soon as possible. Apart from homework and a few short trips away there was 'nothing meaningful and interesting' ahead. She had also begun to lose patience. Ignored by a staff member at the supermarket, she felt angry: 'If you ask me to comment on Australians in this town, I would love to say most of them are silly, rude, narrow-minded, racist and lazy'. Shortly before leaving, her assessment was somewhat more positive as she summed up her experience and praised the Australians' healthy lifestyle, their creativity in creating art in the street, and their sense of humour.

After the robbery on the train, she and her friends were terrified and didn't want to make friends or talk to any of the guys on their street. Before that, 'if somebody approached us, we just talked and made friends. But after that we didn't want to approach them'. In Joey's case, this avoidance lasted about a month because she wanted to protect herself, but then she adjusted her attitude and decided to take chances to make friends, to experience more on her journey.

Although Joey had wanted to make a lot of friends at university, she found that both the local and international students had their own lives and did not really want to do so. There was not much opportunity to talk to them and the university teachers because they were so busy.

The Hong Kong group tended to stick together and spoke Chinese to each other. With regard to the local students, Joey remarked:

> Just like you have been rejected for a few times and then robbery and sexual harassment happened and you just don't want to know them. I don't mean that I didn't want to talk to them but then you talk but you just don't know much about them … talking very superficially.

Because Joey had already learned English well in Hong Kong, she felt that she did not learn much English from the university courses, which were not difficult. The group observed classes in different local schools each week as part of their programme. Joey said that since she was paying so much attention to the teaching she was observing she did not really focus on language. In one of her courses (Ethnographic Project), she chose to do a few interviews for an assignment on Indigenous Australians' participation in Australian life. She did much reading to prepare for her interviews: 'Based on those readings, I can set up my own questions. … I then set up my questionnaire and did interviews with different people; like an expert in the uni, and a local student'. During the whole process, she wasn't worried about her English use. She did learn quite a bit of vocabulary as well as ways to express herself clearly, 'but I didn't intentionally do it'.

In the homestay, Joey always grasped the chance to talk to the mother and father, but they were often just too busy to talk for long. However, she learned a lot of vocabulary 'because I wanted to know, and I needed to know, some of the equipment of things in homestay settings, for example, for cooking equipment, I didn't know the names of this pan and that pan'. Joey 'always asked a lot … of course, I can't remember all, but I learned a bit, and I think I have a better vocabulary bank'. She did have a number of interesting conversations with the father 'about religion, politics, Australian life and topics like that'. She played hide-and-seek with the little girls, and had many conversations with them.

After returning to Hong Kong, Joey thought that her English had improved a little, because she had started to read more English books and had begun to appreciate 'the meaning and humour more easily'. She also learned a lot while travelling, especially vocabulary, and found it challenging to have to use English to communicate when travelling alone to Melbourne. While travelling, she had been a:

> 100 per cent language user – all the texts and labels are written in English and you have to know the words for travelling, you have to

read their catalogues and stuff like that. You have to communicate with others and every time you just learn something no matter what the vocabulary, or names, or accents.

Overall, however, Joey felt that she had not learned a lot of English, although the opportunity to be in a context where she could really use English was valuable:

If you want to learn English, actually you can learn anytime, it doesn't really matter. … You have to have a target, like a context, and I think Australia provides such a context. You just use it. Quite a lot of English in there. … If you want to learn you take the initiative, take a very active role to do that. So I don't think it matters where you are. You really need the context to use it.

Joey compared her earlier experiences of learning English with her approach during the immersion programme. Before, she would intentionally learn English by focusing on grammar or reading or watching TV. During the study abroad, however, she felt she could 'learn more in a more natural way', an approach which she liked.

At first Joey made more effort to use English in this immersion context. She had little difficulty. One problem was the accent, especially when chatting with males. She couldn't always catch their words. She wondered if it wasn't the speed with which males spoke or the topics she discussed that caused difficulty, especially with her host father and one particular university lecturer, whom she thought was not born in Australia. After a few weeks, Joey started to become lazier. In the homestay, for example, she became more reluctant to bring up topics with the parents because she knew they were so busy. And the unfortunate experiences with the robbery and the drunken youth also forced her into her shell somewhat. On the whole, Joey believed that her English proficiency had improved: 'in terms of vocabulary bank and listening, yes. But for other aspects … I won't say no, but maybe there is not very obvious improvement. Maybe I haven't realised it yet'.

Joey felt that the experience had challenged her view of herself as a language learner. With regard to her identity, she now saw herself as almost a native speaker of English – 'I just spoke with them very normally' – but she also had a stronger feeling towards her identity as Chinese. She 'couldn't mix or fuse with Australians'. She did not know why, but she 'just had a very concrete feeling that I was Chinese, I am Chinese'.

Cindy's story

Cindy began to learn English in kindergarten, where the focus was on the basics, such as learning the English alphabet. She enrolled in extra-curricular tutorials, not only for English but for all school subjects. She believed she was forced by the government to learn English at school, and although she does not like English very much, she does not resist English. Her English is good and she is not afraid to speak it. Cindy sees English as an international language, which is widely used in Hong Kong because Hong Kong is an international city. She does not have any pressure from her family to learn English, claiming that she herself is motivated to develop her proficiency. She believes that English is required in today's world and that she needs it to do well at school. Cindy is willing and eager to learn more, and describes herself as 'still a learner', rather than a competent user.

Before going to the United States, Cindy's only trip outside Hong Kong had been to Beijing when she was very young. She was looking forward to getting the chance to test and practise her English skills in an English-speaking environment. Cindy believed that for improving English proficiency, having a good English environment is of most importance. This was the main reason that she decided to join the exchange trip. In Hong Kong, all her friends are Cantonese-speaking, and so they obviously only talk to each other in Chinese. Cindy identifies listening as an important skill for development. She therefore planned to make the most of her opportunity abroad to listen carefully to the English she would encounter:

> The most important thing is that I get to speak English. We do not speak English very often in Hong Kong. However, in the United States, everyone speaks English, so I will have to force myself to speak fluently. Hong Kong just lacks this kind of environment.

Cantonese is Cindy's mother tongue, and she says she likes it better than English, mainly because she finds it easier to use, to express herself accurately, clearly and fluently. On the other hand, she still struggles with understanding and using English fluently, especially informal varieties and slang. She expected to encounter slang in the United States, but felt confident that she would cope: 'I think I will be fine. However, people usually use a lot of slang. Making friends will be a bit difficult at first'. In a way, Cindy wanted to use the exchange as an opportunity to self-evaluate her English ability and to show her actual English ability

when communicating with people in the United States. She expected that there would be problems in daily communication, such as when ordering food, but she was keen nevertheless to take on the challenge and to see how she coped. She also realized that she might find it hard to understand the people she met in the United States, but believed that it would become easier after some time to adapt to the new environment. In spite of any developments, Cindy felt that 10 days would not be enough to make much progress.

Before she left, Cindy was looking forward to meeting and living with her host family. However, she was 'most looking forward to lots of ice-cream!' She hoped that the trip would make her more open-minded after experiencing other cultures and meeting different people. She was aware that, since this was to be her first time studying abroad, she was a person who had not seen the world. She had only experienced life in Hong Kong. She thus anticipated learning about new, exciting things. However, in only 10 days she did not expect to change too much as a person. On her return, she hoped that her communication skills might be better, especially when communicating with foreigners. Since she thought that the pace of life was slower in the United States than it was in Hong Kong, she expected that she would slow down when she returned to Hong Kong.

Cindy sees herself as an active person who is proactive in initiating conversation and is 'not shy to speak'. Making friends is easy for her. In the United States, this proved to be the case. She was surprised by how easy it was to build up a friendship with her host family during the few days she spent with them. She gained more than she could have imagined. Cindy had a very good time with her host family, which included two daughters, and a classmate from Hong Kong. They socialized a lot together. She learned a lot about the American lifestyle while living with the family; for example, that most families kept large dogs, and their refrigerators were always full of meat for the dogs. She spoke a lot of English with members of the family, getting plenty of practice communicating. She experienced no language problems.

At school, Cindy did two courses: a Spanish and an English class. Although she could not understand Spanish she enjoyed both classes, and in the English class felt that she could understand what the teacher taught completely. The teacher spoke very slowly, and this helped her to follow the lesson. She was surprised about the way students behaved in American schools; when the class ended, for example, they would rush out of the classroom as soon as the bell rang. They just ignored the teacher. She found this rather amusing.

Daily life consisted of school and time spent with the host family. Cindy finished school early each day, compared to Hong Kong, and so she could easily finish all the things she had to do on campus and then enjoy life after class, which involved mainly being at home with her family. In all aspects of her life – school, home, daily life – Cindy coped well enough with English. There were times when small communication problems arose, but these were easily resolved: 'Maybe sometimes I suddenly forgot one word. Then I drew or used some body language and they could understand me'. Another example relates to her association with her assigned buddy at school; at the beginning of the tour, she was not brave enough to chat with her buddy, and they experienced quite embarrassing situations on the way to school in the bus: 'As we did not talk much there was even 'dead air' most of the time. But as time went by our gap had gone and we had a lot of chat with each other'.

Cindy felt that her speaking skills were tested, and she enjoyed discovering ways to meet the challenges she sometimes encountered. For example, 'I strengthened a lot in speaking because I spoke a lot. I could run my brain faster when I spoke'. She also overcame many vocabulary and grammar problems. She gives another example: 'I thought they would speak very fast so that I could not catch them. I also thought I would need to use a lot of "pardon?" But actually I have done much better'. Cindy also believed that she was easily understood, and that she could express herself fluently and accurately.

After returning to Hong Kong, Cindy reaffirmed her belief that speaking is best enhanced in an English-speaking environment. Her own experience confirmed this. She had gained confidence in using English and identified herself in the United States as a user of English, as well as a learner:

> A user, just a little. When I am a learner, I pay attention to my grammar at every moment, such as when should I add 's' or 'ed'. However, when I was in the United States, I need not consider a lot at the time I was speaking. To some extent I became a user.

Others said her English was good, including members of her host family. Consequently, she became more confident. She also firmly believed that 'English is really, really, really important!' for her. Cindy plans to return to the United States to further her studies after completing a BA in Hong Kong.

Finally, the trip to the United States planted in Cindy a desire to travel around the world, to broaden her horizons and to meet people with

different cultural backgrounds in different places. She really learned a lot from this trip. In only a short space of time, therefore, Cindy became more open-minded, feeling she could accept the mix of different cultures. She became aware of cultural differences between Americans and Chinese. For Cindy, the world has become bigger. Although she had only been to a small state, and a small school in the United States, she could still discover a lot of things, and she is keen to learn more.

Sociopragmatic competence

Holmes and Riddiford (2011) define sociopragmatic competence as 'the ability to accurately interpret and appropriately express social meaning in interaction' (p. 377). This apparently simple definition includes a number of interrelated components which together describe the complex process of effective communication in social contexts. It refers to the *ability* of the individual. Being able to communicate successfully in a particular situation is a competence. It is something that we know when we know a language, and something we learn when we learn a second language. This communicative ability includes receptive and productive aspects, both of which need to be accurate and appropriate if interlocutors are to get their meaning across. Of significance to sociopragmatic competence is that meaning refers not only to *linguistic* meaning (accurately using the sounds, grammar and vocabulary of a language) but also to *social* meaning (using the language appropriately in particular socio-cultural contexts).

One of the goals of study abroad is for participants to develop their sociopragmatic competence in the language they are learning, typically the language of the host society. Students, themselves, often refer to this goal as improving their language 'proficiency' with the emphasis on linguistic skills, but what they really mean is that they want to learn how to use the language appropriately with the people they study and live with and otherwise encounter during their daily activities in their overseas destinations. In this chapter we examine the goals and expectations that Joey and Cindy have regarding the development of linguistic and sociopragmatic competence while abroad. We then look at the opportunities they have to communicate in English, and how they take up these opportunities when they do arise. Next, we consider some of the sociopragmatic challenges, problems and successes experienced by Joey and Cindy. The final section of the chapter summarizes the relationship between the development of sociopragmatic competence and second language identity as it appears in their study abroad narratives.

Goals and expectations

Before leaving Hong Kong for their respective destinations, Joey and Cindy provided information about their English learning history, their perceptions of their English ability, and their ideas and expectations about the personal goals they set for themselves during their sojourn overseas. Like all study abroad students, they imagined identities for themselves in a foreign environment, including the communities they desired to belong to, the friends they would make, the challenges they would encounter, and the successes they would have. Central to their imagined identities were their use and learning of English. Key questions they were likely to ask themselves included: How good is my English? How will I cope? Will I understand unfamiliar accents and strange slang? Will I learn anything?

  Joey's and Cindy's pre-departure reflections were remarkably similar, considering that they were studying at different educational levels (university and secondary school) and were to stay overseas for substantially different periods of time (five months and 10 days respectively).

  Both described their English proficiency as good, and predicted that they would cope fairly well in an English-speaking environment. Joey, for example, highlighted her good speaking skills, and generally she thought she was at least 'upper-intermediate' level. She expected that her proficiency would improve in Australia, especially her fluency, listening skills and her everyday vocabulary (including plumbing words such as 'toilet seat' and 'water flushing tank'). Access to this new vocabulary, her generally high level of proficiency, and her envisaged improvements should have ensured reasonably successful social interactions. Later we see if this was the case. Cindy, too, described her English as good and quite realistically felt that 10 days in the United States was probably not enough time to see much development in her proficiency. She was, however, optimistic that some improvement would be made with her listening and communication skills, especially when talking to US speakers of English; that is, she hoped to see some sociopragmatic development. She expected some challenges understanding the US accent and the local slang, but believed this would become easier after she had spent some time in the host community. In fact, both Cindy and Joey felt that the best way to learn English is to immerse oneself in an English-speaking environment. For Cindy, doing so was the main reason for going on the study tour. Similarly, Joey was prepared to immerse herself in an English world in Australia and embrace it for what it was: a context necessary for learning more English where any improvements would take place 'in a more natural way'.

Joey looked forward to developing a close relationship with members of her host family, and was eager to learn about Australia by engaging in conversation about its politics and social issues. Through her social interactions she intended to acquire information about her host community as well as enjoy a comfortable relationship with the people with whom she would spend most of her time. Joey was aware even before meeting them that they led busy lives and so was cautious about the likelihood of attaining these goals. Cindy realized her time abroad would be spent mainly at school and with her host family; she was not going to be overseas long enough to do any travelling. She hoped she would get along well with her family, and later exclaimed that she could hardly believe how easy it was to become close friends with them in such a short space of time. Sensibly, Cindy's goals took into account her limited time in the United States. Her main focus was to test and practise her English skills. She wanted to take the opportunity to self-evaluate her proficiency, to see how she coped when interacting on a daily basis ordering food, making new friends, living with her host family, and studying at school.

Opportunities to communicate in English

Three contexts provided Joey and Cindy with opportunities to practise, improve and evaluate their English: the host family, the educational site, and travel. There were also interactional experiences outside of these contexts, and it is mainly Joey who talks about these. These will be discussed in a later section. The main source of opportunities to communicate was the host family. This was to be expected, since study abroad students placed with homestay families spend most of their time with them. The home is where they are based, where they eat, sleep, socialize and learn about the host community. Within the family domain, they engage in recreation, visit other families, go sightseeing and sometimes travel. The interaction that takes place is thus varied, and there are plenty of opportunities to engage in talk.

Joey's narrative has many examples. She spent one-on-one time with the father, having conversations about 'religion, politics, Australian life and topics like that'. These informal discussions allowed Joey to use English in a relaxed environment. However, there were times when she preferred not to talk to her host parents because she sensed that they were very busy. This is not so much a missed communicative opportunity as an awareness of the sociopragmatic appropriateness of silence. There were also times when Joey remained silent in the company of her

mother, again because Joey sensed she was tired or too busy. On one occasion, however, she was forced to communicate. This was after an argument between the mother and father. Joey was upstairs when the 'battle' was underway, but after the father left for work, she came down and played the role of comforter, consoling the mother, who was in tears. This must have taken some delicate sociopragmatic skill on Joey's part, and she coped well with what the situation required. In the home, Joey played games with the younger children, adjusting her talk to suit the playful occasion.

Cindy's time with her American family was just as rewarding. She could hardly believe how quickly she became friends with them, and attributes this success to her outgoing personality. Cindy spoke a lot of English with her family, initiating many of the conversations and getting plenty of practice speaking English. She experienced no problems communicating with them, and learned much about what she called 'the American lifestyle'. Cindy's daily life consisted of time spent with her family and time spent at school. At school, she participated in two courses – English and Spanish – and coped well in both even though she could not understand Spanish. She was able to understand the English teacher completely because she spoke slowly. Joey's university experience was less satisfying. She found it difficult to make friends with both Australian and international students because: first, they had their own lives and it appeared to Joey that they did not really want to make friends with her; second, there was not much opportunity to talk to them as they were so busy. Conversations that did take place with local students were rather superficial, and so 'you talk but you just don't know much about them'. Furthermore, a lot of time spent on campus was with her Hong Kong classmates, and when they were together they spoke Cantonese. Joey's involvement in a course assignment did give her an excellent opportunity to engage with a local student and some lecturers. She was required to interview them for an ethnographic assignment on Indigenous Australians' participation in Australian life. This discourse would have involved an academic style of speaking, incorporating the sociopragmatic skills necessary for inviting participation, asking questions, building a rapport with the interviewee, and ending the interview appropriately. Joey said she coped very well with the whole exercise.

Being in America for only 10 days, Cindy did not do any travelling outside her home town. Joey, however, had much more opportunity to do so. She and a friend went to Sydney by themselves, sightseeing and visiting an old friend. With other friends, she made two short trips to Canberra and a local market town, and she went to Melbourne

all by herself. Joey's quite extensive travel experiences exposed her to many opportunities, mostly unavoidable, to develop her sociopragmatic skills. Besides the texts she encountered (e.g. travel brochures, websites, timetables, written announcements in stations), she had to interact with many service staff and locals to obtain the information she required, and 'every time you just learn something no matter what the vocabulary, or names, or accents'. These encounters provided Joey with a rich source of talk-in-interaction, with which she coped adequately.

In the next section, we look at how willing Joey and Cindy were to take up the many opportunities to communicate in English that came their way, and we also look at some of the strategies they employed to seek out further opportunities to develop their sociopragmatic skills.

Communication strategies

Cindy describes herself as 'an active person' who is proactive in initiating conversations. She was determined before she left for America to fully immerse herself in the English-speaking environment, a strategy she believed was essential for developing English proficiency. She planned, therefore, to listen carefully to the English she heard and to 'force' herself to speak fluently. Cindy was thus very willing to communicate in English. And she certainly did. She reported at the end of her visit that she 'spoke a lot' and doing so made her 'brain run faster'. In the process she overcame many grammar and vocabulary problems. When she did encounter difficulties, such as forgetting a word, she would discover ways to meet the challenge, such as drawing a picture to represent the word or using body language to get her message across. She also did not use 'pardon' to ask for clarification as often as she expected.

In most situations Joey was just as eager to communicate in English. For example, as we have already seen, she established a good rapport with members of her host family and grasped the chance to engage them in conversation whenever she felt they were available. She actively asked them questions whenever she needed to know anything, such as the names of the various pots and pans in the kitchen. It was this sort of relevant information, and the matching 'vocabulary bank', that Joey acquired during these interactions. Joey's overall strategy for improving her English was simply to be in an English environment and within it to 'take the initiative, take a very active role'. Her strategy, in other words, was to make use of the context available to her.

However, there were occasions when Joey retreated from communicative opportunities, usually for strategically defensive purposes such

as when she and her classmates pretended that they could not speak English when confronted by a group of intoxicated young men on a train. This sociopragmatic strategy was successful since they were eventually left alone and nothing serious happened. The after-effects of this incident, and the one when a group of students was attacked and robbed by a woman at the train station, was that Joey withdrew into her communicative shell in public places. For a time she did not want to make friends or to talk to people in the street. Her enthusiasm to interact subsided in the face of repeated unpleasant and potentially dangerous interactional situations. As she says, 'after that we didn't want to approach them'. This was a pity, especially since Joey was determined at the start of the visit to be proactive in making communicative connections with English-speaking people and to immerse herself in the English environment, which she believed was so important for developing her English proficiency. Fortunately, after about a month, Joey adjusted her attitude and decided once again to take chances initiating conversations. She really did want to make the most of her 'journey'.

Challenging sociopragmatic contexts

It could be argued that almost all of the communicative events in a study abroad context present some degree of challenge to the participating students. After all, they are in an unfamiliar environment, far away from home, obliged to speak a second language, and no doubt feel a certain amount of uncertainty regarding the appropriate cultural practices of the host community. Joey's and Cindy's narratives report on numerous experiences where their sociopragmatic skills must have been quite severely tested. By all accounts, both did very well coping with most of these challenges. Cindy, for example, mentions that her speaking skills were frequently tested, but that she enjoyed finding ways to meet the challenges she encountered. She did struggle, however, connecting with her assigned buddy, a student from the same school appointed to support Cindy. Travelling on the bus together, Cindy found it difficult connecting with her buddy and getting a conversation going. As she says, there was often much 'dead air'. Thankfully, the situation improved over time and the gap between them was filled with appropriate chat.

Joey was abroad for a much longer time and so one would expect that her challenges were more frequent and probably greater as she attempted to settle into life in Australia. For example, she found herself involved in a number of unpleasant incidents, as we have seen: one of her classmates was harassed by a man after a bus trip; another three

were attacked and robbed by a woman while waiting for a train; she was called a 'bitch' by two young boys; and she and her classmates were surrounded by a group of drunk men on a train. Defusing such situations in a second language in a culturally strange environment must have been extremely demanding sociopragmatically for Joey. In one instance, we saw that Joey and her friends pretended not to be able to speak English. This strategy worked – they were left alone. Just keeping quiet in the other situations and not responding was probably also a useful avoidance strategy. The consequence, though, besides the emotional cost, was that Joey was afterwards less prepared to initiate or engage in conversation with English-speaking locals. On a road trip to Tasmania, we see a similar outcome. Joey and her classmates remained silent rather than meet head-on the awkward situation they found themselves in when the European travellers in their group expected the Asians (including Joey and her Hong Kong friends) to do the washing-up every night. They were happy to meet their fellow travellers and enjoyed their company, and they generally got on well with them (as opposed to the international students they came across on the university campus), but they did not feel capable of resolving this particular intercultural impasse they found themselves in.

Joey was also baffled about why she was ignored by a staff member in a supermarket. Did she do or say something wrong? Her talk with local and other international students was superficial, and she struggled to make friends with them. Were they too busy or was Joey saying the wrong things in the wrong way? She sometimes found it difficult to understand the talk of young males. Did they speak too fast or was it their accents or the topics they were talking about? In the homestay, she asked many questions about the vocabulary of unfamiliar items she came across. Was it appropriate to do so, so frequently? These were the types of questions Joey asked herself on a daily basis as she endeavoured to participate in her Australian life.

Sociopragmatic successes

Despite these challenges, Cindy and Joey achieved many successes along the way, and at the end of their respective visits were able to report some progress in their sociopragmatic development. One of Cindy's goals for her study abroad experience had been to self-evaluate her English ability; to test out her skills in an English-speaking environment. The overall result was very positive. She knew she could make friends easily because she was a very active person, and she did, especially with her

host family. She had plenty of practice communicating with them, and she had no major problems. In fact, in all aspects of her short sociolinguistic life in America she managed to use English for communicative purposes with few difficulties. Cindy reports that she was able to express herself fluently and accurately, and was thus easily understood. People she met, including host family members, commented that her English was good. She believes that, even during such a short visit, her speaking skill was strengthened; she also overcame some grammatical and vocabulary problems. One clear example was her ability to resolve the slow communicative start between herself and her assigned buddy when they first met and travelled on the school bus together.

Joey's successes can be illustrated by some social activities that she participated in satisfactorily. Like Cindy, she got on well with members of her host family, made friends with them, and learned a lot about Australia through the many conversations she had with them. She played hide-and-seek and other games with the young children, and played comforter to her host mother after a particularly bitter argument the latter had had with her husband (this activity must have required quite refined pragmatic skill). Joey was an observer in numerous classrooms in different schools, and concentrated so intently on the teaching practices of the teacher that she did not find it necessary to focus on the language being used. She could easily understand the teachers in her own university classes. And she completed her quite challenging ethnography assignment, which involved conducting interviews and reporting findings orally to the class, with relative ease. Joey believed before the start of her study abroad experience that English is best learned in a 'natural way' by living in an English-speaking environment. At the end of her stay, Joey felt that her English had in fact improved a bit, but not by much. She further suggested that she might not be aware of any improvement beyond this, saying 'maybe I haven't realized it yet'.

Discussion: Sociopragmatic competence and second language identity

What do we learn about Joey and Cindy from their sociopragmatic experiences described in their narratives? More specifically, what is the relationship between their sociopragmatic development and the development of their second language identities? Through the English they used, its form and appropriateness, they demonstrated their language skills to their interlocutors, but they also projected a sense of who they are as people (see Chapter 3).

We have seen in Joey's narrative of her five-month-long visit to Australia connections among the effort she put into seeking communicative opportunities, the communicative challenges she met, the successes she achieved in sociolinguistic encounters, and how she used English to negotiate the identities she desired for herself. And who she was changed over time. On some occasions she was a defenceless international student, on others she was a competent ethnographic researcher, and on still others a functioning member of her host family. She was also a traveller, a public transport commuter, a university student, a comforter to her host mother, and a supermarket shopper. English use was central to the ups and downs Joey experienced in these situations, and the manner in which she used English showed just who she was and how she saw herself as an English user.

Joey's view of English is that it is a 'very useful and practical tool internationally'. Joey believes that being a *user* of English depends on whom she is talking to. When she was travelling in Australia, for example, she was '100 per cent language user'; she needed to use English to organize and accomplish her trips. She did not need to use English when she pretended that she couldn't speak it when confronted by a group of threatening men on a train. On her return to Hong Kong, Joey saw herself as almost a native speaker, saying that in Australia she 'just spoke with them very normally'. This obviously reflects her view that she coped well. She had learned more English and become more and more a user of English. Nevertheless, Joey is clear that she remains Chinese. Her narrative ends with the words, 'I am Chinese'. She cannot imagine her identity fusing or mixing with Australians.

Cantonese is Cindy's mother tongue too, and she says she likes it better than English because when she uses Cantonese she expresses herself more accurately and fluently. However, like Joey, she believes that English is a required language in today's world: 'English is really, really, really important!' She therefore invested considerable effort in practising her English during her short stay in the United States. Being an 'active person' who enjoyed meeting people and initiating conversation with them, it was to be expected that Cindy would achieve her aim of becoming a little more open-minded after the trip. She particularly appreciated diversity, and began to accept more readily the mix of different cultures. Of course, her visit was only a very short one, at a small school in a small state, but it nevertheless gave her a glimpse of life in America. Her discussions with members of her host family, her chats with her school buddy, and her inclusion in classroom talk at school developed in her a confidence to use English. Although she admitted she still had a lot to

learn about English, on many occasions she identified herself, 'to some extent', as a *user* of English when in the United States. In the future, she looked forward to travelling to many countries around the world.

The narratives in this chapter represent the study abroad experiences of two students. The chapter has focused particularly on their language-related experiences; the opportunities they had to use English, their enthusiasm for doing so, the challenges they encountered and the successes they achieved. It has offered many examples of English used in specific contexts of interaction. Many of these suggest that language learning has taken place. Both Joey and Cindy, despite the difference in time spent abroad, indicated that they learned some English during their overseas visits; from increasing a 'vocabulary bank' to feeling more confident about speaking English, from using English without needing to consciously focus on grammar to expressing oneself fluently during an oral presentation. The distinction between linguistic and sociopragmatic competence is not clear (Schauer, 2009), as we can see in Cindy's and Joey's narratives. When they were using English to develop friendships with members of their host family, were they using their English-language (second language) skills accurately and were they using English appropriately (second language pragmatics) within an informal family context? A further distinction remains unclear: When were Cindy and Joey functioning as language *users* and when were they *learners*? In other words, what were their identities in relation to their English? Both Joey and Cindy suggest in their narratives that at different times they were more one than the other, but generally they felt they were both.

In either case, as learners or users of English, their linguistic and sociopragmatic competence is displayed in interactive encounters. But they do much more than this. Joey and Cindy use their skills to the best of their ability to project to their interlocutors the identities that match their sense of who they are and how they want to be perceived. This chapter has shown how they do this.

5
Linguistic Self-Concept

Linguistic self-concept is the second dimension of our model of second language identity development, and we begin this chapter with two narratives that illustrate such developments. Both students visited Australia. Angelina is an undergraduate English Communication student at a university in Hong Kong. She spent a semester abroad on an exchange programme. Sandy is an Early Childhood Education student who spent five weeks on an immersion programme at a university in Australia. As you read Angelina's and Sandy's narratives below, consider the following questions:

- What are their affiliations with the languages they know?
- What are their beliefs about learning and using English as their second language?
- What do they say about the emotional aspects of their experiences of using English in Australia, especially their self-confidence?
- What do they think about others' perceptions of them as English users?
- How do they perceive themselves as English learners and users?
- How do their affiliations, attitudes, emotions and perceptions *change* as a result of their study abroad experience?

Angelina's story

Angelina started learning English from the age of three. Seeking an alternative English learning experience for her daughter, her mother enrolled Angelina in English classes at the British Council when aged 11, believing that the way they taught would stimulate her interest in English. Looking back, Angelina believes it did have a profound and

positive effect on both her attitude and proficiency. Most notably, these lessons taught her the importance of language learning for interaction as distinguished from the study of language and its grammar. Angelina went on to attend a prestigious secondary school that used English as the medium of instruction, although her teachers and peers rarely spoke English outside the classroom. Nevertheless, Angelina has always had an extremely positive attitude towards learning English, and to this day she loves everything about it. She likes reading and writing in English, and also enjoys English drama. She now has a range of English friends and regularly speaks English with her local friends in class and outside it. Her passion for English has developed into a genuine interest in languages.

Taking the opportunity to develop her second language proficiencies further, Angelina had already participated in overseas language and cultural study tours to Australia, Italy and the United Kingdom. She had also taken courses in Japanese and Spanish. Her trips abroad reinforced her positive view of herself as an English language user. She valued her ability to interact with and relate to people from different cultural backgrounds.

These overseas experiences helped Angelina develop her goals for the exchange semester. High on her list of priorities was developing academic relationships and friendships with Australians. From experience she knew the best way to understand a culture and develop broader language proficiency was to engage with locals. Her shorter-term programme in the United Kingdom did not allow time for such interaction, and finding a common language to use with locals on her trip to Italy proved almost impossible. In Italy, fellow international students became her mainstay of friendships and language and cultural support. To this end, she was certain that 16 weeks or more in an English-speaking environment would provide her with the opportunities to interact with locals that she desired.

Such a length of time away from home, and immersion in an English-speaking environment, did not faze or concern Angelina. On the contrary, she felt well prepared personally and was confident of success. Reflecting on this preparedness, Angelina expressed a clear and insightful understanding of the role of languages in her life:

> I speak Cantonese, Mandarin, English, a bit of Italian and I am learning Spanish now, and I know some Japanese. I feel like Italian is an exotic language for me. I am a learner, a foreigner with it, and then English is like a friend. It is a language that I have grown up with, it's

part of me. It's not something that's exotic. It's more something like I can use in my daily life. Cantonese is more like a family language because I speak this language with my parents. I speak English with my friends and teachers.

Angelina's expectations of her visit to Australia included learning to write better academic English. She assumed she would be compared with native speakers and so decided that her English would have to improve. Her approach to building relationships would also need to change. Angelina described herself as a 'quiet, traditional Chinese girl'. However, she believed this quiet, somewhat reserved Hong Kong personality would not work well in Australia. Describing Australians as passionate and outgoing, Angelina was determined to show that part of her self which 'remains largely hidden in Hong Kong'. Such a change in her approach to expressing herself is both a cultural and a language matter. She planned to exaggerate the part of her cultural self that would be most suited to the Australian context: 'I am on the one hand like this; on the other hand like that'. She did not expect any difficulties fitting in, culturally or in terms of language.

I think they will see me as a foreigner. I'm Chinese. I think they will think I am a foreigner even though I speak English. I know I can't be 100 per cent local, but I will try to feel how they feel, and think how they think. I will fit in.

Angelina walked head on into her exchange experience, safe in the knowledge she would survive, that she had the skills to adapt, to fit in, and with clear desires to learn more about her host culture, particularly their way of thinking. She was resolved to develop a greater understanding of those parts of herself that normally lie hidden, shrouded by a conservative cultural upbringing. With such expectations, Angelina could have been setting herself up for a great disappointment. But, through a delicate balance of skills, focus and cross-cultural understanding, she not only achieved the majority of her expectations, but surpassed many.

Her choice to live in a shared rented house with 13 fellow students was an absolute highlight. This group of students from around the world provided social, cultural and emotional support. They, in a small way, made up for her only real and surprising disappointment: the lack of close Australian friends. The Australian students spent much less time on campus than the international ones. She did not feel that they were racist in any way, just 'very protective of their own country, personal

space and their privacy'. This made making friends with them a challenge. While studying and travelling with her international student friends around Australia, Angelina did find time to explore the culture and surprisingly also the Indigenous Australian culture. However, she felt her understanding of academic and cultural life was somewhat superficial. In spite of this, she did find herself changing.

One important change that Angelina experienced was that she became more independent in study and in daily life: for example, organizing her life, her study schedule, and her time generally, arranging her classes and her house, and her bank account. She also learned how to budget. Everyone, even exchange students, was expected to be independent. The class, the tutor or lecturer were very independent. It was up to the students to make choices about their learning and to ask questions. They should not expect the lecturers to approach them, to ask if they understood what was going on.

Angelina became not only much more aware of her study and learning ability but also her level of English: 'I am more aware of how my English level compares to other people after the trip, like how the Hong Kong English level compares with other countries. I have a comparing mindset now whereas before I didn't really know'. She constantly compared the English ability of people from different countries. Her understandings about language use prior to the Australian visit were based on previous trips abroad, including Australia. She was prepared to be polite and adapt and enhance her English language use. What she found, however, was that her concept of English language use changed.

> Australians, they are like very casual, so they don't really care only about politeness. It's very casual, like you can say 'What the bloody hell?', and they don't find it impolite. They are very friendly, casual. The students treat each other and foreigners as equal and focus on humour and having fun. Maybe in a business corporation it would be different, but in the university the language use, except in academic writing etc. was very relaxed.

While improving her written academic language was her goal, she remained unsatisfied with her ability. At the end of her visit she still found it difficult to write in an academic style, especially a very formal, very academic report. She compared herself to native speakers, saying, even they are 'always polishing their English, so they can write more formally'.

Overall, Angelina believed her English language skills had improved, mainly because she had been exposed to an English-speaking

environment: 'You listen to it and you speak it, you write it, just naturally'. She used English in practical ways, such as for meeting people, and doing basic things like going out with friends, chilling out and having fun, and doing her shopping. 'Practice', Angelina believes, 'makes perfect'. That said, throughout her study, Angelina continued to work on developing and using her understanding of new English vocabulary. She felt the need to study as well. She would read books and try to remember the vocabulary. She was aware that not many people use difficult words in daily life, but she needed to know those words to express herself in certain situations. So, she worked continuously to achieve this.

The 16-week exchange and further travels afterwards developed in Angelina a new confidence in using English. She also developed a desire, a motivation to improve, to reach higher and higher levels of proficiency. She became acutely aware that with such proficiency she could achieve many things – things that before the exchange perhaps she was unaware of or were rated less highly. For example, she believed that using English is unavoidable, and – like Mandarin – it is getting more and more important: 'These languages are like a basic ticket to future success'. In particular, Angelina became more self-aware of the importance of being a more than competent English user:

> I'm more aware of my language ability, not just language itself but also how I use it and how well I can think in English and how others perceive me. Now I think like an examiner. I now have the ability to judge myself and can be quite critical about myself; I know how I compare. Australian's say I speak with an Australian accent, but they don't usually comment on my English. Maybe compared to my Asian friends they would say my English is very good.

The exchange experience challenged some of Angelina's conceptions, and, while she was disappointed not to make many personal friends among locals, she believed the experience had benefited her greatly. She believes she has changed as a person:

> I experience things differently when I'm using English. Not directly but maybe indirectly. I'm like I have changed in some way. I kind of feel that I have more control on things, like I don't feel like I'm very passive. Now I think that I can make things happen. I can be actively involved but it's not like someone else is giving me the ticket, I now know I can do it myself.

Angelina also grew in self-confidence during the exchange semester. She felt that she had become stronger because of her experience of being immersed in an overseas context. She had to take care of herself without the constant support of family and close friends. Angelina also achieved many of her personal goals, notably to be more understanding and open-minded. If people now say things that make her feel bad or uncomfortable, or they interact with her in an impolite way, she has learned not to take it too personally or seriously and to avoid confrontation: 'You have to care less and try and understand more'. As a result of her overseas experience, Angelina learned to do this much more successfully than before. She is more self-aware, knowledgeable and motivated.

Sandy's story

Sandy went to a Chinese-medium primary school where she used English mostly for school and not for doing other things. Learning English for her was hard work but she acknowledged that it is necessary in order to get a good job and be promoted at work. She didn't like English particularly and, like her friends, she saw English more as a tool for communication than as something which interested her. Before departing on her trip to Australia, Sandy thought that her English was not very good. She was determined to study hard while away, but had no specific plans for learning English. She didn't want to push herself *too* hard, preferring instead to just see what would happen through her immersion in the English-speaking context. Sandy realized that she would have to use English, and so relied on this approach to improve her proficiency. She therefore anticipated that in Australia she would be an English user, but at the same time felt that when she returned to Hong Kong she wouldn't have to be an English user anymore.

Sandy's visit to Australia was her first to a non-Asian country, and the first time she had been alone so far away from home. She described the beginning of her stay in Australia as not much fun, but it became better day by day. What made her experience so rewarding was the enormous generosity of the members of her host family. Her relationship with them, their support and their patience were of central importance to her experience. Her family provided 'five-star service' and she felt very lucky to have them as her family. They were very helpful indeed: from translating difficult words Sandy encountered when they were watching TV together, to teaching her how to barbecue and to play bowls, to showing her in detail how the transport to and from university

worked (even accompanying her on her first trip). Sandy was treated like a princess and 'never had a chance to taste hardship'. She believes that if it had not been for her host family she would not have enjoyed the trip.

The downside to all this family support was that Sandy was unable to fulfil one of her main ambitions for the trip; to become more independent. She believes she failed in this regard because her hosts were 'so nice and so considerate, I could hardly have any chance to learn to be independent. They totally helped me in everything that I was supposed to do independently'. She had been looking forward to learning something new, but in terms of independence, she didn't change at all.

Sandy recalls that when she first arrived in Australia she 'couldn't speak anything' with her host family. 'My brain was completely a blank plate. I felt I don't have any knowledge about how to express thank you when being a guest in another country'. To compensate for this she smiled a lot and used gestures to get by. This worked well, and she very soon felt comfortable with her host family. She could not understand them when they spoke too fast, but they were happy to slow down and repeat for her. This embarrassed and frustrated her somewhat, but she soon realized how nice the host family was and how patient, and so after the first few weeks all her 'fear was gone'. She cherished the time she spent with her family at dinner because this was when she tried to speak English with them as much as she could. But at school she did not use much English, because once she joined her classmates she would speak Cantonese. Sandy constantly sought opportunities to speak English while in Australia, but that was not so easy to do since she spent so much time with her classmates.

She did recall one incident when she felt she really had made some progress. She and her friends had got lost in the city. After consulting a map they still could not find their way home. Sandy decided to phone her host family and ask them for help. She was quite desperate and had begun to panic. When she started speaking to them on the phone she suddenly found herself speaking fluently: 'I didn't know I could speak it that fluently. I told them where I was, how many classmates were there with me, and why I needed their help. It totally surprised me'. She described the moments she was on the phone: 'I felt I was just like a native speaker! I never knew I could speak English that fast'.

Sandy feels quite certain that her trip to Australia has not changed who she is when she speaks different languages: 'I am still the same person in whatever languages I speak. I'm not becoming an Australian when I speak English. I'm still a Hong Konger. I just use English to

communicate but not for becoming one of them'. She sees English as a tool for communication. It does not represent or construct a different identity for her. Back in Hong Kong after the visit, people still see her as 'a Hong Kong girl studying English'. 'It has nothing to do with what languages I speak. My hair is black and my English is broken'. In other words, when other people hear her speaking 'Hong Kong English, they will know who I am'.

Nevertheless, Sandy planned to use as much English as possible after she returned to Hong Kong, and hoped she would have opportunities to do so. However, she thought that this was not very realistic. In fact, the first thing she did when she met her friends back home was to tell them what she did and what she saw in Australia in Cantonese. Sandy was not sure if she was going to take learning more English seriously in Hong Kong. She expressed the desire to speak fluently and acknowledged that it was important for securing a good job, but emphasized that she did not like speaking English unless she had to and that she would probably not have enough time to spend learning English. Although she conceded that English felt less like a subject in school than it did in the past, her Early Childhood Education programme had few lessons in English and her classmates didn't have much interest in speaking English either. However, in sum, there was little opportunity within her academic context to use and practise English.

When Sandy returned to Hong Kong, she struggled to explain how her English proficiency had changed, saying eventually that 'English is becoming much closer to my life'. She continued:

> I think that English is not that far away from my life. I can do many things in English now other than taking tests for school. And English is now real to me, much easier to understand. I'm not afraid of speaking English any more'.

Although she did not show much progress between pre- and post-study abroad language proficiency tests, she definitely feels that her English improved while in Australia and that the relationship between herself and English was much closer.

On a personal level, Sandy felt that she had become more open-minded and less shy. She also felt more willing to help others. Helping others was a lesson she learned from her host family. Despite these changes, Sandy declared on her return from Australia, 'I am still who I am'. And this also applies to her smile: 'My host dad said that when I smiled everything looked easy. I know I was using my smile to cover my fear

or embarrassment, but on the other side, my smile helped me relax and make others relax. I will keep my smile'.

Although much in Sandy's life remains constant now that she has returned from Australia, she believes that she has seen the world from a different angle. This helps her to better understand Hong Kong. Every time she and her host parents sat down to watch TV they would ask her questions about Hong Kong culture. She hadn't realized how important it was to tell foreigners about Hong Kong before. Ironically, having left Hong Kong for a short time, she got to know it better. It was a good experience for her.

Linguistic self-concept

This chapter is concerned with linguistic self-concept: how participants perceive themselves as second language learners and users (their reflexive identities), and the projection and recognition of imagined identities in the study abroad context. It is thus concerned with their relationship to English: specifically, how they perceive themselves as users of that language, how they orientate to the language in terms of their beliefs and feelings, and how these perceptions and orientations relate to their second language identities. As we also pointed out in Chapter 3, linguistic self-concept refers to how learners perceive their ability as users and as learners of a second language, and also to their beliefs and emotions (Ellis, 2004). By *learners* we usually mean individuals who are in the process of acquiring a second language (at any stage of proficiency) and by *users* we usually mean individuals who regularly use the language to communicate with others in speech or writing. While many people would consider themselves to be both learners and users, they are likely to perceive themselves as more one than the other in any particular communicative context.

We are particularly interested in the *changes* in linguistic self-concept that the participants experience during their visits abroad, especially whether they feel they have become more users than learners of the second language. The focus of this chapter can perhaps be summed up as the participants' answer to the question: 'Who am I and who do I become as I learn and use English in my study abroad context?' To discuss possible answers, we draw on Angelina's and Sandy's narratives. The first section below briefly considers their changing linguistic affiliations; that is, their relationship with the languages they know and use. The next section examines the students' beliefs about second language learning, before, during and after their study abroad experiences. A range of emotions

accompanies these experiences and these are then discussed in relation to self-concept. The two following sections explore how Angelina and Sandy perceive *themselves* as second language users and learners as well as how they see themselves through the eyes of others. The chapter ends with a discussion of the relationship between self-concept and second language identity, and draws on the narratives of some of the other study abroad participants to exemplify the points made.

Language affiliation

Language affiliation relates to language loyalty; how attached people feel to the languages they know and how strongly they identify with them (Leung, Harris and Rampton, 1997). Those who affiliate closely with a second language conceptualize it as part of themselves, who they are as second language learners or users. Affiliation is thus a matter of linguistic self-concept and second language identity. But how do people establish and express their affiliation with a language? We see that from an early age Angelina liked learning and using English. From the time she began taking classes with the British Council in Hong Kong she became interested in English. To this day, Angelina has a positive attitude towards English and 'loves everything about it'. She has a passion for English. She describes English as being her friend – it is something she has grown up with. It is part of her. It is clear then that her interest and love for English indicates a strong association or an affiliation with the language.

   In contrast, Sandy didn't like English very much when she was learning it at school. She says that when she uses English it does not represent or construct a different identity for her. Like Angelina, Sandy believed English to be a useful tool for communication, but beyond that purpose she was not interested in learning or using the language, and thus expressed a weaker affiliation with it. However, Sandy feels she has changed since her study abroad experience, albeit to a limited extent. She feels that English has become 'much closer' to her life. It has become more real to her. It is not that 'far away' from her life. She has thus developed a stronger affiliation with English, and this is partly due to her belief that her proficiency has improved, even though this did not show up in the results of pre- and post-test of language proficiency that were administered by the programme organizers. There appears to be a relationship between proficiency and affiliation in Sandy's case. It is more difficult to tell if this is also true for Angelina. Although Angelina believes her English skills improved during study abroad, her affiliation with English

had always been strong. It is probably safe to say, however, that these ties had been reinforced or at the very least confirmed for Angelina.

Beliefs about second language learning

Learner beliefs about language and learning language relate to their linguistic self-concept in that they influence learners' goals and expectations for language learning and also the way they approach it. Angelina, for example, believed that the best way to develop proficiency in a language and to understand the culture of its speakers is to engage with them and to use the language for real communicative purposes. She felt that a semester-long immersion would provide an excellent opportunity for her to meet English people, make English friends, and live her daily life, shopping and studying in an English-speaking environment. Further, Angelina believed that practice makes perfect. She was therefore determined to make the most of her stay in Australia to listen to English, to speak it and to write it, 'just naturally'.

The way Angelina went about meeting her learning goals in Australia was influenced by two further sets of beliefs. The first related to her conception of her own personality; more specifically, how she saw herself and how she imagined she would relate to Australians. The second concerned her perceptions of Australians and the variety of English they spoke. Angelina described herself as a 'quiet, traditional Chinese girl'. In contrast, she described Australians as 'passionate and outgoing'. Angelina believed that in order to build relationships with Australians and to achieve her goals of engaging in communication with them, she would have to draw on that part of her personality which 'remains largely hidden in Hong Kong'. In other words, she would have to be bold and take chances and be more outgoing: strategies appropriate for the Australian context. This is a good example of how beliefs relate to linguistic self-concept. Angelina associates different parts of her personality, who she is, with different languages and contexts of language use. In Hong Kong, speaking Cantonese, she is quiet and hidden; in Australia, speaking English, she sees herself as outgoing, actively engaging in English-speaking opportunities. Angelina sums up these conceptions of self by saying 'I am on the one hand like this; on the other hand like that'.

In Australia, some of Angelina's beliefs about Australians and their English use were confirmed, but she also developed new ones. She discovered that Australians, at least in the university context that she became familiar with, were very friendly, casual and relaxed, and treated each other as equals. Consequently, when it came to using English, they

weren't too concerned about politeness, using expressions such as 'What the bloody hell?' in normal conversation. Even though Angelina was prepared to adapt, in comparison her English use was mainly determined by her own more familiar criteria for politeness.

Like Angelina, Sandy believes that English is a very important tool for communication in today's world, and acknowledges that it is necessary for securing a good job and for getting promoted at work. Nevertheless, she did not like speaking English, and only did so when she had to. Sandy had no specific strategies planned for learning and using English in Australia, preferring instead to 'just see what happens' in the English-speaking immersion context. Once she got to Australia, though, she constantly sought opportunities to speak English. She made good use of dinner-time conversations with her host family. She was well supported by them and she felt very comfortable talking to them. Her beliefs appear to have changed, then, illustrated by her effort to actively seek opportunities to use English instead of merely letting the immersion context take care of her learning. Sandy had less opportunity to speak English on campus, however, since she spent much of her time with her classmates and when they got together they tended to speak Cantonese. Nevertheless, Sandy's willingness to speak English signals a change in her attitudes towards the language and in her desire to improve her level of proficiency. She planned to use English as much as possible when she returned to Hong Kong, and hoped she would have opportunities to do so. She also wanted to learn to speak English more fluently. However, at the same time, she maintained her ambivalence towards English and did not believe she would have enough time to devote to studying it further once she resumed her busy life in Hong Kong.

Emotions

Emotions or affect, the way we feel, are closely tied to effort and success in language learning. Garrett and Young (2009: 210) tell us that 'the affective dimension is recognized as a crucial aspect of human mental and social life', and add that expressions of emotions in learner narratives 'not only supply information about how different learners appraise their experiences but also provide insight into where learners focus their attention during foreign language lessons' (p. 209). The same could be said for learners in study abroad contexts. Angelina's and Sandy's narratives tell us about their feelings towards learning English, their desires and fears, their emotional responses to linguistic successes and failures while in Australia and, thus, about the development of their identities. We learn

about their inner feelings and how these affect their learning and their interaction with others, and vice versa. And through the expression of their emotions we also learn more about how they see themselves as language learners and users.

Both Sandy and Angelina believe they changed emotionally during their study abroad experiences. Initially afraid and embarrassed to speak English with her host family, Sandy soon began to feel comfortable with them and after a while 'her fear was gone'. From being a shy girl who used her smile and gestures to get by when her self-confidence to use language failed her, she became aware of herself as someone who was unafraid to speak English. These new feelings of comfort, not being afraid and having a certain amount of self-confidence were accompanied by perceptions of not only being a more fluent English speaker, but also of a growing positive relationship between herself and the English language. In spite of these developments, Sandy promises not to lose her smile, which served her so well in Australia!

Angelina started her journey to Australia in an optimistic frame of mind. Her early experiences learning English when she was young meant that she already had a very positive attitude towards the language. She felt well prepared for her trip and was confident of success. And successful she was. Angelina was motivated to work hard developing her English skills; she sought opportunities to use English in practical ways, she made a concerted effort to increase and use newly acquired vocabulary appropriately, and she read English books. Her successes led to further motivation and the desire to learn even more. Perhaps the most significant change in Angelina was her increased feeling of confidence. She gained self-confidence not only as an English user but also in her personal life. She became more understanding of other people and their cultures, she grew in independence because she had to take care of herself for the first time, and generally she became more open-minded about the world.

Others' perceptions of self

An important aspect of linguistic self-concept is an individual's awareness of how they are perceived by others as users and learners of a second language – how the identities that they project through the second language are recognized by others and how they see themselves through other people's eyes. In Australia, Angelina made constant comparisons between herself and how she assumed others saw her. She knew, for example, that Australians would see her as a foreigner: 'I'm Chinese.

I think they will think I am a foreigner even though I speak English'. This observation is based on a physical definition of ethnicity: the fact that she looks Chinese. But Angelina's awareness was also based on language. As mentioned above, in Australia she called on her hidden Hong Kong self to ensure that her English use would match her perceptions of how she thought Australians spoke English. Angelina realizes that she 'can't be 100 per cent local', but nevertheless tried to fit in. And she did very well. During her time in Australia, Angelina became very aware of how she was perceived, saying that 'Australians say I speak with an Australian accent. ... Maybe compared to my Asian friends they would say my English is very good'. This level of awareness was something that she maintained after her study abroad: 'I'm more aware of my language ability, not just language itself but also how I use it and how well I can think in English and how others perceive me'. This is a significant development in Angelina's self-concept as a language learner. She has become increasingly aware of her second language ability and of how others see her as an English user.

Sandy became more aware of how others perceived her, although in a different way, but this does not necessarily mean that her perceptions of herself have changed (see further discussion in the next section). One example is her self-reference: 'My hair is black and my English is broken'. She aligns these physical features with her 'Hong Kong English', signalling clearly that she does not see herself as a native English speaker. Further, she realizes that when she speaks English in Australia, she does not *become* Australian. She uses English merely as a tool for communication, 'not for becoming one of them'. So, in this sense there was no significant change in her self-concept as an English user, since before embarking on her study abroad adventure she had already expressed no, or very limited affiliation, with English. Sandy has, perhaps paradoxically, become more aware of this.

Self-concept as language learner and user

A clear case of self-conception as a language learner is evident in Sandy's narrative when she reflects on her experiences of engaging with her host family in Australia. Initially, she 'couldn't speak anything' with the family, her 'brain was a completely blank plate'. In time, however, with their support and her magical smile, Sandy was able to take part in dinner-time conversations with relative ease. At the end of her visit she was not afraid to speak English anymore and felt that her English had definitely improved. Sandy clearly believes that she has learned some

English, therefore, and so identifies herself as a learner of English as a second language in this communicative situation.

In contrast, Angelina saw herself as predominantly a user of English before she left for Australia. Trips abroad and successful English learning experiences from a young age meant that she was skilled at interacting with people from other cultures and was comfortable using English in these circumstances before she left for Australia. At the same time, she still saw herself as a learner of English. For example, she strongly desired to develop academic relationships with teaching staff and students while in Australia by engaging in academic discourse with them. She also wanted to improve her English academic writing skills. She noticed a gap in her English ability and wanted to fill it while in Australia. She was aware, therefore, that she still had a lot to learn about academic English. Unfortunately, this was one of her study abroad goals which was not achieved. She remained unsatisfied with her improvement, especially in comparison with native speakers who she observed were 'always polishing their English, so they can write more formally'.

Sandy predicted before the start of her study abroad that there might be times in Australia when she would be a user of English but that this was unlikely to continue when she returned to Hong Kong, where there were fewer opportunities to do so, both academically and in public life. She was right. The first thing she did when she got back to Hong Kong was to use Cantonese to tell her friends about her time in Australia. One particular incident while in Australia stood out for her as a clear example of feeling like a user of English. She and her classmates had got lost in the city and needed to find transport home. Sandy began to panic and so, in desperation, decided to phone her host family for help. While speaking on the phone, she suddenly found herself speaking English fluently, 'just like a native speaker'. As a learner, Sandy felt that this incident was evidence of her making good progress, but it was her self-concept as a user that came to the fore. Despite her awareness of fluctuating between being a user and a learner, however, Sandy feels quite certain that she does not change as a person when speaking English. 'I am still the same person in whatever languages I speak', she declared. She admits, as we saw earlier, that as a result of her experiences using English in Australia the language has become closer to her. She has developed an affiliation with English. However, this does not necessarily mean that Sandy's identity has changed. In fact, she is quite adamant that she has not changed in any fundamental way. Back in Hong Kong, she will still be seen as the 'Hong Kong girl studying English'. On a personal level, Sandy feels that she has become more open-minded and less shy and is more willing to

help others, but again, generally, her conception of self indicates that she has not changed: 'I am still who I am'.

Angelina, on the other hand, was determined to draw on her 'hidden' Chinese self in Australia and use English to the full extent to meet, engage with, and become friends with English-speaking Australians. While she was not as successful as she wished to be in this regard, finding the Australian students on campus 'very protective of their own country, personal space and their privacy', she nevertheless had many chances to compare herself to the English speakers and other international students she did meet. Angelina constantly made comparisons with respect to level of English proficiency, language variety, and others' perceptions of English users. For example, she became more aware of how her own English compares with that of native speakers and her classmates in Hong Kong; and, more generally, how the standard of Hong Kong English compares with that in other countries. Angelina developed a 'comparing mindset' during her study abroad experience. Important here is that because of the process of continuous comparison, Angelina got to take a closer look at herself as an English user and learner, and she noticed some changes. She now sees herself as a highly confident, proficient user of English, able to achieve many things when using the language. The following extract from her narrative sums up her perceptions succinctly: 'I kind of feel that I have more control on things, like I don't feel like I'm very passive. Now I think that I can make things happen. I can be actively involved but it's not like someone else is giving me the ticket, I now know I can do it myself'.

With Angelina, change of linguistic self-concept also means change in identity. As she puts it herself: 'I experience things differently when I'm using English. Not directly but maybe indirectly. I'm like I have changed in some way'. We have seen in this chapter that: Angelina has strengthened her affiliation with English; her beliefs about English and English learning have changed; she has grown in self-confidence as an English user; she is aware that her proficiency has improved; she feels she has the ability to take control of doing things with English; and she is motivated to learn even more. The study abroad experience for Angelina has resulted in some significant changes in her linguistic self-concept and indeed who she is.

Discussion: Linguistic self-concept and second language identity

The two narratives in this chapter describe the experiences of two university students who spent study abroad time in Australia; Sandy for five

weeks, and Angelina for a full semester. The focus has been particularly on their relationship with English, seen from their perspective. We have called this 'linguistic self-concept', and, as we argued in Chapter 3, it is central to second language identity. In other words, how learners see themselves as learners and users of a second language, and how they feel about what they see, are related to who they are as someone who knows a second language. Important questions relating to second language identity thus include: Who am I when I do things in a second language? How do I perform and negotiate my identity in my second language? Answers to these questions, as we have seen in this chapter, depend on how speakers conceive their linguistic self. Aspects of linguistic self-concept that emerge strongly from Angelina's and Sandy's narratives include language affiliation, learners' beliefs about language and language learning, others' perceptions of self, learners' emotions, and their conceptions of themselves as learners and users.

Our aim in this chapter was also to show if and how self-concept and identity *developed* as a result of taking part in study abroad. From the analysis of the two narratives, it is evident that Sandy's second language identity did not change much. She tells of changes to her self-concept, particularly in terms of English proficiency, her emotions and language affiliation. But she never felt that she changed when she used English. Her second language identity remained stable. She says that she will always be the 'Hong Kong girl studying English'. This apparent contradiction can possibly be explained by the short-term nature of her study abroad experience. Sandy's *self-concept* wavered back and forth between being a learner and user of English, having a weak and then a stronger affiliation with the language, not having strategies for learning and then actually implementing strategies when she arrived in Australia, and not changing in terms of English proficiency and then feeling she had in fact learned a bit more. But she articulates her *identity* in her narrative in terms of both her fixed physical characteristics and her more stable perceptions of herself in the longer term – well before the overseas visit and well into the future. Gordon, another secondary school student who spent 10 days in the United States, expressed similar ambiguity in his narrative. He said:

I thought I was a learner. … I think [now] I am more like a user as I get used to use English. … I think I am more confident in using English, so I am more like a user although I may learn some new vocabulary. Still I feel I am using English rather than learning.

And Cindy, whom we met in Chapter 4, admitted that after her 10-day visit to the United States she still had a lot to learn about English, but on many occasions she identified herself 'to some extent' as a user of English when in the United States. These fluctuations are to be expected, of course, if we consider the stance on identity we have taken in this book; that is, identity is not fixed and stable, but rather it is dynamic and situated.

Angelina's self-concept also changed, in terms of, as we have seen, affiliation, self-confidence, and being in control when using English. She continued to see herself as a user of English and she was motivated to learn more, just like Sandy. In Angelina's case, the link between self-concept and second language identity appears stronger. For her, change of linguistic self-concept also means change in identity. As a self-aware English user, Angelina was able to negotiate the imagined second language identities she desired and wished to project. In contrast, Siri, a university student who spent a semester in the United Kingdom (see Chapter 8), described herself as still being a learner after her study abroad experience. She did not feel like a user of English, mainly because she did not use English that often. When she heard people speaking English, she felt uncomfortable, and she felt like a stranger when she used the language herself. Like Sandy, she makes reference to a physical definition of ethnic identity, saying 'At the end you are not British even though you know English. You can't change the fact that you are Chinese even if you go for plastic surgery'. Here, ethnic identity is very much interconnected with linguistic identity and, in Siri's case, second language identity.

6
Second Language-Mediated Personal Competence

Second language-mediated personal competence is the third dimension of our model of second language identity development. In this chapter we discuss two narratives that we believe illustrate how personal development in study abroad can be mediated through second language use. BC and Daisy both went overseas in order to gain educational qualifications: BC to study for a Bachelor's degree in New Zealand, and Daisy to study for a Master's degree in the United Kingdom. Daisy's story takes us through to the completion of her degree, while BC's takes us to the end of his first year in New Zealand. As you read their stories, consider the questions below:

- What were BC and Daisy's goals for language and personal development?
- What developments can be observed in their
  - Personal independence?
  - Intercultural competence?
  - Academic competence?
- What roles did their use of English play in these developments?

BC's story

Learning English began early for BC. Formal instruction started in pre-school from the age of two. In addition to English lessons at primary school, he also attended classes organized by the British Council from the age of six. He took these classes for 10 years and enjoyed the communicative games and activities provided in a less structured approach. What started as support to ensure he had 'the chance to learn and practise the language in an outside-the-classroom environment', influenced

the development of a genuine interest in English language, communication and culture. His mother believed that 'following the textbooks or doing exam practices are not the ideal ways of learning English' and she was keen for him to have the chance to interact with native English speakers.

BC's developing interest and skills were supported by frequent trips to visit his aunt in Canada. Here he was expected to use his English, to interact with local English speakers and to order food during family outings. This contrasted with his infrequent use of oral English in Hong Kong, where opportunities for speaking English were limited to occasional interactions with native speakers and the odd non-Chinese speaking waiter, teacher or salesperson. Even in his local English-medium secondary school, BC found the use of oral English generally low compared with reading and writing; 'lessons always were conducted with an exam focus'.

BC's British Council and travel experiences fostered a love of learning English and in particular his understanding of English songs, especially American and British rap and pop, books and films. This together with 'surprising successes' in school influenced both his choice of study field and eventual study context. BC's experiences also influenced the way he identified personally and socially with English. From an early age he was 'proud of being able to speak English'. He contrasts his English skills with those of his friends:

> When some of my friends don't speak English as well as I do. For example there's a tourist asking the way and I was the one able to answer the questions, but not some of my friends. Those occasions I feel good.

In his opinion 'many Hong Kong students write better than they speak'. BC, however, believes in the importance of English for oral communication, for authentic interaction.

From experience, he understands that listening to different English accents, the speed of native speakers, and making oneself understood in English can be daunting at times. As such he needed to concentrate and if necessary ask speakers to repeat themselves; strategies he believes are a 'natural' approach to learning as opposed to 'intentional'. Prior to his study abroad he believed that 'I am doing alright. I am not fluent enough but I'm able to communicate with people in English, I'm with it … . I just naturally absorb what I have seen or heard, so I am not really learning intentionally'. This said, throughout his schooling and into his first year of university study, BC had high expectations of improving

his English language use, and in particular his levels of oral fluency in different contexts.

BC's choice of undergraduate study location was deliberate. It was a country he had visited in the past on three separate occasions, it was predominantly English-speaking, and it provided the opportunity to have a 'change in life' to get away from family and friends and develop his independence. Not least of all, BC said, 'I love New Zealand'. His time spent travelling in English-speaking countries and engaging with native English speakers meant BC was well prepared and realistic about his personal, linguistic and academic goals and expectations.

The first few weeks in New Zealand were 'rough and tough', not because of language difficulties but because of 'the basic stuff, like opening a bank account, getting a phone number, enrolling in uni courses among other things'. His expected homesickness came and was dealt with largely by brief phone calls home to family and friends, 'when I was free, when I needed them, or thought about them'. These calls reinforced his sense of family, his respect for friendship, and his Hong Kong cultural identity. They helped him remain connected and acted 'like an energy drink. I actually feel more proud to be a Hong Kong person than I was before I came. I appreciate things about Hong Kong a lot more because I cannot have them anymore'.

Brief trips home at the end of his first semester and at the end of his first year provided first-hand evidence to family, friends and himself of his increasing maturity, his enhanced level of independence and, to his surprise, a growing sense of his Hong Kong cultural identity. An awareness of this cultural identity first arose during his first semester. Following continued introductions and explanations of who he was, where he lived and why he chose the country and the different courses, he began to realize not only how much he missed his homeland but how much he had been positively influenced by his upbringing in Hong Kong and his Chinese heritage:

> I actually feel more belonged to Hong Kong when I came here. It might be because when I met new people I have to repeatedly tell them where I am from and sometimes I even have to tell them some Hong Kong history.

These feelings of cultural identification were reinforced throughout his first year when he spoke Chinese, heard news from home, when he began work as a DJ on a local Chinese radio station and when he was asked to speak formally or interact socially with other students.

Linguistically, BC was well aware of the challenges he faced. His first semester provided the greatest test of his academic English skills. The level and speed of academic language used in classes by teachers and students, the complexity and volume of technical terms used in different courses, and the sheer amount of reading required a concerted effort for him to keep up. BC's English in non-academic contexts was, as he predicted, fine. Despite slight problems with the New Zealand accent and a lack of local knowledge, he was 'coping alright'. In contrast, the academic work required much preparation and attention to detail when conversing in tutorials. Over time he believes he improved, although on several occasions his confidence was shaken by making comments or presentations when he had not prepared or thought carefully enough about what he was contributing. These setbacks did not deter BC, after all his social goals were to get away from his 'comfort zone' to 'cope with a new cultural context' and become 'a better communicator'.

Looking back after one year, BC was no longer concerned about his English or academic ability. He felt he had adapted socially and academically to his new context, though he was still trying to 'figure out' the best strategy to deal with 'in-class challenges'. This aside, he was more 'comfortable' and 'confident' with his level and use of English inside and outside the classroom. He saw his English use and learning as more 'intuitive', and while he was no longer concerned about preparing to speak in class, he saw room for improvement in his use of English for academic purposes.

> As long as I can say in English whatever I want, then I'm fine with that. But that is just for like daily speaking. But because in tutorials we always talk about a lot of abstract concepts sometimes it's hard to express what I want to express. This is because I have to apply the concepts and maybe give examples and my opinions about the concepts. It means I need to put in a lot of effort. If I feel tired, if I didn't get enough sleep the night before, I struggle a lot in tutorials, so I have to concentrate on what I'm thinking. In terms of academic speaking, there's still room for improvement.

BC continued to focus his energy on preparing thoroughly, and found that his level of interest in a subject equates to a resulting level of engagement in his preparation and his in-class activity. He was, therefore, continuing to work diligently to maintain high levels of interest in all subjects.

A number of experiences enhanced BC's confidence in his English language skills. The first was an international night in which he was

master of ceremonies (MC) for the evening. While not his first time host-ing an event in English, it was the first time he had hosted in English with a predominantly non-Chinese-speaking audience. Staff and stu-dents, local and international in origin, recognized and applauded his success in this role. While extremely satisfying and gratifying, evidence of just how well he was developing as an English language user came from another source. It came in his skill at immediately recognizing and adapting his use of humour from one that suited a Chinese audience to one that suited an English-speaking one.

> I realize a big thing. In terms of humour because I actually have two types of humour that I made in the night. … I would say Hong Kong style joke but I translate them in English. I can see that the response is less among the audience even if it's in English. I don't know how to describe it – it's just different sense of humour. But when I made a more westernized sense of humour, that kind of jokes, brought a lot of laughter. It's the same language but different kind of jokes.

The second experience was during a trip back home when a group of English-speaking foreigners treated him as a Kiwi-born Asian, believing he was a native, English-speaking, Asian expatriate. Together with these experiences, his comfort in 'using English to express his true personality with others', such as his Malaysian flatmates and a small group of 'close Kiwi friends', his readiness to approach foreigners and speak to them, his ability to articulate and make linguistic comparisons, and the shift from a perception of himself as a learner of English demonstrate BC's developing confidence.

Although he has enjoyed his time in New Zealand, BC believes the location of a time spent in study abroad is not the most important aspect of the experience: 'It's probably not due to where I go but the fact that I go. It's [the going that] is a big part of what help me develop as a person'. Despite his growing maturity and career focus, and his progress socially, culturally and linguistically, BC still views his academic skill and English language development as 'a work in progress'. However, he is confident and proud to be viewed as someone who speaks a second language: 'it's a really good, great advantage to know two languages as well as I know them'. He now is focused on enhancing his academic skills and maintaining his academic performance.

Daisy's story

Daisy first studied English in a Chinese-medium primary school but only 'got to study it well' when she went to an English-medium secondary school. After completing secondary school, she went to a local university where she took a degree in English. On completing her degree, she applied for Master's degree courses overseas and was accepted at a university in England to study Applied Linguistics. Her application was late and she missed out on the chance to apply for a scholarship. Her family was reluctant for her to study overseas for financial reasons, but Daisy was persuaded by her university teachers that this was an opportunity that she should not miss and her parents agreed to support her.

Daisy hated English in primary school, but began to do well at secondary school, where she was inspired by her teachers in Forms 1 and 2. Grammar was not a problem for her and she enjoyed writing. She liked languages in general and enjoyed being good in both English and Chinese. Daisy especially enjoyed reading, beginning with Chinese translations of English books in primary school, and later reading the same books in English in secondary school. In primary school, she also developed the habit of reading both the English and Chinese on product labels in the supermarket. Despite her keen interest in English, Daisy had little contact with English speakers and little opportunity to speak English.

Daisy first began to speak English with her university teachers, as she was in an English department where everyone was expected to communicate in English, and two or three years ago she and her friends had started to use Facebook and MSN. This gave them some contact with foreigners and they took the opportunity to use English to communicate and to talk about culture online.

The main difference between Daisy and her classmates in their approach to learning English was her love of reading novels. She saw memorization and vocabulary as her weaker points, and explained that she did not like to look up words in the dictionary and had developed the habit of guessing unknown words. She thought that reading was a very important learning method for her and that this explained why her grammar was good. She felt that her reading and writing were good compared to her classmates and friends, but that her speaking and listening might be a problem. She hoped that studying in England would help.

Daisy also explained that she had 'divided Chinese and English into two systems' since she was small. If she was studying English, she would

think in English, and would not bother with translating back and forth between Chinese and English, which she thought was a waste of time. But she also found a 'problem', which was that if she wrote English and Chinese versions of the same paper, they would look like they were produced by two different people:

> I have a totally different mindset in different languages. I discovered this when I was in secondary school. I realized that the content of my composition will be totally different when I write it in English instead of Chinese. Briefly speaking, one difference could be I tend to give more real-life examples and evidence in English, while I tend to make full use of the vocabulary I know in Chinese to express abstract meaning and ideas.

Explaining what English meant to her, Daisy said that she had always thought of Chinese and English as the basic languages that everybody should know, but decided to focus on English at university because 'English is more global'. She believes that knowing more than one language is important because 'we all have to communicate with other people, either for study or for work'. Earlier, she had thought of English as a 'tool', but since graduating she had changed her attitude and now saw English 'more as an art'. English had become more than just a way of expressing her ideas. This interest in all aspects of English was why she had applied to do a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics in England.

This was not the first time that Daisy had left Hong Kong to study abroad. She had visited Melbourne on a short study tour during secondary school. The trip was organized by her school and she was selected to join the tour because she had won an English writing prize. Because Daisy was one of the oldest in the group, she had to help others speak English for basic communication. Although she sometimes felt awkward that Chinese people are not very willing to speak English when they are in a group, she didn't have problems communicating, although it was 'all very basic, survival English'. She had also been on a second 10-day study trip to Melbourne in her first year at university, where she had more opportunity to speak English.

Daisy's main goal in travelling abroad was to study Applied Linguistics, and she was especially looking forward to experiencing life on the university campus. A friend had told her it was more than 100 years old and the biggest campus in England. She had chosen the university because it was a prestigious university and also because it was not far from

London. This was an important factor for Daisy because she thought the accent of the English spoken in London was the most correct. She had also chosen a programme in the same area as her undergraduate study because she wanted to continue on the same track at a more advanced level.

Daisy's main language goals were related to listening and speaking: 'I want to hear how the local people sound when they speak English as the mother tongue'. She wanted to learn more vocabulary and improve her accent. She also wanted to make friends with local students and planned to find a part-time job in customer service or catering to have more contact with local people. She knew that Chinese people often like to stay with each other when they go abroad, but she didn't want to be like that. As she was concerned about losing her Chinese, she also planned to write her blog in Chinese.

Daisy was well prepared for the trip, having joined a Facebook group where people shared photos of their university rooms, which were similar to those in Hong Kong. She had made contact with a secondary school friend who lived locally, who had said she would help her if she needed help. She also had a former tutorial student in the city and another former colleague in England. Daisy felt more relaxed knowing that there would be some friends there, and planned to contact them every other week. She planned to keep in touch with her family by Skype, but only for a few minutes every night. Because Daisy and her friends mostly met online on MSN, she didn't think there would be any difficulty maintaining friendships while she was away from Hong Kong.

As Daisy expected, her time in England was mostly focused on study and on her life and friends in the university flat. She spent a lot of time in her flat, and did not find a part-time job until late in the year. Her experience was good overall, but not exactly as she expected it to be. She had two main friendship groups: the five other students taking her Master's course (two from Malaysia, two from England, and one from Nigeria) and the six students who shared the kitchen with her (three from mainland China, two from Hong Kong and one from Taiwan). One unexpected thing was that most of her friends were female. In Hong Kong the majority of her friends were men and she had previously had some difficulty in communicating with women. She counted getting along with women as one of her biggest achievements. Another was that much of the communication in the flat was in Mandarin Chinese. From the point of view of language, the best thing was that she spoke very little Cantonese, speaking Mandarin in her flat and English with her classmates. She was pleased that her Mandarin pronunciation

had improved, people could understand her without a problem, and she could speak quickly:

> Although people may feel strange about me learning Mandarin in England, I feel good about this. After all, this is what I need. I expected only to improve my English but I didn't expect that my Mandarin would improve a lot.

The 'bad side' of her course was that the 'curriculum, compared to Hong Kong, was much less condensed and [she] was less busy'. There were only nine hours of lessons each week, and the lecturers gave long reading lists but did not expect the students to have read them as they went over basic terms in lessons. At first she set high academic goals, but later felt that things were slipping out of her control. She got lower than expected marks in assignments and did not understand why. She then set a new goal for the second term to work hard and to find out what the lecturers wanted. Her performance improved and she became more comfortable with academic work, but in the third term she ran into financial difficulties. Her family told her that the money allocated to support her study was almost at an end, so she now 'had an urgent goal to earn money'.

Finding that working hours and pay as a shop assistant or waitress were unsatisfactory, Daisy took a part-time job as an interpreter in hospitals and clinics. Although at first she was worried that she would not be able to manage the work, she found that, because 'the doctors didn't have high expectations', it was a relaxing job that gave her life experience. She was able to think of it as a hobby that earned money. Her work also gave her a chance to travel around the city and she enjoyed walking around ordinary places, instead of tourist spots. She discovered that 'the life-styles and races of people were very different in different parts of the city' and she enjoyed talking to the patients and getting to know their stories. Her work as an interpreter turned out to be the high point of her time in England: 'thanks to my tight budget my life has been much richer in the last two months because of the job'.

In terms of achieving her goals for study abroad, Daisy was disappointed with her Master's programme:

> I am a bit disappointed academically. I thought I could learn double of my knowledge from my Bachelor degree but I am feeling like I have only learned a little more. … All of us thought there wasn't enough guidance … Even the locals thought it was confusing. … I

did learn something but I think I could have learned more if I was in Hong Kong. There were less number of lessons and it [the Master's course] really depends on self-learning. … MA in Hong Kong isn't like this. The teachers would really teach you everything.

Although the course had not lived up to her expectations, Daisy thought that she had improved her spoken English, especially her intonation and fluency. Because she mixed mainly with international students, she did not feel her pronunciation had improved: 'As long as they understood, no one would correct your pronunciation'. Nor was there much influence on her formal English because Daisy had been a keen reader in Hong Kong. The main difference was that she read more informal English when she was shopping and in her daily life. She had also learned some slang, such as 'what a shame', to express pity, which she previously thought was used to scold someone.

In daily life, she found that people were nice to her and sometimes asked if she had been in England for a long time, which she felt was an achievement. She characterized British people as polite, a view not shared by a number of her Chinese friends: 'The Chinese I knew there were not very happy because they thought the British were impolite and discriminate against the Chinese'. Daisy acknowledged that she did see 'real discrimination', but thought that most of it was 'not on purpose'. She also suggested that 'sometimes some actions of the Chinese made people think we may not be polite although we didn't really mean it', giving as an example a Taiwanese friend who refused to acknowledge a question – she just 'turned silent and went away' – because she didn't understand.

Daisy found that she could present complicated and logical ideas quite clearly during lessons, sometimes better than local students, and this helped her to 'get closer with the locals'. She found that although local students 'looked down on people who were not good at English, they were willing to talk to [her]'. She described herself as 'the rare Asian who could chat with them'. One difficulty was the topic of these conversations:

I was very unsuccessful when they were talking about music. They realized that I was silent and asked me specifically. And I couldn't really answer. I was a bit embarrassed. And when they talked about places, I would try to talk about the places that they have been to. They have been to a lot of places because they were Europeans and when they talked about places with names of other languages, I didn't

know what they were talking about at all. I can do things better when it comes to criticizing, arguing, and putting forward my beliefs.

Politics was one area in which she improved her English conversation skills. Daisy took a course where she needed to read and comment on newspaper articles: 'I was a politics idiot before and I know much more now'.

Daisy's concept of 'Chinese' had widened as she got to know people from mainland China and Taiwan and found that Hong Kong, Mainland and Taiwan varieties of Mandarin Chinese are almost three different languages. She had some unpleasant incidents when her Chinese flat-mates would say her Chinese was wrong, although 'every Hong Kong person would have understood'. Although initially Daisy was unhappy about their reaction, she later decided that 'we have different kinds of Chinese but none are right or wrong'. Later, she tried her best to accommodate to different kinds of Chinese when she was talking to different people.

Daisy believes that the most important change resulting from her study abroad time is in her attitude to other cultures:

> I have got into contact with many different people with different histories, and now I know that there are reasons behind every action that a person does. And when I saw people from different cultures arguing, I discovered that many arguments were due to misunderstanding. Now, I pay more attention to how different cultures may lead to conflicts.

This awareness of culture has given her the ability to see beyond difference and focus instead on the similarities between people: 'I think people in different places are actually leading more or less the same life'. This has also affected her attitude to Hong Kong: 'when I am looking at Hong Kong now I have an ability to look at Hong Kong culture. In the past I was blinded by my own culture and couldn't analyse it objectively'.

Second language-mediated personal development

Personal development is an overarching goal of all study abroad programmes, whether or not they involve the use of a second language. As we outlined in Chapter 3, personal development goals are often articulated in terms of intercultural competence and personal independence. When students study overseas in order to obtain an academic qualification, the development of academic competence may also be important. When

students study for academic qualifications through the medium of a second language, however, the relationship between language and personal goals can be complex. At university level, such students often have relatively advanced second language competencies and prior experience of study abroad for language development. For these students, language goals may be less important than personal goals, but personal goals may imply language development nevertheless.

In this chapter, we will first tease out how BC and Daisy articulated their language and personal development goals for study abroad before departure. We will then examine the personal development outcomes that emerge from their stories. These outcomes will be discussed under three headings – personal independence, intercultural competence and academic competence – and we will be especially interested in how they were mediated by their use of English in the study abroad setting.

Language and personal development goals

BC and Daisy were both successful English language learners before they left Hong Kong. They had done well in formal study of the language in Hong Kong, were proud of their language skills, and thought of themselves as people who were 'good at English'. In contrast to Joey and Cindy (Chapter 4) and Sandy and Angelina (Chapter 5), they did not study abroad as part of a group or institutional exchange. They made their arrangements for long-term study abroad independently and directly with their overseas universities, which was itself an indication of their self-confidence as users of English.

BC chose New Zealand as his study abroad destination, because he knew the country well. This was his third visit there, and the time that he had spent overseas, both in New Zealand and in Canada, meant that he was well prepared for the linguistic and personal challenges of study abroad. BC enrolled for a Bachelor's degree in Film and Media Studies and was explicit about his goals for both language and personal development. Aware of the difficulties associated with accent, speed of delivery and contextual understandings, he wanted to continue to develop his oral language skills. Of equal importance, he thought that time away from home, family and friends would give him space to be more independent in his personal life. Daisy was enrolled in a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics in a university in England. Although her main focus was on successful completion of her programme of study, she was also keen to develop her oral language skills and to find opportunities for

social interaction with local students and community members. Daisy was under some pressure to find part-time employment and ease the financial pressure that time in England would place on her family.

For both students, pre-departure goals involved the development of oral language skills and the personal skills needed to live independently in a second language environment. As relatively mature students, however, they focused more on personal goals, seeing language development as something that would occur more or less naturally if they were successful in meeting the personal challenges of living in a second language environment. As BC put it, study abroad was a matter of getting away from his 'comfort zone', both personally and linguistically.

Language and personal development outcomes

Personal independence

Although greater personal independence was among BC's explicit goals, he found the first few weeks in New Zealand difficult as he struggled with 'the basic stuff' without the support of family and friends. Once the organizational details of opening a bank account, sorting out a phone and enrolling in subjects for the first part of his course were out of the way, the problem of homesickness remained. Phone calls home assured him of the continued support, albeit at a distance, of family and friends, and BC was able to plunge into social and academic life with renewed enthusiasm. Two experiences highlight the ways in which his willingness to engage in new experiences, resulting in personal development, were mediated by his use of the second language.

The first experience was the evening that BC acted as MC for an international night at the university. BC had performed this task a number of times previously, but always in Cantonese for a predominantly Chinese audience. Now he was asked to use English to host an event for a mixed audience of local and international staff and students. That he was able to do so successfully is clear testimony of his developing competence, both on the personal and linguistic levels. Most impressively, BC was able to shift his jokes to cater for a 'Western sense of humour': a task recognized for its difficulty by all who have tried to understand humour cross-culturally. The experience shows how BC was able to achieve recognition for a projected second language identity that reflected his own sense of who he was – a skilled and amusing raconteur – in both Cantonese and English.

The second experience, which again came from BC's willingness to engage with the unknown, came during a trip home to Hong Kong. A group of English-speaking tourists he met were sure that he was

a 'Kiwi-born Chinese'. Before his trip to New Zealand, BC had made a habit of offering assistance to English-speaking tourists, but this was the first time that he had been taken for one of them, rather than a Hong Kong local. As a result of these and other experiences, BC became more confident that he was able to 'use English to express his true personality with others'.

For Daisy, interpersonal use of English outside the context of formal study was at first limited to interaction with other students. She developed two main friendship groups, both predominantly female. This was a departure from her social network in Hong Kong which was mainly male, and she counted this new found ability to interact successfully with other women as a significant development in personal communication. The first friendship group was a mix of local and international students enrolled in the same course; the second consisted of the women living in the same student accommodation. Communication with this second group was mainly in Mandarin, and the development of her skills in this third language came as an unexpected benefit of the study abroad programme.

In contrast to BC, who had leapt at opportunities to engage in interpersonal use of English, Daisy was pushed into interaction with local people by her need to find employment. She had not received a scholarship to cover the cost of her study and although her family provided financial support, they found it increasingly difficult to meet the costs of her study abroad as the year went on. By the end of her third term in England, Daisy 'had an urgent goal to earn money' and the experiences that resulted from this financial imperative proved to be the most rewarding part of her time in England. A part-time job as a hospital interpreter provided opportunities for her to travel around the city, and provided both structure and purpose to interact with a diverse range of local people. She found that she was able to engage with strangers effectively and sympathetically in English and, as a result, her second language identity and personal competencies developed hand in hand.

Intercultural competence

BC was surprised to find that one outcome of his time in New Zealand was a strengthening of his sense of self as a Hong Kong Chinese. On a return trip to Hong Kong he was flattered to be thought of as a native New Zealander, but time away from home, combined with the need to introduce and explain himself to new acquaintances, also reinforced his sense of Hong Kong cultural identity. BC had always been ready to engage with people from linguistic and cultural backgrounds other than

his own. Offering assistance and advice to tourists in Hong Kong had been one of the main ways in which he had found occasion to interact in English in the past. During his time in New Zealand, BC was keen to make friends and to use English in both social and academic contexts, and he was pleased with his success in doing so. He had clearly begun to develop a high level of intercultural competence and was able to reflect on and accommodate language and cultural differences. However, for perhaps the first time in his life, BC had a clear sense of what it means for him to be 'a Hong Kong person' and the positive aspects of his upbringing and Chinese heritage.

BC experienced an increased sense of connection to Hong Kong. Daisy, in contrast, felt that her time away from Hong Kong, combined with the experience of contact with other nationalities and other cultures, gave her the distance necessary to look at Hong Kong and its culture more objectively. This increased objectivity resulted in an understanding of the similarities that exist between peoples rather than, as had previously been the case, an emphasis on differences. She commented that 'I think people in different places are actually leading more or less the same life'. Unlike BC, who had always been proactive in seeking out encounters with others, for Daisy this recognition that others were fundamentally the same as her was a new development. There was also some contradiction in this new focus on global identity when Daisy discussed the women with whom she shared her accommodation. These women were all Chinese, but Chinese from different parts of the world. Daisy's initial assumption that her way of using Chinese was the only way of using Chinese was challenged when she was told by one of the women that her Chinese was wrong 'even though every Hong Kong person would have understood'. She later decided that there are different kinds of Chinese but 'none are right or wrong'. This flexibility and tolerance for misunderstanding was also apparent in Daisy's accounts of her interactions with English-speaking locals. Although she encountered some 'real' instances of discrimination, Daisy's experience was that most local people with whom she came into contact were both polite and friendly. Citing the example of a friend who turned away from conversation when she failed to understand a question, she interpreted occasions when people were not polite or friendly as being, in the main, the result of cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Academic competence

BC found that academic work was by far the most challenging aspect of study abroad in New Zealand. His high levels of competence in non-academic English meant that the challenges of dealing with personal

matters and intercultural communication were relatively easily met. In his coursework, however, he found the combination of new language and knowledge difficult, and struggled with academic language during the first semester. The difficulties he experienced with speed of delivery, subject-specific terminology and the expected volume of reading both surprised and challenged him. His confidence was also shaken by occasions when he felt unable to contribute to tutorial discussion, and this made him aware of the need to prepare carefully. Where BC may have previously felt able to depend on existing understandings of English and his high levels of communicative competence, he now realised that consistent hard work was needed to cope with the academic demands of his course. This approach paid off and, by the end of his second semester, BC was feeling confident about his progress.

Daisy appears to have experienced fewer language difficulties than BC, but in the first semester she found the formal side of her study abroad disappointing. Her postgraduate programme was in a similar area to her undergraduate programme, so there was less new and unknown language and content for her to engage with. She expected to cover material at a more advanced level and in more depth, and set high academic goals for herself. In the first semester, however, she felt that the lecturers provided insufficient guidance, there were too few hours of formal instruction, and there was too much reliance on independent study. Disappointing results at the end of the first semester led to something of a crisis, which led Daisy to reconsider her understanding of the assignment requirements. Once Daisy was able to understand 'what the lecturers wanted', her marks improved. Daisy contrasted postgraduate study in England with study in Hong Kong, where 'teachers would really teach you everything'. She defended her initial reaction to the programme by saying that 'even the locals thought it was confusing'. It seems likely, however, that the difficulties she experienced partly resulted from the culturally unfamiliar approach to teaching and learning in the university. There was evidently a conflict between Daisy's imagined identity and what the university expected of postgraduate students.

Discussion: Personal development and second language identity

Our analysis of BC and Daisy's stories points to a complex interweaving of personal and language factors in their development during study abroad. Comparing their stories to those of the students in Chapters 4–5, who participated in institutionally organized study abroad programmes,

BC and Daisy were competent and confident English speakers who had decided to make their own arrangements to use English to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate study overseas. In terms of sociopragmatic competence and linguistic self-concept, their second language identities were already well developed, especially in terms of their affiliations to English and their motivation to continue to learn the language by using it. Although study abroad might have led to development in their second language identities in these respects, it was unlikely to transform them, and their goals were focused more on pushing themselves personally – in terms of independence, intercultural competence and academic competence – through a longer-term and deeper immersion in an English-speaking environment than they had attempted before. We have also seen that they often talk about personal development in conjunction with their use of English in new or unfamiliar contexts of interaction. There is considerable evidence in these passages of their narratives, in other words, of the mediation of personal identity development by second language use, which leads us to think of it in terms of the second language identity development.

A second point that emerges from this analysis is the centrality of intercultural interaction to second language-mediated personal development in study abroad. In BC and Daisy's narratives, the development of intercultural competence spills over into the development of personal independence and academic competence, which are often presented as consequences of intercultural experiences. This is notably so, for example, in Daisy's account of her academic difficulties, which are presented in terms of a contrast between the university cultures of English and Hong Kong. The fact that Daisy remains disappointed with the academic side of her study abroad experience at the end of the year is, perhaps, a sign that this intercultural tension was not entirely resolved. It is also notable that Daisy achieved more satisfaction in her part-time work as an interpreter, where she appears to have found a more comfortable position as an intercultural communicator.

In Chapter 3, we linked intercultural competence to second language identity through Byram and Zarate's (1997) notion of the 'intercultural speaker'. From this perspective, developing intercultural competence – or, as we now understand it more broadly, second language-mediated personal development – is ultimately a matter of developing an identity as a mediator between languages and cultures. This helps us to understand a third aspect of BC and Daisy's personal development that appears to have taken them somewhat by surprise: the strengthening of their sense of Hong Kong cultural identity. One expectation of a

longer-term and deeper immersion in a second language environment might be a stronger affiliation with the second language culture and a corresponding weakening of attachments to the first language culture. These students' narratives suggest, however, that second language identity development may involve a strengthening of affiliations to both languages and cultures. BC and Daisy, for example, both experienced a stronger sense of Hong Kong cultural identity without losing their motivation to use and improve English or engage with English language culture. This suggests that second language identity development for students such as BC and Daisy is likely to be a complex matter that ultimately concerns achieving the kind of objectivity Daisy mentions at the end of her narrative that allows a person to use both first and second languages to project and achieve recognition for identities corresponding to their reflexive sense of who they are in a variety of linguistic and cultural settings.

Part III
Programmes and People

7
Study Abroad Programmes

In Part II we examined narratives from students involved in a variety of study abroad programmes, including a 10-day secondary school exchange, credit-bearing overseas semesters for university students and independently organized long-term university education. Within these categories of study abroad we can identify several dimensions of variation which have the potential to affect participants' outcomes. These include the duration of the programme, participant educational level, programme organization, level of integration and interaction with host nationals, and the purpose or goals of participation.

In this chapter we examine narratives from students who participated in two different programme types. The first narrative reports on Phoebe's participation in a 16-week university student exchange programme. The second recounts Catherine's involvement in a 10-day student exchange for secondary school students. When reading Phoebe and Catherine's narratives, the following questions may act as a guide to understanding the effects of the respective study abroad programme on their second language identity.

- What are the similarities and differences between Phoebe and Catherine's study abroad programmes and experiences?
- What effect do you think the following programme features may have had on the outcomes of their study abroad:
  - the duration and organization of the programme?
  - the level of integration and interaction with host nationals during the programme?
- Are the outcomes of their study abroad mainly explained by the programme type or by the individuals' preparation and engagement?

Phoebe's story

Phoebe is an undergraduate student of English language education studying in Hong Kong who joined in a 16-week student exchange programme in Australia. Phoebe's background in learning English is, she says, like that of most local Hong Kong students. Her schools from kindergarten through primary to secondary all used Cantonese as the medium of instruction. Therefore, much of her English learning occurred in specialist classes conducted by an English-speaking local teacher. She recalls most vividly reading comprehension lessons, doing dictations which were memorized in the days before the test, and completing writing drills. Unlike so many of her peers, Phoebe never sought or had the opportunity to attend English tutorial lessons after school. She did not feel the need for the support of an English tutor because her English results were good. However, she did take the initiative in her early teens to start reading the local English newspaper every day as a way to learn new vocabulary and to help her English reading fluency and understanding. She recalls adopting the strategy of looking up unknown words up in a dictionary and writing down the translation to help with understanding, and then re-reading the article out loud. Regularly watching English movies with Cantonese subtitles also helped her knowledge of English language and culture.

Phoebe considers herself to be a reasonably fluent user of English and someone who grabs every opportunity to use it in her daily life. She enjoys surfing the Internet, chatting in English and sending emails using proper English written form. However, despite her initiative and opportunistic nature, she assesses her knowledge of English language as fair and her oral skills as only satisfactory for everyday communication. For her, being able to communicate in English on different levels is important. She believes English is the world language, which makes it more significant than Cantonese, her mother tongue, which has limited use outside southern China and Hong Kong. She considers Cantonese to be closer to her, as more 'intimate', because using it in Hong Kong gives here 'sense of belonging, of being a Hong Kong person'.

Before her exchange, Phoebe had enjoyed previous family trips to Beijing and Singapore. These trips provided opportunities to learn about her family's Chinese heritage, and to practise her Mandarin and English language skills while on tours and shopping. These trips and experiences in Hong Kong with native English speakers highlighted and reinforced how much she needed to learn if she were to be an effective user of English. She found that native speakers of English spoke

too fast for her to understand. This she discovered when shopping or asking directions.

Phoebe chose to take part in the exchange programme because she thought it was a good way to travel overseas without delaying her academic career. She would receive academic credit for her studies and graduate with her friends. She also had clear language and cultural goals. These were to improve her speed of speaking and clarity of writing English, to explore the Australian culture, and get good results in her studies. The main challenges that she anticipated would be to talk in English with her classmates in and out of class. Phoebe was looking forward to Australia. Her friends had spoken highly of it and she had read and watched some videos about it. Based on everything she had found out and heard, Phoebe was confident her English would be understood, that she had the social skills to fit in, and that she would be accepted.

Her plan was to make new friends by joining in. She was determined to have good communication with her fellow students and with staff at the university. She knew of the importance Australians place on manners, so she had read up and practised ways to employ proper welcoming conversations. To build her writing skills, Phoebe's aim was to read more academic books to learn more about the word choice of authors and build up her vocabulary.

Before the exchange, Phoebe expected to be homesick and to miss Hong Kong. Never before had she been so far away from her family for so long. However, they had agreed plans to keep in touch by email and by Skype. She did not expect the experience would have a great effect on her as a person, on her personality or on her views and relationship with language and culture.

Early in her exchange, Phoebe's beliefs were put to the test. She found herself to be the only Hong Kong student in her university programme and for most classes the only Asian student. Due to overcrowding in the international hostels, Phoebe was placed in a university flat housing five men; she was the only woman. At first she was scared, but decided to tackle the situation with confidence. In so doing, she learned much about men and the Australian approach to university education. While she describes her flatmates as being 'normal during the week', after classes and on weekends she found they loved to party and play their music very loud. But she also found them to be generous, friendly and concerned about her welfare both during the week and on weekends. They encouraged her to relax, to talk through her feelings and any concerns, and when it was time for assignments they offered help when they could. Such generosity and concern impressed her, and she found herself often

comparing how different her flatmates were to the ones she shared university hostel accommodation with back in Hong Kong.

Throughout the exchange, Phoebe kept in touch with her Hong Kong friends who were studying in England, using Facebook and Yahoo messenger. She learned that several were experiencing bias and discrimination, and was grateful she was not experiencing anything like this. On the contrary, she discovered that Australians and international students were welcoming and kind not only to her, but to all people.

She found lecturers, in particular, to be approachable, and they displayed an understanding of how second language users learn English. They were kind, they listened and they willingly answered questions. They understood it was difficult at times to answer questions quickly in English, and at other times, when mistakes occurred, she found them to be tolerant and informative. 'They told us what the problems were, clarified our understanding, and shared ways to improve speaking and essay writing'.

Phoebe was the only Asian student in her classes. She found the lecture-tutorial delivery of classes provided her with constant opportunities to use English in a formal way, and her classmates spoke with her outside class. Phoebe looked forward to discussing what she had learned during the week, and to the general chat about life. She constantly reflected on these conversations, making comparisons with her own experiences in Hong Kong. Phoebe noted that Australian and international students talk so much more than Hong Kong students about 'personal stuff' like family and friendships. They enjoyed discussions and expressed many ideas, and they often disagreed with one another. Phoebe also found to her surprise that they went 'out of their way' to involve her.

Phoebe believes that this involvement and acceptance encouraged her to talk more, and because the local students were talkative and had opinions she grew in confidence in expressing her own. She recalls having self-doubt about her language and ideas, but she pushed these doubts aside to get involved. By doing so, she found herself growing in confidence, and when her intonation or accent or word choice confused her classmates, with their help she would self-correct, and then the discussions continued. She experienced no negative judgement about her use of English or her ideas; she was treated as an equal. This, she found rewarding and comforting. As she had planned, Phoebe also engaged in campus life. She joined outings and classes offered by the International Office of the University, which gave her the chance to see more of the Australian countryside and cities. These activities also

provided her with even more chances to use English with international students and local student group leaders.

After returning to Hong Kong, Phoebe affirmed that her exchange goals had all been achieved. She recalls how strange it was on the plane journey home to hear so much Chinese. For the entire stay, apart from emails and phone calls home and to friends, she recalled using Chinese on only a few occasions. For example, one time she was in a local takeaway food shop run by a Chinese person. Phoebe asked him a question in English and he replied in English. Then in Chinese he asked where she was from. She answered in Chinese and the conversation continued.

Unfortunately for Phoebe, her exchange was cut short by a few weeks because of the sudden illness of a family member. On return she found herself easily slotting back into Hong Kong life and university study. However, while she felt 'at home and normal', friends and her university lecturers noticed differences in her. They quizzed her, 'not always in a positive way', about why she was using so much English. Her English lecturer noticed real changes. She was much 'more involved, more willing to share, more talkative and self-confident, more independent'.

For Phoebe, the programme length helped build her confidence in speaking English. 'I had time, I learned to express ideas, and not to be afraid of changing an opinion if need be'. The trip also strengthened her listening and communication skills and she adapted well to the speed of conversations. However, she felt that if she had stayed longer, she would be even more proficient and have better skills.

Phoebe recognizes the opportunities the exchange experience presented. She found Australians – students, lecturers and local people – to be tolerant of Asian students and to those who use English as a second language. She believes the Australian culture is about 'bringing people together'. She does not believe the exchange experiences changed her thinking about 'English or her personality that much', although she has changed the way she identifies with English. She labels herself now as a 'competent and effective user' of English, as someone who 'now has the ability to communicate, to be understood in different contexts'. However, she still sees herself as 'a learner'. Finally, Phoebe has kept the same life and career goals. Her passion to teach English is stronger, and from her personal experiences she is committed to communicative language teaching methods. She believes these will inspire her students to use English in more enjoyable and functional ways. The experience fulfilled her cultural and linguistic expectations. It confirmed her ability to fit in socially and her readiness to use English in both formal and informal contexts. For Phoebe, the Australian culture and people

'accepted' her as an individual and in turn she found herself becoming more engaged in class and taking part more in the new culture. Of the exchange, she says: 'I have much to learn, but this experience opened my eyes to new possibilities, it built my interest and skills'. She now sees herself as having the responsibility 'to make the world a better and more tolerant place'. As an English teacher, she intends to use the experiences she has gained to make a difference in the lives and language learning of her future students.

Catherine's story

Catherine is a Hong Kong secondary school student who took part in a 10-day exchange to the United States. Cantonese is Catherine's mother tongue and she is 'quite good at Mandarin as well'. She can remember clearly when she first started learning English and the strong positive feelings she associated with this time. This was when she was around five years old. Her parents had moved to Canada to work for a year, and so she attended a local pre-school. She recalls the games and songs used in the kindergarten, the strong sense of excitement, of feeling happy and the play with other children. She remembers having 'so much fun learning' about things in English and cannot recall ever feeling that she did not understand the language. From this time, English became important to her, she says: 'It became part of me, of who I am'.

   Back in Hong Kong, Catherine found English lessons in primary school to be different from her kindergarten experience. Memorization of facts and processes replaced practical tasks. Silence replaced communication. Her parents registered her in extracurricular English classes and tutorials to improve her English communication skills, and for her these were more rewarding. Nevertheless, she adapted to school. Learning English 'never presented a problem' for her and, although Chinese is her mother tongue and the language spoken in her home, she finds English easy to understand and to use.

   Catherine believes that by studying and being able to use English, Cantonese and Mandarin effectively she will be more successful in her future work. She has a pride in her ability to communicate in English, especially with foreigners. It makes her extremely happy to know she can do it. However, she feels she needs to be much better and has much to understand. Although learning English has always come easy, she still sees herself as a 'learner' especially when it comes to interacting with native English speakers.

Catherine considers herself lucky. She has travelled with her parents around Asia and, while in junior secondary school, joined in a 10-day study tour to the United Kingdom. Looking ahead, she felt excited about her first trip to the United States. While she did not know anyone from the school she would be visiting and had not spoken with her homestay family, she was confident the trip would be a success. Her previous study tour to the United Kingdom had helped prepare her as had the school. However, she had found it challenging at times to be on her own for the first time in a foreign country and to be away from her parents for so long. But the 10 days had gone quickly, and overall she felt the experience had been positive. In her heart, she knew this trip to the United States would be the same; it 'would be a great success'.

Catherine was not concerned with the use of English for day-to-day conversations. She knew from previous experience that she could make decisions on her own; that she could handle simple day-to-day conversations at school, or while out shopping or travelling. She was also confident in her ability to communicate with her host family. Daily communication in English was easy for her, but what concerned her most was using English in more sophisticated ways.

So, as part of her preparation, Catherine had thought about what she hoped to gain from her 10 days in the United States. She believed it would be an opportunity to immerse herself in a new kind of English. She wanted to overcome her nervousness when talking to foreigners in courses that required more advanced academic language. Her plan was to talk to local people, to get involved early and take part in as many different activities as possible. From her previous experience she knew that her time abroad would go quickly. So she was determined to make the most of the little time she had. Catherine was also aware from her trip to the United Kingdom that some local people speak quickly and have opinions of Chinese people and their use of English, but this did not concern her. To deal with this she had developed simple strategies; to ask for help when she didn't understand something, to be polite and happy. If need be she would ask them to slow down.

Other than English, Catherine was keen to explore, understand and, if possible, adopt those parts of the American culture she had heard about or seen on television and in the movies. For example, she had come to believe that Americans are open in what they say and think. They easily give ideas and opinions, and she was determined to try to become more like this.

Catherine's homestay parents met her on arrival and, despite some obvious differences with her family environment in Hong Kong, she

immediately felt at home with the four kids, a cat and two dogs. At school, following her plan, Catherine embraced the different activities and accompanied her homestay buddy everywhere, including going to school. The size of the school and the interaction between teachers and students impressed her most. The classrooms were bigger, more colourful than she had ever experienced. The teachers were friendly and interested in her and where she was from. They took the time to stop and say hello, to ask questions, and this made her feel welcome, happy and special.

Her classes were sometimes challenging, especially Spanish, but even in this class, Catherine found people understood her English. She attended after-school dance classes and athletics training with her homestay buddy. On the weekend one of her buddy's school friends invited her to a sleepover. They played games all night long. The homestay family even threw a big birthday party for her, which not only surprised her, but made her feel warm, special and a little emotional as she thought of her parents.

When she experienced differences between the American and Hong Kong way, she tried to find ways to understand them. She asked questions, she asked for explanations, and she asked for help whenever she felt the need. There were times at school when Catherine felt challenged personally and linguistically. For example, she remembers needing to write a story based on pictures in a class related to Health Studies. She didn't understand and couldn't express herself clearly, which made her feel frustrated. On other occasions she had to ask more than once for the speaker to repeat what they had said so she could understand. What surprised Catherine most was how people reacted. They never complained or became frustrated, they just seemed happy to help; despite all her questions, nothing was too much trouble.

For Catherine, as expected, the 10 days went too fast, and before she knew it she was saying goodbye. To leave so soon was sad and she wished she could stay longer. After returning to Hong Kong, Catherine thought back over her study tour experiences and discussed these with her family, her friends and her teachers. She believed that, despite the short duration of the exchange, she had achieved her goal of communicating without nervousness to native English speakers both in school and outside it. This, she credited to the people she met and the culture of support she experienced. The exchange also affected her in ways she did not expect. Her parents noticed that she was more expressive, more sharing of her thoughts and opinions about the trip. She even felt herself being more polite; she had it seemed adopted some of the American openness.

The exchange also helped Catherine have a better understanding of herself and the importance of friendships. She told her friends that she was even more attracted to the United States and to the importance of using English. The people she met on this exchange helped build her confidence as an English user; they showed her support and praised her efforts. It reminded her of the happy days way back in kindergarten.

The friendliness and attitude of the people Catherine met during this exchange impressed her. Soon after her return she discussed the possibility of going back to the United States with her parents. She believes that this short overseas exchange highlighted how big and different the world is. She sees that experiencing different cultures, diets and lifestyles will help make individuals better not only in language, but as people.

Similarities and differences between the programmes

Phoebe is a second-year university student who chose one of the most common forms of study abroad programme – *student exchange*. These programmes are academic in focus, and normally run for one academic semester of around 16 weeks. However, occasionally, academic student exchanges may last for a full year. In principle, academic exchanges are reciprocal in nature. That is, the two institutions formally agree to send one student to the other in exchange for receiving a student. For example, in Phoebe's case, while she studied in Australia, a student from her Australian host university went to study at Phoebe's institution in Hong Kong.

In reality, balancing the numbers of incoming and outgoing exchange students is a challenge for institutions. Despite this, academic exchanges are common in universities around the world. Because of their reciprocal nature they are a low-cost way of promoting student mobility. For example, in Phoebe's case, she did not need to pay tuition fees to study in the Australian university. Instead, she continued to pay her home university tuition fees, and a similar arrangement applied for her exchange counterpart. In essence, they simply exchanged places of study for 16 weeks. An added feature of the agreement underlying Phoebe's exchange was a guarantee of placement in student housing. While the reciprocity principle in academic exchange agreements is common, finer details of individual student's study needs, accommodation, travel and institutional support can vary.

Catherine's narrative, like Cindy's in Chapter 4, provides an account of her experiences as a secondary school student involved in a *short-term student exchange* programme. While Phoebe travelled solo, Catherine

travelled as part of a school group that included students and teachers. Like Phoebe's, Catherine's exchange involved reciprocal visits to her home institution. In this sense, both programmes involve an exchange of students. However, the purposes and organization of the two programmes differed.

While the purpose of Phoebe's exchange was academic, Catherine's exchange was more experiential. The programme and context provided opportunities to practise using English in a native English-speaking environment. A secondary purpose was to explore and learn as much as possible about the local culture. A key feature and benefit of her exchange was staying with a local student (buddy) in her family home (homestay). Homestay provided added opportunities for Catherine to use English and to develop cultural understanding through experiences of everyday life and culture. During the day, she attended her buddy's secondary school and took part in organized outings.

While Phoebe received credit for her 16 weeks of academic study, the short-term nature of Catherine's exchange (10 days) prevented this. Catherine's exchange involved a series of preparation classes after school and at weekends. For Phoebe, her preparation was a briefing and general orientation provided in the final weeks before the start of her programme. A key part of Catherine's exchange preparation involved setting language and cultural goals. On return from her exchange, Catherine – like all group members – had to deliver a presentation at school. During this presentation, Catherine had to reflect on her experiences and goal achievement. Phoebe's institution held no such expectations either before or on return from study abroad. Differences in Phoebe and Catherine's educational level and age may account for such variances in preparation and institutional expectations. The assumption is that, older, more experienced students require less preparation and guidance for study abroad.

The responsibilities of Phoebe's institution were to set up links and to provide administrative support. However, Catherine's school, in liaison with the host school, organized the whole exchange programme. This included arranging flights and local transport, selecting the homestay provider to the different tasks and outings. Travelling alone, Phoebe needed to take full responsibility for all decisions made during her programme. Catherine, on the other hand, had teachers available to support her in any way considered necessary.

While Phoebe and Catherine's study abroad programmes involved a degree of reciprocity, the purposes, duration and organization of them differed. These differences in programme features, coupled with Phoebe

and Catherine's personal dispositions, were to have an effect on their second language identity development.

Programme features and second language identity development

Duration and organization

The length or duration of Phoebe and Catherine's study abroad programme had both an indirect and direct effect on their second language identity development. For Phoebe, the 16-week exchange resulted in more positive academic and sociocultural gains than she expected. The 16-week duration and general organization of the exchange provided Phoebe with the opportunity to complete four courses of full-time study. This equalled a full-time study load in her home institution. Importantly for Phoebe, her institution recognized the final grades she achieved. This meant that on returning, Phoebe could continue her studies with no delays on graduation or progress because of her semester abroad.

When programme features such as academic credit transfer are integral to study abroad programme organization, they can stimulate student involvement. They can provide students with a tangible benefit from their time spent studying abroad. Phoebe saw such value, commenting that exchange provided a good way to travel overseas with no delay to her academic career. Knowing this gave her not only a clear academic focus, but allowed her to think beyond the longer-term effects of the programme. In so doing, Phoebe set goals related to language development and cultural understanding. These goals would direct and motivate Phoebe's involvement in her exchange programme. Phoebe's plan was to make new friends by joining in. She was determined to have good communication with her fellow students and with staff at the university. Phoebe's programme needed active participation using her second language in classes with local native-speaking students. Her goals reflected this understanding and need. From her narrative we note the challenges she faced in dealing with this critical part of her programme. We can also see the effect this had on her developing second language proficiency and self-confidence.

Phoebe's exchange programme, unlike many other study abroad programmes, was not organized or focused on second language development. Nor was it designed to teach or inform her about Australian culture. Phoebe's exchange was academic in nature. Therefore, she attended regular classes with local students, completed the same tasks and assessments as if she were a regular student. When she confronted problems,

it was her responsibility to take the initiative to ask for support. To her delight, she found support was readily available. This encouraged her to talk more and, because the local students were talkative and had opinions, she grew in confidence in expressing her own. Lecturers in classes were approachable and displayed an understanding of how second language users learn English. They were kind, they listened and they willingly answered questions. She also sought and found support from her classmates, housemates, the International Office of the host university and other international students.

While Phoebe's exchange programme provided time for her to identify and engage such support, indirectly Phoebe's second language identity mediated her action. To seek support she needed confidence in her ability to interact with foreigners. In Phoebe's case, this personal confidence had developed through previous experience of second language use in intercultural settings. But Phoebe also needed confidence in her second language proficiency; that is, her ability to express herself clearly and to understand responses. Phoebe owned such abilities and confidence. She started her exchange with a positive second language identity. This guided her involvement. It helped her anticipate and react to different events in both academic and social settings. The constructs underlying this identity include her linguistic self-concept, second language proficiency and those related to personal development, for example, her independence and self-confidence. As seen in her narrative, throughout her exchange programme, these constructs were continually being challenged, tested and refined. They governed her actions and the manner in which she responded to both the formal academic and informal parts of the programme organization. On return from study abroad, Phoebe's second language identity had developed. She was 'more involved, more willing to share, more talkative and self-confident, more independent'. Phoebe learned to 'express ideas, and not to be afraid of changing an opinion if need be'.

The length and organization of Phoebe's exchange meant she had time to engage with local students in and outside class. She also had time during public holidays and on weekends to travel, explore and experience Australian life and culture. The programme provided time for Phoebe to get involved, to develop her understandings and, in so doing, refine her second language identity.

In Phoebe's case, study abroad was a positive experience. This was due in part to the support offered by staff and students in her exchange context. Such support was not part of the planned programme organization or institutional agreements. Rather, it occurred naturally in

the institution, the accommodation and classes Phoebe attended. Phoebe's positive experience academically and socially was also due to her second language identity. It provided her the confidence to get involved, to engage, and to organize the exchange programme experience towards achieving her goals. Phoebe indicates that she returned from her exchange as a more 'competent and effective user' of English. She was 'now someone who has the ability to communicate and to be understood in different contexts'. The length of the programme and its organizational focus, and her second language identity, helped fulfil her cultural and linguistic expectations. The duration and general organization of Phoebe's exchange scaffolded her second language identity development and refinement, which in turn supported and guided her involvement in the programme.

Catherine's 10-day exchange programme, unlike Phoebe's, did not allow the luxury of time for her to fully explore local culture and life. Goal setting for Catherine was, however, a part of her pre-departure preparation programme. Her goals, like Phoebe's, were connected to language ability. These were 'to use English more fluently' and to overcome nervousness when talking to foreigners using more academic language. She wanted to talk to local people, to get involved early and to take part. Catherine was keen to explore different aspects of American culture. Despite the short-term duration, Catherine assesses that she also achieved these goals. This achievement we attribute to the programme organization.

Catherine's study abroad programme involved a mix of routine, organized outings and free time. Apart from Catherine's own goals, the programme's focus and expectations were that she would be active in family life. This included doing household tasks, playing with family members, sharing mealtimes, and attending after-school events with her homestay buddy and outings with the family. On weekdays she attended regular classes at the school. Consistent with the programme purpose, these opportunities immersed Catherine in an English-speaking environment. They provided countless opportunities to use her second language skills and to interact with local students.

In classes, she found the teachers encouraging of her language ability and genuinely interested in her background. Despite all her questions, 'they never complained or became frustrated, they just seemed happy to help; nothing was too much trouble'. There were also organized tasks such as a presentation on Hong Kong, meetings with her teachers, and field trips to local areas of interest. These too provided opportunities to use English, and some Cantonese. They also made her think about family and what was happening back home.

In organizing Catherine's programme, her teachers tried to ensure students could achieve and experience as much as possible in a short time. It provided time to build second language competency skills, and to apply them in different contexts. The support provided by the homestay family, her buddy, local students and teachers, reinforced Catherine's self-belief, her confidence in using English. The planned programme organization and support had a direct impact on Catherine's second language identity development and refinement. It provided a metaphorical scaffold for the use and development of her second language competency. It heightened her linguistic self-concept and supported her developing self-confidence.

Other study abroad programmes in our study provided more time and organizational scope for students to engage and develop. Yet for Catherine and other students on this short-term exchange programme, there were significant linguistic, cultural and personal benefits gained. This we credit to the clear programme focus, the intensive preparation of students, and the highly organized exchange experience.

Integration and interaction with host nationals

Both Catherine and Phoebe's programmes saw them integrate and interact with local students and staff. On Catherine's exchange, students were integrated into regular classes. The aim was to get local and visiting students engaged in discussions on a wide range of topics. Both Catherine and Phoebe, like many in our study, had study abroad goals related to interacting, engaging or making friends with local host nationals. For students, like parents and programme managers, there is an assumption that such involvement is a naturally occurring feature of a study abroad programme, and that such involvement will lead to improved second language proficiency and intercultural understanding.

For Phoebe, the prospect of studying with local host nationals was exciting. She believed she would improve her second language ability by interacting with local students in formal and informal settings. Travelling alone, Phoebe had no obvious group or individuals to call on when times got tough, or when she needed personal or academic support. The nature of Phoebe's exchange programme forced her to create her own friendship or support groups, and to make decisions independently. She needed to deal with issues such as housing, academic and cultural differences, and entertaining herself when not attending university. Phoebe's positive linguistic self-concept, her second language confidence and ability to interact with native English speakers helped prepare and support her.

Similarly, in Catherine's narrative we sense her eagerness to learn, to interact with local students. Catherine carried this attitude throughout the 10-day exchange. In so doing she projected an image that resulted in positive responses from host staff, students and her homestay family alike. The warmth of the responses made her feel 'special'. They encouraged her to become even more involved and to find out as much as she could about American culture. In so doing, Catherine's confidence as an English language user grew, as did her understandings of herself as a Chinese person and as a second language user and learner. Developing personal understandings through a second language in native-speaking contexts provides evidence of a developing second language identity.

However, interacting with local students and 'fitting in' or 'being accepted' are significant challenges for study abroad students. How well a study abroad student fits in or is accepted is dependent on both groups' willingness and effort to work with one another. While the programme organization may indirectly provide opportunities to interact with locals, the student must take advantage of the opportunity. This involves acting. The student must make the effort to set up contacts, to communicate with local people. The ability or desire to engage is mediated in part by the individual's second language identity.

The nature of study abroad programmes and related organization can have a direct influence on the opportunities offered to integrate with host nationals. In turn these opportunities can have an effect on second language identity development. For example, in programmes such as Catherine's, and others such as the six-week and 16-week language immersion programmes, students travel in groups. They are also often required to take classes together as a group. As the only exchange student, and only Asian in the class, Phoebe had little choice but to get involved. For Catherine, however, her classes involved numbers of co-nationals from her school. And, when large numbers of co-nationals exist in classes there is the natural temptation to sit together or to combine as a group and speak their native language. This not only restricts the language and intercultural benefits associated with the study abroad experience, but indirectly limits the potential development and refinement of the constructs underlying an individual's second language identity.

Acceptance in a second language environment is central to developing second language identity. However, success is also dependent on the willingness of local host nationals to work with the study abroad student. Simply, local students may not have the ability or see the incentive to interact with visiting students. Study abroad is transient in nature. Students study, or are involved, for different lengths of time, some very

short. Globally, the numbers of students taking advantage of study abroad, particularly in higher education, are increasing. Consequently, so too are the number of study abroad students attending regular classes with host nationals. Therefore, it is more than possible that local students simply may not see the point of engaging with increasing numbers of transient students. If this is the case, the potential benefits and effects of study abroad on identity development may be at risk.

Many study abroad programmes, such as Phoebe's, call for involvement with local host nationals. Phoebe displayed confidence, a wish to get involved and to set up friendships. Yet we found little evidence in her narrative to suggest the host institution was making planned efforts to help her integrate or communicate with local students, and vice-versa. Similarly, Catherine believed that because her study abroad time was so short she had no choice but to get involved. Like Phoebe, she was challenged to use her second language skills in a wider variety of social and academic contexts. However both students projected second language identities that encouraged local students and people to want to interact and make friends with them. And they did.

Many programmes place study abroad students and local students in the same classes. However, this does not necessarily lead to intercultural interaction. The general lack of formal integration and involvement in a study abroad programme reduces significantly the potential academic and sociocultural benefits of such programmes. From a student's perspective, acceptance and integration into a second language context is critical to their developing sense of self; their second language identity.

Phoebe and Catherine were fortunate to enter study abroad programmes with well-developed second language identities. The confidence this provided helped them integrate and interact with local host nationals. For Phoebe, this was without formal support or interventions within the programme organization to help study abroad students like her to 'fit in'. Other students in our study were not so fortunate. The lack of involvement or acceptance significantly reduced the benefits and potential effects of the study abroad programme on second language identity development.

Discussion: Programme features and second language identity

In this chapter we have examined the effects of two different types of study abroad programme on second language identity. The academic nature of Phoebe's 16-week academic exchange programme helped her achieve her academic, linguistic and cultural goals. We also found that students such

as Catherine, who took part in a short-term, 10-day secondary school exchange, achieved similar linguistic and cultural goals. This, we credit in part to the structured and organized nature of the 10-day programme.

Both programmes provided numbers of opportunities for students to develop their second language ability, their intercultural communication skills, and to integrate and interact with local host nationals. These opportunities were, for Phoebe, unstructured in nature. For Catherine, the programme organization included them. For example, second language proficiency support was provided before and during the study abroad programme. Before departure, students discussed coping strategies, including how to use their second language in a range of non-academic contexts. These features related directly to constructs underlying second language identity. Both students sought to develop and use their second language effectively and efficiently, and to be accepted into the host communities. Both students received support, although from different sources. This support came from staff, students, community members, and in Catherine's case her homestay family. Local host nationals responded positively to Phoebe and Catherine's questions and efforts to use language, to interact and to integrate. Receiving such support was instrumental in helping Phoebe and Catherine to feel accepted by the second language host community. This acceptance is an essential construct underlying second language identity development in a study abroad setting.

Importantly, the analysis of programme effects reveals the complex interplay between programme features and the individual student's second language identity. Underpinning the programme is what the student brings to the study abroad experience. In Phoebe and Catherine's cases, both students entered the study abroad programme with positive second language identities. Both believed they would cope with the stresses of living and study in a second language context. Both were confident in their second language skills and in their ability to interact with locals. Both students set achievable goals based on prior experience and self-belief. From their narratives we sense how positively both students approached their study abroad programme. This approach, grounded in their positive second language identity, was projected throughout their experience.

What we have come to understand is that study abroad programmes provide a context to scaffold second language identity and its development. It is, however, equally an individual's second language identity that defines and is in turn defined by involvement in a study abroad programme.

8
Individual Differences

Chapter 7 discussed the experiences of two students who participated in two very different study abroad programmes. In spite of the differences between the two programmes, both appeared to have a positive influence on the students' second language identities. We concluded that, if two quite different programmes can have a similar impact, the preparedness and engagement of individual students may well be more important factors in the impact of study abroad on second language identity than the programme type. This chapter continues to explore the issue of individual differences in a somewhat different way through the contrasting stories of two students who participated in the same programme.

Siri and Janice were both undergraduate English teacher education students. Their semester-long study abroad programme was a compulsory component of their degree, largely funded by the university and designed to provide future teachers with an experience of 'immersion' in an English language environment. The programme framework was based on partnerships between the students' home university and overseas universities in several parts of the world. During the immersion semester, the students took credit-bearing courses, including some that were mandated by their home university for the group of 15–20 Hong Kong students and some that were individually chosen by the students from those offered to local students. The overseas partners also arranged homestay accommodation and various cultural events and visits for the students. In the year that Siri and Janice completed the immersion semester, their group was divided among universities in the UK, Australia and Canada. One of the main differences between the two students' experiences was that Siri studied at a university in the north of England, while Janice studied at a university on the east coast of Australia. Apart from differences related to location, however, the framework of the

programme was the same for both students. As you read Siri and Janice's stories think about these questions.

- How would you sum up the differences between the two students' experiences and their impact on their second language identities?
- How do you think the following factors may have influenced their experiences?
    o their previous experiences of learning English
    o their previous experiences of travel and study abroad
    o their goals and expectations for study abroad
    o their experiences during study abroad
    o their personalities

Siri's story

Siri was educated in Hong Kong, first at a Chinese-medium primary school and then at an English-medium secondary school, where she had to study English because 'all the subjects were taught in English and [she had] to be proficient in English'. At school, her written English was always better than her spoken English, and she disliked speaking in class. Siri thought she would do well in English in her secondary school exams. Unfortunately this was not so. However, her results were good enough to gain a place in a degree programme to study English language in a teacher education programme:

> I thought my English score would be the best subject in my A-level but it turned out to be the worst one. It disappointed me. I didn't want to study here but I ended up here.

A negative experience in a recent teaching practicum also meant that Siri was reluctant to work as a secondary school teacher after graduation:

> I will try my best not to become a secondary school teacher. I had a very bad school attachment experience. I want to work in universities. I want to stay away from secondary schools.

Siri had mixed feelings about the coming study abroad semester. It was not something she really wanted to take part in but rather something which she was compelled to do – 'I have no choice. I am an English major. I have to go'.

Although Siri's grades indicated that she was doing well in her English studies – her grades put her in the top 10 percent of her cohort – she described herself as 'like a kindergarten student … at beginner's level'. She explained that she was good in terms of reading and writing and 'can get a very high score in taking tests [but] can't get high scores in presentations'.

Siri did not enjoy travelling, and before participating in the study abroad programme she had not travelled outside Hong Kong. But as the immersion semester was part of her degree programme, she had no option but to participate and chose to study in England, because she thought that the partner university was more 'prestigious' than those in Australia and Canada. Her main goal was to get an A grade in the English Literature module which she had chosen to take. Siri felt that the atmosphere for learning literature in England would be better than in Hong Kong. She did not expect to use much English outside class because she planned to spend most of her time with her classmates from Hong Kong. Siri knew very little about her homestay arrangement – 'I have no idea if it's a big family or a husband and wife or just a lady'. What she did know 'sounds quite boring'. Her main concerns were food – 'English people eat potatoes every day' – and whether she would have Internet access. Perhaps because she had not travelled before, Siri expected to miss Hong Kong very much.

Siri did not think she would have much difficulty in getting things done or being polite in English in England, but expected that 'people will laugh' at her when she spoke English. She did not expect to make many new friends as she described herself as 'very shy, very passive, not out-going, not expressive … very ill-tempered'. Siri did not think her visit to England would change her:

> I don't want to change … . It's my personality, I think. When I change it is just a little change, very minor. I don't want to have big changes, but I do want to be more confident in speaking English.

Overall, however, Siri acknowledged that she was not very well prepared for trip and thanked the interviewer for helping her to think about the questions that had been raised.

At first, Siri did not enjoy her stay in England at all. She left Hong Kong in a typhoon and caught a cold on the plane. Her first message to friends was to say that she had arrived safely, was in the university library and was back on Facebook and MSN via the Wi-Fi at her homestay. At first she was homesick and said that she just wanted to speak Cantonese

and turn on the television and watch programmes in Cantonese. In one message she wrote: 'Speaking in English … makes me feel nothing. Nothing's real. It's like I have lost my identity'. The changeable weather made life generally uncomfortable, and after a trip to a larger city nearby, she regretted being in the city where her university was located, which she described as being 'like a nursing house, nothing there but students and studies, so boring'. She also found that her homestay was a one-hour journey away from the city and that the buses were never on time: 'you have no idea how long you have to stand here, or have no idea if it will finally come'. Many of Siri's messages were nostalgic for Hong Kong: she did not reset the time zone on her mobile phone, iPod and laptop and did not use photos taken in England on her Facebook page because she only wanted pictures of Hong Kong on her profile. In a Mid-autumn Festival message to Facebook friends, Siri quoted Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to express her feelings about her life in England: 'Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful'.

As time went by, Siri became impatient for her return home. She wrote that she had little free time after classes at university and that she did not know what she was doing in England – 'I don't know what I am doing here. Every day and night I miss Hong Kong'.

> I don't know how to communicate with others here, most of the time I hide myself in a corner and type my words in a word file of MSN to express my feelings. I'm so passive. I can only open myself to those who I know well, so well that I feel safe. I think I write my heart better than I speak. I really care how other people look at me here.

One bright spot was a message in which she wrote that she laughed out loud in her heart when her teacher praised her English intonation, and she also enjoyed weekend shopping trips, although she regretted being unable to shop with her regular Hong Kong shopping partner, who was taking the immersion semester in Australia.

By the end of the semester, Siri had travelled quite a bit around the United Kingdom. She had visited York, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford and Edinburgh, and had even made a 30-hour return trip to stay for four to five hours in Amsterdam, 'because it was cheap'. But these trips seem only to have reinforced her negative opinion of the city where she was living: 'I wish I can go to a bigger city and study there. There's more places to go, more like Hong Kong. Why do I waste my time here'?

Fortunately, the food provided in her homestay was better than Siri had expected and her host, who turned out to be a single elderly lady,

cooked to suit her preferred diet. Siri also found that the local people were friendly and helpful, and although she hated waiting for buses, she found that bus stops were a good place to chat. In this respect, she found England to be very different to Hong Kong. However, she did not make any local friends and spent much of her time at the university with the Hong Kong group, with whom she spoke Cantonese.

Nevertheless, Siri found that she had more chances to speak English in England than in Hong Kong, although she was surprised to find that she learned more vocabulary in Hong Kong than in England, where people used more everyday English: 'although English in Hong Kong is a second language, the vocabulary and grammar seem to be more complicated'. She was also disappointed with her university lecturers, who she felt accepted anything the students wrote: 'they shouldn't tell us that we are good, we had no improvement in the whole trip'. There was some acknowledgement that this perceived lack of learning might have been a consequence of her subject choice, which was based on the location of the classes, rather than the challenge of the subject: 'I chose the easy courses so I didn't learn that much … some people learnt something new. They had to go to the college on the hill … it's far … I didn't want to go'.

Describing her feelings after she returned to Hong Kong, Siri said that she might consider studying abroad again but only if it were to go to a more prestigious university. If the university was 'just a normal university' it would be pointless. She would prefer to stay in Hong Kong and study at the University of Hong Kong, which 'is good enough … not easy to get in, but it's closer, no need to go so far'. She didn't feel that she had improved her English and said that she still felt like a 'learner' rather than a 'user'. The trip had also reduced her motivation to learn English. She felt that the 'pleasure' of learning English had gone and that English was now no more than a 'tool' for her. The main impact of Siri's study abroad seems to have been to reinforce her affiliation to Cantonese. In one Facebook message she wrote: 'I really love to be a Hong Konger, I love my HK identity. I like speaking Chinese'. When she heard people speaking English, she felt uncomfortable, and like a stranger when she used English herself. 'At the end', she said, 'you are not British even though you know English. You can't change the fact that you are Chinese even if you go for plastic surgery'.

Janice's story

Growing up in Hong Kong, Janice had little opportunity to use English for everyday communication. Her use of English was mostly for homework

and examinations. Nevertheless, Janice was active in her efforts to engage with English outside the classroom. In her secondary school she joined the English Society and she and her friends who also wanted to learn English made the most of the Native English Teacher (NET). They would 'grab the NET to chat, have meals together, and we would take part in whatever activities they organized'. At a local district community centre, she befriended two young American women who were there to teach 'leisure courses in English'. They would socialize together, watch movies and go shopping, and chat on MSN 'for an hour … one to two nights a week'.

A defining moment in the process of learning English came when a friend gave her a CD of an American band, the Back Street Boys. Janice became a 'massive fan' and began to listen to songs in English, to read magazines and listen to interviews. At first Janice found the language difficult, but she 'replayed and replayed' until she was able to understand. This interest in pop music led to an interest in 'foreign culture' and 'since learning their language is the "tool" to get in touch with their culture … [she] wanted to learn good English'. Janice devoted herself to English and as a result her 'Chinese results were getting worse but the opposite in English'. This interest in and enthusiasm for English became closely connected with Janice's identity. Being good at English became part of who she was: 'perhaps I have no other talents but for English … my results make me more confident in myself so English for me is a positive thing'.

The study abroad semester was not Janice's first visit to Australia. She had visited three times before, for periods ranging from one week to two months. The main reason for her earlier visits was to spend time with her former boyfriend, also from Hong Kong, who was studying at an Australian university. Keeping in touch with him online had been a bonus for Janice's language development. 'We used English to communicate online – it's much faster than Chinese', however once Janice arrived in Australia her interactions with him and his friends were all in Cantonese. At first she felt scared to use English with other people. Her English accent was 'American style' and she was concerned Australians would not understand her. One unintended consequence of her interest in English pop music was that Janice found that the language she learned 'was not really about communication for everyday purpose'. Much of the English she used on previous visits to Australia was connected with shopping and 'the singers that I like seldom say these things'. On this visit, however, she both expected and wanted things to be different.

Janice was enthusiastic about the prospect of a study abroad semester in Australia, saying she wanted 'to know more people from different places' and to learn 'English for everyday purposes like buying things, and to "feel" what words they will use for communicative purposes'. At the start of the immersion semester, she was determined to use English in different ways, to learn more English, and to meet 'more people from different places'. At the same time, she expected that she would change as a person: her 'world knowledge will be bigger' when she gets to know more people and her perspective on life will change as a result of 'eye-opening exposure' to different people and cultures. Finally, she hoped that she would become 'more independent because my mother has been taking care of me well since I was little'. Although Janice was close to her family, she did not think she would miss them while she was in Australia and was quite sure that she would not be homesick: 'perhaps I'll just make one phone call and everything will be settled'.

Janice arrived at the host university after an hour's bus ride from the airport. As the bus pulled up beside the waiting host parents, she suddenly realized, 'I haven't written down my host's name!!!' It turned out that her host parents had not remembered her name either, and so she was the last to be matched with her host parents. Even though this was not a great start, Janice was not upset by this 'messy' meeting at all. Her initial thoughts were that 'the host dad looks really handsome', 'the little girl is lovely and shy' and the 'mum looks so young and fashionable'. Satisfied with her host family, Janice arrived at her home for the next 13 weeks, which was 'really big compared to my house in Hong Kong', and where she very soon settled into her room, got connected to the Internet and met the two family dogs. By evening dinner on her first day, she declared, 'I LOVE this family'. It did not take long for Janice to settle down and she very soon got on well with her host family. Significant members of the family included Tammy, the host mother, Mike, the host father, and their daughter. Over the weeks, Janice participated in many family-oriented activities with them. They went shopping together, watched movies on TV, swam in the family swimming pool, had barbecues, went fishing, went on a bike ride, and shared many good conversations.

Janice's participation in these conversations did not always go smoothly. Although she had spoken of an interest in the Australian accent – 'it's cute' – and her desire to 'sound like an Australian', she struggled to understand Mike's accent and said that he talked too fast. On one occasion, a barbecue, Mike offered Janice a beer saying, 'Do you want to try this Australian beer?' Janice thought he said, 'Have you ever tried this Australian beer?' to which she replied, 'No'. She then followed this answer

with her own question, 'Can I have some?' Of course, this led to some confusion, and so Tammy (the host mother) commented, 'He just asked you if you'd like some and you said no!' Janice then explained that she had misheard Mike because of his accent. They continued to discuss each other's speech. Janice said that she could understand Tammy more easily than Mike. Tammy said this was not surprising, adding that 'she was the only one who could understand what he said coz they've been together for so long now and he talked so fast'. Mike and Tammy said that they tried to slow down when they talked to her, but that they forgot sometimes and spoke at a normal rate because English is their mother tongue.

One night Janice and Tammy were watching a movie on television. When Tammy explained to Janice what the movie was about, Janice 'couldn't understand a word of what she was talking about'. However Janice felt quite happy to ask Tammy to clarify what she said: 'Sometimes when she talks about movies, she gets so excited to speak with lots of slang and accents. I could hardly understand sometimes but I'll ask. It's good that she hasn't made me feel like she's annoyed by my frequent questions. I've learnt a lot from talking with her coz she'll always explain'.

Outside of the home, Janice was also thoughtful about her language use. At the university, for example, she was relieved, after some time away from her classmates, to see them again for orientation week. This gave them the opportunity to compare notes on their host families and to familiarize themselves with the campus and its people. Janice describes the programme organizers as 'so so so slow. They let us know what we have to know in the very last minute and they're not as organized as we Hong Kong people'. These signs of difference were also evident in the language choices of the Hong Kong students: 'we could speak Cantonese freely without others knowing what we're talking about and we could just do stupid things and pretend that we know nothing and are happy being silly'. So at times the students used Cantonese to (actively) distance themselves from others on campus, and by so doing could pretend (or have the freedom) to be ignorant of their surroundings.

They were less happy to be 'distanced' in other ways though. After two weeks of university, Janice felt 'a little cross' with the limited course choices available to them. She also felt that 'the lecturers put on a nice face but we feel that inside they just treat us like outsiders'. She believed that the Hong Kong students were not treated equally: 'We can't get access to the online materials that we're supposed to get coz our school fees have been paid for by the government. Shouldn't we be treated the same as any other students in the uni?'

In the classroom, Janice says she only felt like an English learner when she was in classes that 'were related to English'. In other classes she seldom used English. Many of her Hong Kong classmates were in these classes, and they would speak to each other in Cantonese. They did sometimes use English to talk to their lecturers, especially when they had conversations with them outside of class to talk about assignments, or when the lecturers 'might start a conversation with us to talk about other things in class, in English'. This was not always easy, since 'most of the lecturers were not Australians'. One, for example, was Russian, 'and the English he used was really really boring, and I couldn't understand. … His accent was strange, and I felt that I had difficulty in understanding him'. Janice also struggled to understand her mentors, the Year 2 Education students: 'Our group of four didn't understand, but politely laughed with them when they joked, many times, it was strange to ask them what they were joking about. … They used very local words and accents, so "local" that we didn't know'.

Janice spent a lot of time with her classmates from Hong Kong, particularly one or two close friends. They visited each other's homestays, went shopping together, and they did a lot of sightseeing. Excursions sometimes took them out of town, including visits to Sydney. When sightseeing, they interacted quite a bit with the locals, mainly for transactional purposes in shops, to negotiate public transport and to ask directions. Janice 'definitely' used English with people other than her classmates because she 'tried to integrate myself into … wanted to adopt Australian accent more'. While Janice was happy in the city where the university was located, many of her classmates were not. They preferred the bright lights of Sydney and Janice found their attitude annoying; she enjoyed the 'nice and quiet place' where she was. She declared her appreciation of the opportunity to participate in the study abroad programme which is 'generously provided by our government'. Janice wrote: 'We just need to pay a little bit of money we can stay for three and a half months … what else can u ask for? Just live your life and enjoy it …!! A lot of people want to be in your position too, just dun waste the resources and ENJOY it!' At the end of her stay in Australia, Janice was reluctant to leave. Very early on she said she loved living with her host family. Mid-way through the stay she declared 'I really love living here', and at the end she said 'I really didn't want to go, but it's life. … Things can't go the way you want sometimes'.

Before she left for the immersion semester she had indicated that she expected some changes. She expected to learn more non-academic English that could be used for everyday communication, and she thought she

would become more independent, learn more about the world, and 'see things from a different angle'. Reflecting on her experiences in Australia, Janice felt that she had changed somewhat. In terms of language, she did not feel that she had changed much: 'no special changes'. But she acknowledged that she did learn something, especially about the different ways in which Australians used English. Although she still felt that she was a 'learner' of English, she had also developed in some ways as a 'user of English'. In Australia she had been 'pushed to use the language … and this helped me with my identity as a language user'.

There had also been some personal changes: 'I am more ready to accept things, more open-minded'. Janice had a better understanding and acceptance of cultural differences, such as 'why foreigners can live with their boyfriends and girlfriends easily'. She was also more ready to 'accept others and friends'. Her final statement in her post-interview was: 'I have grown older'. Janice ended her reflections by making connections between language and identity and her time in Australia: 'I don't think I can be like a local [Australian] person who can speak [English] fluently when communicating with others. I have my own culture and thinking. I better understand that Cantonese is my mother tongue. I know that even if I married a native guy, I would never become a native speaker. After I returned, I think I am Chinese. When I use Cantonese I have a stronger identity as a Chinese'.

Individual differences and the impact of study abroad

We observed in Chapter 3 that marked individual differences are a recurrent feature of studies on the learning outcomes of study abroad (Kinginger, 2009). This observation was made in the context of studies of language learning outcomes, which have been shown in some studies to be influenced by factors of identity. The ways in which we experience and know the world are largely the result of our individuality, which is shaped by prior experiences, goals and expectations, and the identities that we construct and project to others in interaction. In Chapter 7, we saw how the impact of study abroad on second language identities is related to the identities that students have developed before departure and carry into the study abroad setting: two students achieved positive outcomes from very different programmes. Siri's and Janice's contrasting stories of their experiences of participating in the same programme can help us explore this issue in more depth.

Readers will no doubt agree that Janice gained far more from her study abroad experience than Siri. We don't know exactly how much

English each student learned – both say that they did not learn a great deal - but Janice indicates a number of positive developments, including a feeling that she has developed as a 'user' of English in some respects and a sense that she is now more open-minded. In contrast, Siri tells us explicitly that she has changed very little and that the trip has, if anything, had a negative impact on her second language identity. She still sees herself as a 'learner' of English, her motivation to learn the language has diminished, and her affiliation with Cantonese has been strengthened (although this was also something that Janice experienced).

In sum, we might describe the influence of Janice's experience of study abroad on her second language identity as a positive one. In contrast, Siri's experience seems to have been one of little change. Moreover, we have selected Siri's narrative for inclusion in this chapter as one of only two of the 48 narratives in our data set in which the student reports little or no second language identity development. The overwhelming majority of students report positive outcomes, even if they have encountered difficulties during study abroad. From this perspective, the impact of Siri's experience of study abroad might be described as a 'negative' one, in a context where positive outcomes are generally expected. We might also speculate on its longer term consequences, as Siri does herself when she suggests that she might pursue postgraduate studies in Hong Kong, rather than overseas.

The question that we want to focus on, however, is why the second language identity outcomes were so different for these two students. We will explore this question by looking more closely at five themes that emerge from their stories: their contrasting previous experiences of learning English and overseas travel, their goals and expectations, events during study abroad, and broad differences in Janice's and Siri's personalities.

Previous experiences with English

Siri and Janice have spent many years studying English, like most university students in Hong Kong (in most cases 13–15 years before entering university). They have also been relatively successful in their learning, having achieved results in school-leaving examinations that enabled them go on to university. Although opportunities for use of the language in 'real life' situations in Hong Kong are limited, Siri and Janice have become competent users of English. It is mainly in the approaches they have taken to study and the aspects of language use in which they regard themselves as most proficient that they differ.

Siri has taken a very individual approach to learning; she dislikes speaking, but she does well in written tasks and enjoys reading English literature. However, despite evidence to the contrary (she was among the highest achievers in her degree programme), Siri has a largely negative attitude to her abilities in English and describes herself as 'a beginner … at kindergarten level'. We might say that she has a relatively weak linguistic self-concept, or sense of self as a second language learner and user. This aspect of her second language identity appears to be linked to a disappointing result in the final years of secondary schooling when Siri did less well than she expected in the English A-level examination. Her linguistic self-confidence also seems to have taken a further knock during a difficult teaching practicum, which had caused her to reconsider teaching as a career option. Siri's approach to study abroad was clearly influenced by this history and, in particular, by experiences that had led her to doubt her abilities in English and the goal of her degree programme.

Janice's experiences with English were somewhat different and we have a sense that she was always active in seeking out opportunities to use and develop her language skills. At school she was a member of the English Society and a student who took advantage of the opportunity to socialize with native English-speaking teachers at her school and local community centre. Where Siri developed an interest in reading English literature, Janice developed an interest in listening to English popular music, which she saw as a tool to understand English language culture. In their stories, there is a clear contrast between Siri's orientation towards a more private engagement with English culture through reading, and Janice's more interactive orientation based on speaking and listening to the language. Janice's story conveys a strong impression of her positive linguistic self-concept, expressed in her view that English may be her 'only talent', and a sense, derived from her good results, that she was confident in herself and that English was a 'positive thing' for her.

Previous experience of travel and study abroad

The difference between Siri and Janice's previous experiences of travel and study abroad is also significant. Many university students who study overseas already have experiences of study abroad, which may have an impact on their attitudes to and preparation for subsequent experiences. We saw this, for example, in the stories of Joey (Chapter 4), Angelina (Chapter 5) and Daisy (Chapter 6). Neither Siri nor Janice had

previous experience of study abroad, but they differed in that Siri had not left Hong Kong before, whereas Janice had visited Australia three times to see her former boyfriend, who was studying at an Australian university. This difference clearly influenced their attitudes and expectations towards study abroad. Janice had already 'done' being away from home and was confident that she had the skills needed to negotiate her way through an unfamiliar environment. She had also chosen to do her immersion semester in Australia, a country that she liked and knew well. For Siri, study abroad was something very new, and the challenges which are an inevitable part of any step away from the known added to the complexity of the experience for her. Siri was also one of a relatively small number among the university students participating in our research who had no experience of overseas travel at all. She did not particularly like travel and saw the immersion semester as something that she had no option but to do. Her choice of destination was also based on her view of the status of the host university, rather than a wish to visit England.

Goals and expectations

In terms of the model of identity outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, previous experiences of language learning and overseas travel form part of the reflexive self-identities that students bring to the experience of study abroad. They contribute to the student's sociopragmatic competence, their linguistic self-concept, and their ability to mediate personal competencies through the second language. Students' goals and expectations constitute what we have called their imagined identities in the study abroad setting. Based on reflexive identities, imagined second language identities represent the selves that students hope to project, the relationships they envisage and the changes they hope to undergo.

It is perhaps not surprising, given the reflexive second language identity that Siri brought to the immersion semester, that her goals and expectations were less than positive. Unusually among the students who participated in this research, Siri had avoided setting goals and making plans for the trip up to the time she was first interviewed. (She even thanked the interviewer during the interview for making her aware that she was not well prepared!) Although she thought that she had the skills needed to communicate competently in English, she expected that people would laugh at her accent. However, she expected that she would not interact very much with local people and that she would spend most of her time with her Hong Kong classmates. Whereas other students saw

the homestay as the place in which they would use English the most, Siri did not mention this and appeared not to know who her hosts would be. Her main expectation was that the semester would be 'boring' and her one clear goal was to get an 'A' in an English Literature module she had enrolled in. Insofar as she articulated goals, they were restricted to academic achievement and further engagement with language through literature, rather than interaction with speakers of English.

Janice's goals and expectations were framed by her sense of linguistic self-confidence, her successes in using English in spoken interaction. They were also formed in the light of previous experiences in Australia, in which she found opportunities for interactive use of English to be limited. She was determined to make the most of the time available (and possibly of the fact that, this time, she would not be visiting her boyfriend) to meet local people and extend her English language skills. In contrast to Siri, Janice did not articulate academic goals and did not, in fact, appear to view the immersion semester as an academic experience; her goals and expectations were focused on engagement with people. Also in contrast to Siri, who said explicitly that she did not want the semester to change her, Janice was enthusiastic about the prospect of going to Australia and imagined herself developing her sociopragmatic competencies, her knowledge of the world and her personal independence. In sum, the two students' imagined identities were conditioned by their previous experiences and Janice's was, in many ways, a more fully formed, imagined identity than Siri's. Siri's lack of preparedness was reflected in an inability to envisage herself in the study abroad setting and to see what she might gain from it.

Experiences during study abroad

We noted in Chapter 7 that study abroad programmes typically constitute the framework for students' experiences, while the programme itself is constituted by individual students' engagements in intercultural communication in the study abroad setting. This engagement is conditioned by the students' reflexive and imagined second language identities and involves the projection and recognition of identities in the second language. In a sense, individual students also create the particular settings and contexts within which this engagement takes place (Benson, 2012). In Siri and Janice's stories, the location of the immersion semester and their homestay arrangements turned out to be especially important elements in this process of constructing individual settings and contexts for engagement.

Although Siri and Janice chose their study abroad destinations, they did so for different reasons and with different consequences. In Janice's story, the city in which she was living appears as a backdrop to her experiences in the homestay and university. In comparison to Siri, she has a relatively neutral view of the city as a location for study abroad. While she does not say how often she used English outside the university and homestay, she does mention excursions for shopping and sightseeing, where she used English in transactional encounters. These transactional encounters were also identity-related from her point of view. Janice used English more than her classmates, because she wanted to 'integrate' and improve her 'Australian accent'. Unlike many of her classmates, who would have preferred to be in a bigger city, Janice was also happy to be where she was, describing it as a 'nice and quiet place'. In sum, although Janice does not have a great deal to say about the Australian city in which she stayed, we see how she constructed it as a setting within which she could project her imagined identity and pursue her goals.

Siri, on the other hand, quickly developed a dislike for the city she had chosen. Although she had chosen the university, rather that the city in which it was located, she was soon describing it as a city in which there was 'nothing but students and studies'. Her frequent sightseeing and shopping trips to larger cities only reinforced this view. To make matters worse, the university was located some distance from her homestay, and buses were infrequent and seldom on time. Siri's story tells us much less than Janice's about her interactions with local people. We may, perhaps, infer that they were few, although she mentions that the long waits at the bus stop were an opportunity to talk to other passengers and that she was surprised by their friendliness. Siri's comments on her preference for reading and writing and her shyness in speaking suggest that using English with strangers may have been a very different matter for her than it was for Janice. The experience also seems to have reinforced this aspect of her linguistic self-concept. Towards the end of her stay, she wrote that she did not know 'how to communicate with others here' and that she had begun to 'hide herself' in a corner until she could come back to Hong Kong. Like Janice, Siri constructed the study abroad setting in accordance with her imagined identity, but in this case it was a setting that inhibited rather than facilitated change.

In general, the students who participated in the immersion semester did not find that the university environment was conducive to the use of English. Because they were already attending an English-medium university in Hong Kong and remained in their Hong Kong groups for many activities, they quickly fell into a familiar routine of using English

for academic matters and socializing with each other in Cantonese. Making friends with local students meant withdrawing from the Hong Kong group to some extent, and the one immersion semester student in our study who did this felt that she was ostracized by her Hong Kong classmates. For many of the students, the homestay thus became the main environment for engagement with English and local culture on a daily basis. This varied, however, according to the composition of the homestay 'family' and their household arrangements. We saw in Chapter 6 how Joey, who participated in the same programme as Janice and Siri, took advantage of her homestay environment, and Janice's experience seems to have been even more positive. Despite a somewhat shaky start – Janice forgot the name of her hosts – she seems to have quickly become part of the family, participating in family activities and seizing every opportunity to develop her language skills. When communication difficulties arose, she dealt with them proactively by asking for help, which her host family willingly provided. Siri was placed with a single woman and, although her worries about English food turned out to be unfounded, there is no indication of a close relationship between the two. The homestay is absent from Siri's story as a setting for interaction, and it only appears as a symbol of her sense of isolation, represented by its distance from the university.

Summing up the two students' experiences during study abroad, it seems as if Janice was in many ways more fortunate than Siri. Taken at face value, Siri's story suggests that things began to go wrong right from the start, while Janice appears to have fallen on her feet. This is most apparent in their homestay arrangements. Most female Hong Kong students prefer to be housed with a family, who live close to the university, and in this respect Janice may have been more fortunate than Siri. What we see in the narratives, however, are the students' constructions or representations of the settings, rather than the settings themselves. There are also examples in our data of students who form close friendships with single hosts, and of students who fail to interact in family environments. What is most striking in the two stories, therefore, is the sense in which Janice and Siri's experiences matched their expectations – the sense that Janice was determined to make things work, while Siri was more willing to accept that things were not as she would have liked them to be.

Personality

So far in this chapter, we have considered how previous experiences of English and overseas travel, goals and expectations, and experiences

during study abroad influenced the development of Janice's and Siri's second language identities. The overall impression that we gain is that all of these factors worked together in contrasting directions for each student. In Janice's case the influence is positive and leads to identity developments that she recognizes and values. In Siri's case, the influence is negative in that it inhibits change and may reinforce aspects of her linguistic concept that she acknowledges but may not value. Lastly, we may consider the extent to which these contrasting directions are conditioned by aspects of the two students' personalities, insofar as they are revealed in their stories.

We approach this question cautiously, because what we know of the students' personalities comes from what they tell us about their attitudes and approaches to study abroad. Nevertheless, we see that Siri describes herself as a person who resists change and dislikes new experiences, a person who is 'very shy, passive, reserved, ill-tempered'. She also reveals that she is intelligent, hard-working, and well read, and she shows a dry sense of humour in her use of a quotation from Beckett to describe her study abroad environment. Janice does not describe her personality explicitly, but we see clearly that she is sociable, enthusiastic and eager to make friends. Overall, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Janice's personality left her better equipped than Siri to face challenges in study abroad. Janice's active engagement in the kinds of activities that lead to second language identity development is in stark contrast to Siri's lack of engagement. Yet it is also evident that the factors that lie behind their different approaches and experiences are both complex and deep-rooted.

Discussion: Individual difference and second language identity

In this chapter, we have seen how the second language identity outcomes of study abroad can be very different for two different individuals following the same programme. In Chapter 7, we observed that the individual's engagement in intercultural communication during study abroad is crucial to the development of second language identity. It is, in a sense, the place where such developments take place. 'Engagement' and 'lack of engagement' also seem to be the words that best sum up the contrast between the experiences of Janice and Siri. We have also seen, however, that engagement is not a 'free' variable in study abroad. There appears, instead, to be a chain of variables in which the identities students bring to and imagine they will adopt in the study abroad setting lead to certain patterns of engagement, which in turn influence identity development.

We have also observed how individual experiences tend to follow individual goals and expectations. The link between expectation and experience is clear in the stories discussed in this chapter. Siri expected and experienced little, and much of what she did experience was unpleasant. Janice limited her expectations but was open to and enjoyed numerous new experiences. This is also a pattern that runs across most of the narratives in our data set, in which students tend to experience what they expect to experience. Siri exemplifies this, although she was unusual in imagining an identity that was not conducive to positive development; she expected that English people would laugh at her English, and was resistant to the idea that the experience of study abroad would lead to change. In most cases, however, students imagined identities that would lead to positive effects. In particular, they saw themselves as willing and enthusiastic participants in study abroad who would take advantage of every opportunity to use and develop their English. Often, the opportunities were fewer and more difficult to manage than they expected, but in general the students returned with a sense of having developed in a positive direction.

Although the framework of a study abroad programme may be the same for each student, each student's experience of the programme is unique. The uniqueness of these experiences – conditioned by previous experiences, goals and expectations, and factors of personality – also conditions individual differences in the outcomes of study abroad. This creates a complex set of problems for programme providers, and in the next chapter we turn to the question of how study abroad programmes can best facilitate positive second language identity outcomes for all students.

9
Improving the Effectiveness of Study Abroad Programmes

The narratives that we have discussed in this book capture the essence of each student's experience of their study abroad programme. They provide examples of how prior second language learning and experiences such as overseas travel can influence the shape of personal study abroad goals. They illustrate factors that affect their involvement and engagement. In so doing, they highlight connections between the study abroad programme, prior learning and experience and second language identity development.

Second language identity not only shapes student involvement in a study abroad programme, but is in turn shaped by it. We contend that second language identity is important to the way an individual uses and continues to learn through their second language in a wide variety of contexts. We believe that to meet the different goals and needs of students and programmes, students need to be educated about studying abroad. A key factor of such education is a clear understanding of purpose, the development opportunities presented and the potential effects a study abroad experience may engender. Similarly, study abroad programme managers and providers need to recognize and, through purposeful tasks and study, place a greater emphasis on the role and development of second language identity. This focus on purpose, student needs, goals, effects and the different dimensions of second language identity must also happen before, during and after their study abroad experience. We believe the design of an effective study abroad programme is one that meets programme goals, student goals and develops core parts of second language identity. In this chapter we offer suggestions and considerations to help make this happen. The questions that guide this chapter are:

- Who benefits from study abroad and in what way?

- How can study abroad programmes be more effectively designed to achieve student and programme goals, and in so doing have a positive effect on second language identity development?

Student participation in study abroad is on the increase globally. In 2011, there were more than 4.1 million students enrolled in long-term, full-time study abroad programmes (OECD, 2012). In the United States, more than 273,000 tertiary students joined in short-term study abroad programmes. Of these students, 96 per cent were in programmes of one semester (16 weeks or less). Some 58 per cent of the students were in programmes of eight weeks or less (Institute of International Education, 2012). Such trends are repeated around the world. Why? Simply, schools, parents and students believe that a period spent studying or working abroad will bring substantive benefits. This raises the question of who benefits and in what way? The investment in study abroad by families and individuals is significant. Therefore, the programme design and results of involvement in study abroad are of concern.

Who benefits?

In our study, the most obvious beneficiaries were those students who chose to engage in the different opportunities presented in their study abroad programme. However, several students did report little or no benefit. For this group, the study abroad experience did little more than confirm, in a negative sense, fixed ways of thinking, practices or identities. That said, we contend that effectively designed and run study abroad programmes can cater for the needs, interests and expectations of all students. In so doing, the likelihood of negative responses can be significantly reduced.

For those students on full-time study abroad programmes, there was an added benefit. These students stood to benefit from immigration policies in their host country which allow them to use the time they spent there studying towards an application for permanent residence. Many countries encourage the permanent immigration of international students. They do this as a means to strengthen the country's workforce. Immigration considerations, although not a feature of the students' purposes mentioned in our study, are known to affect some international students' choices of country in which to study (OECD, 2011).

Others to benefit are the student's extended network of family and friends. For example, many of the students in our study returned home with new perspectives and a deeper appreciation of family and friends.

The students involved believed that what they had learned on study abroad would bring them closer to their families and friends.

Teachers or academic staff who are involved with the student also stand to benefit. Study abroad students return home with unique intercultural experiences that can be shared with others in classes. Teachers can use these experiences and new understandings of different cultural practices and thinking to inform other students. They can have students share and take a lead in helping non-study abroad students to develop their intercultural communication skills.

Types of benefit

In our study, the types of benefit reported by students can be classified into three interrelated categories. These are:

- educational or academic benefits
- personal benefits
- future-oriented benefits.

Educational or academic benefits

Students on 16-week exchange and immersion programmes received academic credit for the classes they completed. The same was true for students involved in full-time study in secondary school or university. As discussed in Chapter 7, Phoebe, like many other students on the 16-week exchange and immersion programmes, saw this as a major benefit. It allowed her to take part in the exchange without having an effect on either her academic progression or graduation date. Students on 16-week language immersion programmes also received academic credit for up to three courses studied overseas. This was viewed positively by all students, especially given the mandatory nature of their study abroad programme.

Teacher education students on six-week exchange and 16-week language immersion programmes also cited educational benefits. These were most often focused on their placements in early childhood centres or school classrooms. Placements gave them direct contact with teachers who could explain and discuss what was happening in the classroom. Reflection sessions that often followed the placement experience provided opportunities for students to discuss their observations and experiences with the teachers involved. A common benefit linked to such placements was that they provided demonstrations of new ways to teach and manage student learning.

Shorter-term secondary school exchange programmes to the USA and Germany provided students with the opportunity to attend regular classes. Occasionally, students were asked to give presentations about

Hong Kong or aspects of Chinese culture. Such experiences, while 'stressful' for some at the time, rated highly in the students' narratives. Students appreciated the opportunity to engage with local teachers and students, to share their backgrounds and culture, and to learn about how they used language and to ask questions. Such experiences also gave students the change to test themselves and their language in different learning contexts.

For many students in our study there were planned and unplanned chances to explore the local community or country. Those students who took advantage of these opportunities reported learning about the local culture, of meeting new and interesting people and animals. These sociocultural expeditions provided opportunities to sightsee and to engage in local events, to learn outside the classroom. For many, these experiences were a highlight of their study abroad experience.

Personal benefits

Although improved language skills were not always the direct purpose, they were at the heart of most programmes in our study. All study abroad programmes in our study, except one, saw students studying in native English-speaking countries. Selected parts of some programmes involved intensive language classes, or involvement in regular classes with local students. In both instances, lessons were taught in the target language, English. From these classes and the study abroad experience generally, students reported varying degrees of second language improvement. With a few exceptions, students returned home believing they had improved in their use of English.

Many students also talk about an improved view of themselves as second language users when compared with other Asian international students. Students discovered that they could use their second language to solve problems, to share and receive information. They found they were much better at the English language than they had previously thought. They shared instances in which they were using language daily not only to survive but to engage with native speakers.

The daily use of a second language in a native speaking context also led to a host of reported personal benefits. Some of these include:

- increased self-confidence
- gains in independence and decision-making ability
- improved problem-solving and negotiation skills
- better understanding of Chinese culture
- deeper understanding of the local culture and global perspectives
- understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses

- improved appreciation of family and friendships
- commitment to using English language
- changed perspectives on life
- new enthusiasm for travel and overseas study
- new international friends.

Future-oriented benefits

These types of benefit include skills and understandings that students believed would be useful or provide advantage in the future. Some students, like Phoebe (Chapter 7), linked participation in study abroad to their future careers. Phoebe returned from study abroad with a passion to teach. She had a new commitment 'to communicative language teaching methods'. These methods, she believed, would help 'inspire her students to use English in more enjoyable and functional ways'. As discussed, several other narratives talked about the benefits of field placements which provided exposure to new ideas about teaching and learning: ideas and approaches they believed would be useful in their future careers as teachers. For others, future-oriented benefits related to skills and understandings that would improve their life. For example, Pamela, a six-week university immersion student, reported 'increased patience, independence and problem-solving skills'. Similarly, Bob, a secondary student, returned from his 10-day exchange with altered views of people from other countries. 'I found that other people in the world are not as bad as I imagined. Since most of them are nice and friendly, therefore, I no longer have any bias against strangers or foreigners'.

Some students cited future-oriented benefits as study abroad goals. However, most students mentioned them when summing up the study abroad experience. We argue that students should examine the benefits of study abroad before starting the study abroad experience. This would allow not only an understanding but the development of goals in areas they may not have previously considered. We also think that benefits should be re-examined during the study abroad experience. This may be in the form of mid-programme reflection sessions. And, as in the case with students in our study, the benefits attained should be a focus of discussions after the students return home.

Factors affecting the development of second language identity

Given the substantive investment in study abroad by individuals and institutions, attention must focus on ensuring students have a positive

study abroad experience. In so doing, students will feel they have achieved their personal goals. From the student narratives, three factors arise that we believe can improve the effectiveness of study abroad programmes to ensure student and programme goals are met and which will have a positive effect on students developing second language identity. The three factors are:

- prior experiences of second language learning and use and travel
- purpose and goals
- programme design and preparation.

The sections which follow discuss each factor. As a guide for programme designers and providers, we list possible tasks and events for inclusion at different stages of a study abroad programme.

Prior experiences

Each student approaches study abroad with a different background and experience. Positive prior experiences of travel and successful foreign language learning often result in students who express clear study abroad goals. For example, Angelina (Chapter 5) – a one-semester exchange student – 'felt well prepared for her study abroad'. This, she credited to previous travels to Australia and Italy, and a short-term study tour to the United Kingdom. Her exchange goals clearly reflected her previous experiences. 'My time in the UK did not allow time for interaction at a higher level. My goals are to speak English in a more academic way and for professional things … so I am expecting to learn more academic English'. Based on her previous travel experiences to Australia, Italy and the United Kingdom, Angelina knew her exchange 'would be a success'. Pamela's, narrative of a six-week language immersion course also recounts the influence of previous travel. 'Every time I return home from trips I feel that I am somehow different'. The poverty of the Philippines made her more appreciative of life in Hong Kong. The cultural differences of life in Norway made her 'self-reflect' on her views and practices. These experiences have left her 'eager to know more about the world'.

   Such prior experiences help build a positive linguistic self-concept. They develop students' confidence in using their second language ability in different contexts. The experiences also build self-confidence and a sense of independence. They affect student thinking and help develop skills that are needed to cope with the challenges of living and studying in a foreign country and culture. As Angelina puts it, 'When your family

is not behind your back and your really good friends are not behind your back, you know you're alone. It's like when you put a person in the wild: you, naturally become stronger'. The experiences also develop constructs – or ways of thinking and acting – that are fundamental to an individual's second language identity, and to survival in a foreign culture.

Many students in our study sought knowledge about their intended host country, school, university and programme well before the programme began. For the majority, this knowledge also helped build confidence and psychological preparation for their study abroad experience.

Previous travel and second language learning contribute significantly to developing second language identities. Those students with positive previous travel and intercultural communication experience more often than not expressed a genuine enthusiasm and interest in their study abroad. Evidence of this were clear goals and defined strategies to deal with foreign language learning and coping with life in the host country.

However, we also found students with little or no prior travel experience, or ones who had poor second language learning experience. Often these students were less than enthusiastic about study abroad involvement. Some also set unachievable goals. Others seemed ill-prepared or had few ideas about how to cope with cultural differences or second language learning and use while abroad. Several of these students reported difficulties adjusting to their study abroad programme. Therefore, to increase the benefit of study abroad, students need to understand their past. They need the chance, before departure, to examine their past second language learning, to develop realistic goals and the opportunity to prepare for the realities of their study abroad programme.

Before study abroad

Study abroad and study abroad programme managers should make available the time for students to:

- examine and explore ways in which previous travel, intercultural communication and second language learning can affect and be affected by study abroad in a positive sense
- discuss details of the specific study abroad experience; for example, location, culture, programme features
- identify positive experiences and linguistic skills that can be used effectively in a study abroad context and provide practice using them

- explore the range of linguistic and sociocultural and academic support services that will be available to them throughout and on return from study abroad.

Purpose and goals

Why do students undertake study abroad? There is a multitude of answers to this question, each dependent on the individual and their particular circumstances. Developing an understanding of a student's purpose and motivation for involvement in study abroad, we believe, is essential in helping them prepare for the experience and in the programme delivery. Two levels of student purpose emerged from our student narratives.

At a surface or external level, the most frequent purpose for wanting to study abroad was a desire to improve second language skills. This was often linked with a wish to interact with and learn from people from the host country. Other students' purposes lie in longer-term benefits associated with setting up international professional and social networks, workplace alliances and future employment prospects. For others still, it was the chance to travel, to experience freedom and develop independence, or gain a general understanding of a foreign culture.

However, some students' purpose reflected a wish to develop themselves as individuals. For example, Janice (Chapter 8) discusses the effects of English immersion on her developing sense of being Chinese. 'I don't think I can be like a local [Australian] person who can speak [English] fluently when communicating with others. I have my own culture and thinking. … After I returned, I think I am more Chinese … I have a stronger identity as a Chinese'.

Involvement in the study abroad experience can also reveal a developing appreciation and understanding of family, of culture, and of languages and learning. For example, Bob – a secondary school student who took part in a 10-day study tour – 'felt that he was not quite the same person he was before he went away. Before the trip he would get mad easily and be too shy to talk to strangers, and was now braver and more sociable'. His attitude and understanding of cultural differences had also changed. 'I found that other people in the world are not as bad as I imagined. Since most of them are nice and friendly, therefore, I no longer have any bias against strangers or foreigners. I also found that their culture is not inferior to China, as there are many magnificent buildings and exquisite sculptures'.

Hannah – a secondary school student – developed her understanding of how a family in her host culture communicate. 'They are very intimate with each other, which is the opposite of Hong Kong'. On return

from study abroad, these understandings changed the way she interacted with her family. In her narrative she also shared her new understandings and skill in being able to cope with difference. 'I've learnt how to respect people … . The way I treat people has changed … especially with family and entertainment. I used to stick with the computer, but now I talk more to my family. I have learned and accept that I'm a person who can adapt easily and who tries to enjoy differences in culture'.

Each study abroad experience is unique. It affects each student differently. The idiosyncratic nature of different study abroad programmes and the personal nature of study abroad involvement often results in changes or refinement in student expectation and purpose throughout the experience. Therefore, it is essential that programme organizers and providers take time to elicit and examine the student's purpose, motives and expectations of study abroad before their departure, during the study abroad experience and on return.

Better understanding of a student's purpose, goals and expectations will help both the student and study abroad provider. If students understand the aims and organization of a study abroad programme they can use these to align their own goals. Providers – who have information on students' purposes and goals, and an understanding of each student's second language identity – are in a better position to ensure they receive the information and skill development they need when they need it. In so doing, students and providers can be more certain of a closer match between the programme goals and conduct and the student's purposes, expectations and abilities. We therefore make the following recommendations addressing student motivation, study abroad purpose and related goals before, during and following participation in a study abroad programme.

Before study abroad

Before leaving for any study abroad, students should:

- discuss details of the study abroad experience; for example, location, culture, programme features and related expectations
- examine and understand the programme objectives
- discuss the potential benefits
- explore how specific backgrounds can affect and be affected by study abroad in a positive sense
- identify and refine student expectations and goals
- look into and address student concerns
- explore the range of support services that will be available during and on return from study abroad.

During study abroad

Host institutions should provide continuing support for students and their developing and changing expectations and goals during the programme. Students need to:

• reflect on their expectations, goals and intercultural communication involvement to help identify areas of achievement and areas that need attention
• reflect on the benefits students see in the study abroad programme
• discuss and improve individual students' intercultural communication skills
• take part in formal interventions and training designed to develop their ability to reflect on their purposes and developing understanding and skills
• explore strategies to cope with possible linguistic and sociocultural shock.

After study abroad

While support before and during study abroad is essential, students also need support after their study abroad experience. Students need time to reflect on the experience as a whole, and on specific achievements in relation to study abroad expectations and goals.

In addition, students may need psychological and linguistic support as they readjust to life and study in their home culture. For many students, returning home to the controls of family life and routines of study pose significant difficulties. For example, some Asian students find returning to the family home often challenges the personal autonomy and independence they have developed in longer study abroad programmes. For others, heightened second language identities and related beliefs about the role and use of their second language may not fit well in their home culture or study context. This is obvious when Asian students return home to family and friends who do not understand or who react negatively to these new beliefs about the use of English.

It is, therefore, essential that students in post-study abroad reflection and programme debriefing sessions should:

• share evidence of specific achievements related to the personal goals for study abroad
• share evidence of specific intercultural communication and second language proficiency development achievements

- reflect on changes to their linguistic self-concept, and second language-mediated personal and professional development
- be assisted in dealing with sociocultural readjustment and second language challenges
- examine the short-term and longer-term benefits of the study abroad programme and experience, and the means to preserve and act on what they have learned about themselves about language and culture.

Programme design and preparation

As discussed, it is essential that programme purposes and features align with student needs, goals and expectations. This will go a long way to ensure students have an engaging and productive study abroad experience.

Our study shows there are no fixed study abroad programme formulae or recipes to ensure positive study abroad goal achievement. However, there are programme features that students responded positively to. These we believe have the potential, when combined, to have a positive effect on the achievement of study abroad goals and in turn second language identity development.

The first programme consideration is duration. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 7, not all study abroad programmes have the same goals or features. Short-term exchanges or study tours in our study lasted anything from days to weeks. Other exchanges lasted for six months or more, while full-time study programmes lasted from one to three years. However, the uniqueness of each student's background makes it difficult to pinpoint specific features that will have a positive effect on their second language identity development.

In our study, contrary to others (Coleman, 1996; Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002) a 10-day exchange programme was effective in helping students reach their goals. In Chapter 7 we credit this to the structured nature of the programme. But equally we argue it could be the positive second language identity the students held before starting their study abroad programme. The mix of programme features and the complexities of a student's background make it difficult to ascribe feature to outcome with any certainty.

The second consideration is the need for students to receive tangible rewards for their participation. While many students do not need or seek such rewards, as discussed in Chapter 7, students saw great benefit from receiving academic credit for their studies. We argue that study abroad programmes need to encourage participation and involvement. One way is to provide all students with some form of tangible reward.

Such rewards may range from formal certificates of participation and reports on linguistic gains and intercultural competency achievement to academic credit for their studies. Such rewards are meaningful to the students, notably those on programmes of shorter duration. They provide tangible evidence of development and involvement that can be used by students in their future studies or careers.

The third consideration is the level of integration and interaction students have with local host nationals. Interacting with local host nationals is for many students a clear goal of study abroad. The issue and challenges of ensuring study abroad students integrate and interact with local host nationals has been a long-time concern of researchers (Clyne and Rizvi, 1998). Our findings show clearly that one of the most positive and often frustrating experiences of students' stay abroad was making contacts with locals. Sharon, a six-week immersion student, wanted to make friends with locals, but felt that the programme 'did not provide her with much opportunity to interact with the locals'. We found that when such goals are met, students are positive in both their reporting of experiences and in their overall assessment of the study abroad programme.

Forming social and study relationships can also result in positive academic, social and personal outcomes for study abroad students. These include higher grades (Westwood and Barker, 1990), increased student satisfaction (Lulat and Altbach, 1985) and increased efficacy. This, in turn, advances intercultural adjustment and social integration (Schwarzer and Scholz, 2002). We would add that engaging with local hosts in a foreign language context improves student self-belief and increases their linguistic self-concept. These factors are critical in developing second language identity.

Students place great importance on integrating into the life of the host country as shown by student friendships. However, ensuring these happen poses significant difficulties for some students and most study abroad providers. One of these difficulties is the number of co-nationals who are placed in the same class (Trice, 2007). In our student narratives, Janice (Chapter 8) talks about how her group used Cantonese to (purposefully) distance themselves from others on campus. 'We could speak Cantonese freely without others knowing what we're talking about and we could just do stupid things and pretend that we know nothing and are happy being silly'. While Janice and her group saw some benefit in such action, the reasons underlying it are complex. Hofstede (2001) attributes such behaviour to cultural differences or the similarity in the individualist vs collectivist backgrounds. Others speculate that it occurs

because of differences in language ability (Cheng, Miles and Curtis, 2004) between local and international students. Others still argue there is a general lack of commitment to forming friendships because of the time available to do so (Yang et al., 1994).

We argue that an understanding of second language identity may assist programme providers to help students meet the challenge of intercultural engagement. In our study, students with positive second language identities found ways to engage with local students; while those with poor linguistic self-concepts or individual perceptions of themselves as second language users often did not. However, equally, it may be a lack of understanding of the need to integrate with local students, or of the benefits of intercultural engagement. It may also be that the student simply has not had the intercultural experience or has poorly developed intercultural communication skills. The challenges of integrating and making friends highlight the need for students to under-stand and be prepared psychologically and linguistically to engage with local host nationals.

Providing opportunities for study abroad students to integrate and interact – to engage – with local host nationals is a critical feature of a study abroad programme. It is, as we argue, essential to second language identity development. Being able to communicate on different levels with host nationals helps build students' self-confidence. Working and communicating with locals helps make students feel accepted by the host community. Knowing they can use their second language effectively to solve problems and cope with life in their host community is a fundamental part of being a second language user, and of second language identity.

Our considerations pose significant challenges for study abroad programme design and preparation. As well as the possible tasks and events listed for the previous factors, we feel programme designers and providers need to consider the following programme design features to address students' needs, goals and expectations.

Before study abroad

Programme managers should:

- sensitize students to the aims and design of their specific study abroad programme, including differences in the academic learning climate
- provide opportunities for students to meet important individuals from the study abroad context either in person or electronically; these may include programme coordinators, academics, teachers, student buddies or the homestay family

- build students' understanding of the different aspects of second language identity, and develop related study abroad goals;
- make efforts to recognize, prepare and support student need for autonomy and control over decision making.

Before and during study abroad

Programme managers and providers should:

- make available support structures and specialist units or people (e.g., counsellors) that can address and appease student concerns or grievances.

During study abroad

Programme providers should:

- build in opportunities for students to make choices
- offer students the chance to assess the programme at different stages, and provide and receive feedback on their involvement
- provide formal intervention and training to support second language development, intercultural communication and intercultural skill development
- make certain students have access to experiences whereby they can achieve success in using their second language for various personal purposes
- provide professional development opportunities for faculty about the need and means to make pedagogical adjustments to their teaching to support the second language proficiency and intercultural communication needs of international and domestic students
- build intercultural communication and skill training into the programme support for study abroad students
- provide opportunities for students to make sense of the experience by reflecting on their academic gains, and intercultural communication and sociocultural experiences through journals, diaries, blogs, storytelling, etc.
- support student preparation for their return home from study abroad
- provide tangible rewards or recognition for the study or tasks completed.

We accept that it is difficult to ensure local and study abroad students engage with each other. It is an even more difficult and complex task to make sure friendships develop. However, programme providers must

take measures to make certain intercultural communication between local and study abroad does happen.

To promote intercultural engagement, programme providers should:

- ensure that all study abroad students are involved in classes or groups that include native-speaking local students. It is also important that when in such classes, study abroad students use the local target language
- create opportunities for students to integrate and interact with local community members in informal and formal settings
- provide interdisciplinary classes that focus on intercultural communication through an internationalized curriculum. The use of such classes as a stimulus for intercultural communication and engagement for international students involved in full-time study and exchange.

Conclusion

Study abroad is a multifaceted endeavour. Engagement in study abroad evokes situations that result in personal, social and academic challenges. A successful study abroad experience rests largely on the student's motives for involvement, and achievement of goals and expectations. As shown in student narratives, previous second language learning and experiences of life in other cultures are significant factors that affect the way a student approaches involvement in study abroad.

Similarly, differences between the programme characteristics, student goals and the study abroad experience can result in and decide different impressions and results. Variations in the programme undertaken and the related expectations and preparation influence both the way students engage with local hosts, and the study abroad programme itself. For the student, the study abroad experience can be made easy or hindered by the levels of support provided at different stages of programme implementation. We also contend that, on a deeper level, it is the individual's second language identity which most significantly affects their readiness to get involved and the success they will experience.

Answering, then, the question posed about how study abroad programmes can be more effectively designed to achieve student and programme goals is not easy. Given the complex interplay of knowledge and second language learning experiences, motives and expectations, and study abroad programme features, there is no single approach, no

simple recipe that will guarantee an effective study abroad programme. What we have learned from students' reported experiences is that a successful study abroad programme is one which meets or even surpasses their expectations. An effective study abroad programme identifies, explores, builds and supports second language identity understanding and development. It is one that encourages and supports intercultural communication at all levels, and provides opportunities to develop and practise autonomy and decision making. It elicits and revisits the programme and personal purposes and goals of study abroad. It provides individual students with the personal, social, linguistic and academic support they need before, during and on return from their study abroad experience.

10
Conclusion: Second Language Identity Revisited

The main aim of this book has been to argue for and to develop second language identity as a usable construct in second language learning research. We have looked at the idea of second language identity from three different angles: in Part I from the perspective of theory and in the context of previous research on study abroad; in Part II from the perspective of evidence for second language identity development in students' narratives of study abroad; and in Part III from the perspective of possible influences – related to programme type and individual differences in study abroad – that might have an influence on its development. In this concluding chapter, we will sum up what we hope we have achieved.

Identity in second language learning research

Our interest in second language identity has developed in the context of wider interest in identity in second language research. This interest in identity is, in turn, part of a broad 'social turn', which has led, somewhat paradoxically, to an intense focus on language learning in the context of individual lives (Benson and Cooker, 2013). Viewed from the perspective of individuals learning and using languages in a succession of social contexts that are ultimately unique to their individual life trajectories, it is clear that second language learning is somehow connected to identity. It seems, however, that we do not yet know exactly what the connection is. In some cases, it seems to be a matter of identity influencing language learning opportunities and processes, while in others it is language learning that influences identity. In both cases, language learning and identity are represented as separate constructs, which is, perhaps, a precondition for thinking about the influence of one on the other. The idea of language identity, on the other hand,

leads us to think of language learning as being integral to the development of identities, but language identity is often narrowly conceived in terms of affiliations or identifications with the languages that a person knows. While this view represents a step in the direction of a more integrated view of language and identity, it appears to overlook the sense in which identity develops simply as a consequence of learning, knowing and being able to use more than one language.

We began, therefore, with a working definition of second language identity as any aspect of a person's identity that is related to their knowledge and use of a second language. Broad as this definition is, it has the specific implication that a person's language repertoire is a fundamental condition of their identity. This implies a relationship between second language learning and identity in the deep sense that knowledge of a second language recontextualizes the person's knowledge of their first language. This is even apparent in the terminology: a language only becomes a 'first' language when a person has begun to acquire a 'second'. In this sense, a person who knows more than one language has a different *kind of* identity to a person who knows only one. It is this difference, which lies mainly in the specific kinds of identity work that learning a second language implies, that we are trying to capture in the idea of second language identity. In Chapter 2, we also linked second language identity to global mobility and the narrative construction of identity. From this perspective, narrative identity is a particular kind of identity that is replacing the older 'sociological' identities derived from relatively fixed positions in social and cultural space. The inherent potential for mobility in second language learning, therefore, has much to do with the identity work that goes into the development of second language identities. The stories that people tell about their experiences of second language learning and use are part and parcel of the construction of their personal and social identities as, actually or potentially, globally mobile individuals.

Our use of the term 'second language identity' is similar, in this sense, to Burck's (2005: 3) use of 'multilingual identities' in work concerned with 'examination of the differences languages make to individuals, and of the ways in which individuals construct their identities and relationships'. Burck's research was based on retrospective interviews with adults who had either grown up speaking more than one language or had moved to a second language environment later in life. It showed, above all, that multilingual individuals experience personal and social identity in ways that are intricately bound up with the roles of different languages in their lives. We have also seen a good deal of evidence of

this in the narratives included in this book, among students who have grown up in Hong Kong speaking Cantonese as a first language and learning English as a second language from an early age. Their accounts of their early lives, especially, show that learning English was not simply a matter of acquiring linguistic knowledge and skills, but an experience that was woven into their growing sense of identity. They also show us how, at the point of embarking on study abroad, many of these young people had already developed second language identities that helped them orient towards this new, and sometimes first, experience of global mobility with a strong awareness of their language capacities and the potential that lay within them.

Our interest in study abroad for Hong Kong students, therefore, lies mainly in the challenges it poses to second language identities that have developed over many years of studying English at school. We have described study abroad as a potentially 'critical experience', serving as a kind of crucible for second language identity developments that we have attempted to observe through students' narratives. We believe that the narratives largely bear out this view of study abroad. For the most part, the students did not believe they had learned a great deal of English while they were overseas, but they did believe that their language and personal competences had developed and, in some cases, they were able to articulate developments related to their second language identities directly. In general, they did not measure the benefits of study abroad in terms of quantifiable language learning gains; instead they saw it as a process of positive development and change. While we would not necessarily expect the students to be able to articulate these developments and changes in terms of second language identity, our analysis in Part II of this book suggests that they often can be understood in those terms. The point, here, is not so much that we have shown that study abroad led to development of the students' second language identities, but that we have shown that the concept of second language identity is helpful in interpreting data related to a range of developments. This observation raises two important questions, however, concerning the sense in which second language identities *develop* and the *processes* that are involved in second language identity development.

The development of second language identities

If second language identity begins to develop at the point at which a person begins to learn a second language, we can assume that it continues to develop as their learning progresses, alongside their second

language proficiency. Yet it is also clear that second language identity development cannot be understood in the linear and incremental terms in which we tend to understand language proficiency development. Nevertheless, we are able to observe in our data certain long-term trajectories for second language identity, which include a subjective sense of becoming a more proficient learner of the second language and a sense of becoming a 'user' of it. Although these transitions are specific to the students' second language development, they also involve a balancing out of first and second language capacities as the students gradually become able to do the kinds of things with a second language that they are able to do with their first language. This, in turn, has strong implications for personal identity as the approximation to an equality between second and first languages means that they are approaching 'bilingualism' in the everyday sense of being able to use two languages 'well'.

A sense of being able to function as a competent person while 'using' the different languages that one knows, therefore, seems to be a goal of second language identity development. It is not a necessary goal of second language learning, however, and learners are often content to achieve far less. Yet the weight that the Hong Kong students' narratives place on 'using' English in their study abroad settings, which manifests itself irrespective of the educational level of the student, points to its subjective importance for them. These students did not see study abroad primarily as an opportunity to study, to see the world, or have a good time. They saw it as an opportunity to use English and this was equally true whether they were embarking on a degree programme at an overseas university or leaving for a 10-day exchange with an overseas secondary school. Study abroad thus represents a particular kind of critical experience for these students' second language identities. Having developed identities as users of Cantonese and learners of English over many years of schooling in Hong Kong, they are anxious to test out imagined identities as users of English in a new setting. Their narratives also show that they are especially gratified when they are recognized as users of English and that this is an important criterion of a successful study abroad experience from their point of view.

It is also true that, for an educated Hong Kong citizen, to be recognized as a competent user of both Cantonese and English is to hold a socially valued identity that is often associated with having lived or travelled overseas. We may say, then, that for the students who participated in our study, any development that supports the recognition of this identity represents development. This illustrates both the sense in which second language identities are interwoven with personal and

social identities and the sense in which their development is situated within particular sociolinguistic contexts. The idea of becoming a user of a second language is especially salient to the experience of second language identity for Hong Kong learners of English as a second language. More generally, therefore, we might say that second language identity development takes place whenever people move in the direction of individually and socially validated personal identities through experiences of language learning or use.

Processes in second language identity development

With regard to the processes involved in second language identity development, we believe that the narratives discussed in Parts II and III of this book provide us with some evidence for the value of the multifaceted view of identity outlined in Part I. We have seen how students bring particular reflexive identities to the experience of study abroad and how they are conditioned by shared experiences of learning English at school, but also individualized by out-of-school experiences. The identities that they imagined for themselves in the study abroad setting, on the other hand, were conditioned by expectations of using English in interaction with local English speakers. Taking a broad view of the students' narratives, we see that the development of their second language identities during study abroad depended largely on whether or not they succeeded in bridging this gap between reflexive and imagined identity by projecting identities as competent users of English that would be recognized as such by local English speakers. We also see a persistent concern with non-recognition or mis-recognition – a concern that one's English will be 'laughed at' or 'misunderstood' or that one will be positioned as a 'Chinese' or 'foreign' speaker of English. When students are gratified to be 'mistaken' for native speakers, it is not so much because they feel that they have become native speakers, but because the projection of an imagined identity as a competent user of English has been endorsed.

In the course of this cycle of identity projection and recognition through the medium of the second language, then, students draw on salient identity categories and resources to rework reflexive and imagined second language identities. This is a process that we see at work in the narration of study abroad experiences (and presumably one that goes on independently of their narration for the purposes of our research), as students interpret outcomes of particular interactional encounters and experiences as indicators of their successes and failures during study

abroad. This process also has some significance for our understanding of the three dimensions of second language identity development that provided the organizational framework for Part II of this book. In Chapter 3 (Figure 3.2), these dimensions were ranged along a continuum from identity-related aspects of second language competence to second language-related aspects of personal competence. The division of this continuum into three dimensions was to some extent arbitrary. What has emerged from the analysis of the narratives, however, is a sense that development at the mid-point of this continuum – represented by linguistic self-concept – is, in a sense, fed by developments at each of its ends. Developments in linguistic self-concept are manifested mainly as subjective developments at the level of the interpretation of experiences. They represent, in effect, the students' self-awareness of how their second language identities have developed as a consequence of study abroad experiences. Developments in sociopragmatic competence and second language-mediated personal development, on the other hand, appear to take place more at the level of experience itself. They are, in this sense, aspects of the cycle of identity projection and recognition that underpins development of linguistic self-concept. They are a matter of what the students do with the second language – functioning as a competent person, making friends, solving practical and interpersonal difficulties, and representing desired identities in an unfamiliar environment – which, if they are done successfully and repeatedly, develop and expand the student's identity as a multilingual individual in a multilingual world.

Conclusion

Much of what we have written here about second language identity and its development, however, should be taken as hypothesis, rather than established theory. We do not intend to claim that we have developed a comprehensive model of second language identity development. The conclusions that we have drawn are based on a relatively small set of data gathered in a particular context, and would no doubt be revised if they were to be examined in the context of a wider range of experiences. What we do claim is that the notion of second language identity is a useful one in research on second language development, in that it forms a bridge between second language acquisition, in a narrow cognitive sense, and the social factors that are often seen as influences on language learning and use, but not integral to them. In the context of our research on study abroad, second language identity has also proved to be a useful tool for understanding relationships between a range of

otherwise unconnected outcomes related to language competence, self-concept and personal development. In addition, the fact that the idea of second language identity has proved useful in research on study abroad suggests that it may be relevant to a much wider range of experiences than the often drastic effects of migration on individuals' language identities. We look forward to more studies that seek to develop second language identity as a conceptual tool for fine-grained analysis of social and individual processes of language learning and use in a wide variety of settings and contexts.

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