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Cultural learning outcomes and summer study abroad

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CHAPTER 10

CULTURAL LEARNING OUTCOMES AND SUMMER STUDY ABROAD

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According to the *Standards of Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, an essential goal for students studying a foreign language study is to understand the relationship among the products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture so that they may “participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world” (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 9). The study abroad context is often claimed to be an ideal environment for cultural learning. The potential advantages of a study abroad experience are many: Students studying and living in another cultural and linguistic environment have been shown to attain increased language proficiency (Freed, 1995; Matsumara, 2001; Yager, 1998), world-mindedness, independence, tolerance for ambiguity, self-esteem, and empathy after a study abroad program (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Laubscher, 1994).

Many assume that study abroad will also lead to greater understanding, tolerance, and a more positive attitude toward the target culture. Some researchers claim that foreign language students may gain important

cross-cultural skills and knowledge that are critical in a global community (Chieffo & Zipser, 2001; Laubscher, 1994). Recently, however, faculty and researchers have begun to challenge assumptions that immersion creates automatic cultural and language learning (Talbert & Stewart, 1999; Wilkinson, 1998). Wilkinson (1998) claimed that "deep cultural understanding cannot be guaranteed" (p. 33) if students are limited to their own perspectives when attempting to comprehend cultural differences.

Supporting these assertions, Day reported that participants in shorter programs might have superficial contact with the host culture, inadequate language practice, a group orientation that isolates them from the host culture, and a vacation mentality that works against an academic atmosphere (1987). Yäger (1998) suggested that in shorter-stay study abroad programs, student attitudes and out-of-class contact with the target language and culture become increasingly important if students wish to attain cultural and linguistic gains. For example, in a study of 32 students in a 6 week summer study abroad program in France, Freed (1990) found relatively little change in students' linguistic proficiency as measured by OPI scores. However, improvement in grammatical achievement was significantly related to students' interactive out-of-class contact with the target language and culture. Freed concluded that gains may be difficult to measure with instruments such as the OPI, yet shorter study abroad stays can still be beneficial and valuable experiences for students.

Wheeler (2000) reported that enrollments in study abroad programs are currently at a record high yet students' stays abroad are becoming shorter. If it is true that there is relatively little change in students' linguistic proficiency after a short-stay study abroad program, questions may arise about students' gains in cultural learning during summer study abroad. As more students are choosing shorter-stay study abroad programs, it will be important to know whether students are attaining one of the major goals of foreign language study—an understanding of the relationship among the culture's products, practices, and perspectives.

STUDY ABROAD AND CULTURAL LEARNING

An important underlying premise of study abroad programs posits that exposure to varied cultures and living conditions promotes a more positive understanding of the "other" (Stephenson, 1999). Some research has revealed that study abroad participants tend to make significant gains in general cultural knowledge during their time abroad (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990). Recognizing the advantages afforded during a cultural and linguistic immersion experience, students often expect to achieve immediate cross-cultural understanding and fluency (Wilkin-

son, 2000). However, positive attitudes, understanding, and tolerance toward other peoples and cultures are not necessarily guaranteed after a study abroad experience (Bateman, 2002).

Cultural understanding is often viewed as a developmental process in which learners evolve from an ethnocentric vision of culture toward greater recognition of varied perspectives and acceptance of cultural differences (Paige, 1993). Robinson (1988) described cultural understanding as an "ongoing, dynamic process in which learners continually synthesize cultural input with their own past and present experience in order to create meaning" (pp. 11-12). Learning to understand native and target culture perspectives, products, and practices therefore challenges the learner's sense of self and cultural identity (Bateman, 2002).

Participants' identification with the target and native language and culture may also be complex and multifaceted. Kramsch (1998) explained that from a historical perspective, the teaching of foreign languages has been characterized by the polarization of "we" versus "them." This assimilationist view upholds the native speaker as the unchallenged model of communicative and cultural competence. In an attempt to redefine foreign language learners' complex cultural and linguistic identity, Kramsch (1993, 1998) envisioned a new position she called a "third place," where "learners of a foreign language are in an in-between position that challenges them to redefine their relationship both to themselves and to the foreign language and culture" (p. 54).

The development of cross-cultural identification and understanding may be strongly influenced by a variety of factors that may include previous cultural knowledge, language fluency, length of residence in the new culture, and cultural distance (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993, 1994; Ward & Searle, 1991). For such reasons, the differences in cultural distance experienced in homestay and non-homestay study abroad living environments may have an impact on students' cross-cultural understanding.

HOMESTAY VERSUS NON-HOMESTAY ENVIRONMENT

The homestay environment has long been viewed by the second language acquisition community as the optimal environment for enhancing students' linguistic and cultural learning while studying abroad (Davidson, 1995; DeKeyser, 1991; Jorden & Walton, 1987). Homestay programs are said to provide students with "very rich, first-hand experience in living in the target culture and using their language skills with native speakers in circumstances with direct real-world consequences" (Brecht, Frank, Keesling, O'Mara, & Walton, 1997). Allen and Herron's (2003) study of

linguistic and affective outcomes of summer study abroad revealed that 18 out of 20 participants interpreted the contact with the host family as a direct cultural and linguistic advantage. In Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart's (2002) study of 24 host families, they found that host families facilitated students' study abroad experience in linguistic, psychological, and cultural terms.

The linguistic advantages for those study abroad participants who live with native speakers in a homestay environment are also supported by social network theory, which claims that personal relationships an individual shares with others such as relatives, friends, coworkers, and neighbors mediate variable linguistic behavior (Milroy, 1987; Milroy & Milroy, 1992). In her study of cultural identification of Americans in Norway, Lybeck (2002) explained the relevance of social network theory to the context of second language learning:

Second language learners who are able to engage in exchange networks with native speakers will experience less distance ... than learners who do not have exchange networks. Learners with exchange networks will thereby improve their L2 learning. Conversely, learners who have native speakers as only part of their interactive networks or who have limited or negative exchange networks will have more cultural distance and experience more difficulty in L2 learning due to the lack of target language norm enforcement in their networks. (p. 177)

Despite these views on the advantages of linguistic and cultural immersion in homestay contexts, others claim that the host family situation does not always constitute the most beneficial living arrangement for study abroad participants (DeLey, 1975; Wilkinson, 1997, 2000). Wilkinson (1997) referred to the "homestay myth"—the illusion that homestay families contribute to participants' development of cultural knowledge through immersion in an authentic family environment. The success of this arrangement assumes the involvement of host family members, and neither all families nor all study abroad students contribute the same time and interpersonal commitment to the experience (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Wilkinson, 2000). Moreover, DeLey claimed it is possible that host families can complicate rather than ease, the cultural adjustment of study abroad participants (1975).

Characteristics that differentiate the homestay environment from the dormitory environment are the potential contact with native interlocutors and the amount of target language input (Frank, 1997). For those students who live in a dormitory environment, they may choose to communicate in their native language with roommates and other residents, and their communication in the target language may be limited to classroom situations.

In a study of over 2500 postsecondary students in homestay and non-homestay environments in Russia, Rivers (1998) found the homestay environment was a negative predictor for speaking proficiency and had no apparent effect on the listening proficiency of students. In an ethnography of the homestay experience, Frank (1997) discovered there was limited interaction between the study abroad students and their Russian host families, and, moreover, participants often spent time alone completing academic assignments during their time in the families' homes. Such results reveal the need to consider the nature of the living environment abroad and the individual characteristics of homestay study abroad participants.

Various questions remain related to the cultural learning outcomes after a study abroad experience: Does a study abroad experience allow opportunities for students to have extended and meaningful interaction with members of the host culture? Does a study abroad experience lead to increased cross-cultural understanding, learning, and adaptation? How does a study abroad experience influence participants' perceptions of the target culture? Moreover, what role do housing arrangements play in shaping students' interpretations of the target culture? As cultural distance influences cross-cultural understanding, the potential for limited interaction with native speakers in varied living environments may influence the cultural learning of study abroad participants.

THE PRESENT STUDY

To date there has been limited analysis of the impact of the study abroad experience upon participants' identification with the native and target cultures as well as their understanding of the target culture's perspectives, practices, and products. This investigation sought to answer the following questions related to cultural learning in the summer study abroad context:

1. Is there a significant change in study abroad participants' self assessments of ability to perform linguistic tasks in the target language after study abroad?
2. Is there a significant change in study abroad participants' perceptions of sociocultural challenges after study abroad?
3. Is there a significant change in study abroad participants' identification with their native culture and the target culture after study abroad?

4. Are the cultural learning outcomes investigated in Research Questions 1-3 significantly different between homestay and non-homestay study abroad participants?

PARTICIPANTS AND PROGRAM SITES

The participants in this study were junior high and high school students enrolled in eight summer study abroad programs in France, Italy, and Spain during the Summer of 2004. Table 10.1 presents a summary of each program's residential configuration and the total number of participants in each program. Three of the eight sites were in France, two sites were in Italy, and three sites were in Spain. The duration of each program ranged from 4 to 5 weeks. These eight programs shared common program goals of "explor[ing] the world's most beautiful towns and cities, learn[ing] languages, discover[ing] cultures, mak[ing] new friends and simply hav[ing] a blast ... balancing structured activities and freedom to foster real cultural immersion," according to the study abroad organization's online program descriptions.

Although the eight programs shared certain cultural and linguistic goals, variations existed including academic structure and residence configuration. The three residential configurations for the programs were Homestay, Dormitory, and Residential Immersion. Five of the eight programs were Homestay programs wherein students lived with a family, typically sharing a double room with another American student and joining the homestay family for meals, day trips, and other family activities. Two of the eight programs were Residential Immersion programs wherein students and staff lived together in an apartment complex; in this residential

Table 10.1. Participants by Program Site

| <i>Program Site</i> | <i>Residential Configuration</i> | <i>Participants</i> |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| France Site 1 | Homestay | 23 |
| France Site 2 | Dormitory | 20 |
| France Site 3 | Homestay | 23 |
| Italy Site 1 | Residential Immersion | 37 |
| Italy Site 2 | Residential Immersion | 22 |
| Spain Site 1 | Homestay | 29 |
| Spain Site 2 | Homestay | 23 |
| Spain Site 3 | Homestay | 12 |
| Total Participants | | 189 |

arrangement, students shared double rooms within apartments of three to six students total. In one program, participants lived in a dormitory, sharing their room with an American roommate yet studying and living in a dormitory with international students from around the world on the language school campus.

INSTRUMENTS

Participants completed a survey which addressed the following factors: (a) demographic characteristics and motivation for study abroad participation, (b) current contact with the target language, (c) self assessment of ability to perform target language tasks, (d) sociocultural adaptation, and (e) identification with native and host culture. This survey consisted of four subscales: The Demographic Information and Language Contact Profile, the Linguistic Self Assessment Profile, the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, and the Acculturation Scale.

Demographic Information and Language Contact

The Demographic/Language Contact Profile, (Allen & Herron, 2003) which contained 22 items, was used to gain a better understanding of participants' personal and demographic characteristics, motivations for studying abroad, prior foreign travel, and previous experience with the target language. Also included were questions on participants current contact with their native language and the target language (e.g., spending time with people they live with, watching television, reading, and listening to music). Items pertaining to demographic and personal characteristics were omitted from the Posttest.

Linguistic Self-Assessment Profile

A 40 item "Can Do" scale, a modified instrument from Allen and Heron (2003), was used to assess participants' confidence in their ability to complete 40 target-language tasks. These tasks were divided into the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing and were organized in ascending order of difficulty for each skill area.

Sociocultural Adaptation Scale

The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) was used to indicate the degree of difficulty students anticipated having in the target culture (Pretest) and the degree of actual difficulty they had while experienced in the target culture (Posttest) in terms of cultural perspectives, products, and practices. The SCAS required participants to indicate the degree of difficulty anticipated or experienced using a Likert-type 5-point scale (1 = *no difficulty*, 2 = *slight difficulty*, 3 = *moderate difficulty*, 4 = *great difficulty*, 5 = *extreme difficulty*) with 29 items. Examples of items related to perspectives included "Family relationships," "The pace of life," and "Understanding jokes and humor." Examples of items related to practices included "Following rule and regulations" and "Using the transport system." The two items related to products were "Finding food you enjoy" and "Accommodation." This scale was chosen because of its pertinence to the "culture learning paradigm" and its proven psychometric properties (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Kennedy (1998) demonstrated the scalar reliability of this measure and reported an alpha coefficient of .89 in his study of Singaporean students abroad. Internal consistency measures of the SCAS have ranged from .75 to .91 (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Identification With Native and Target Culture

The Acculturation Scale (Ward & Kennedy, 1994), which contained 21 items, assessed the extent to which participants identified with their native culture's and the target culture's perspectives, practices, and products (e.g., perceptions of the native and target culture, food, and recreational activities). Respondents were asked to consider two questions about their current lifestyle in reference to these items: "Are your experiences and behaviors similar to those of people from your country of origin (host nationals)?" and "Are your experiences and behaviors similar to those of (target culture nationals)?" Sample items related to perspectives included "Family Life" and "Self-identity." Sample items related to practices included "Friendships" and "Language." Two sample items related to products were "Clothing" and "Material Comfort." Respondents rated the similarity for both on a Likert-type scale whose end points were labeled "not at all" (1) and "extremely" (7). This approach results in two independent "similarity" scores for a range of behaviors and cognitions (range: 21-147). Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) demon-

strated the scalar reliability of this measure and reported alpha coefficients of .91 for identification with host nationals and .89 for identification with target culture nationals.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SURVEY

In June, 2004 all participants in the eight study abroad programs as well as their parents were notified in writing of the investigators' intention to conduct a survey of culture learning, and each participant was invited to take part in the survey. Parents and students were provided contact information for the investigators, and a small number of parents corresponded with follow-up questions on the nature of the survey items. None of the parents or students expressed an objection to participating in the study. Surveys were distributed to each program director prior to the program's start, and participants were asked to complete the survey during the first two days of the program during the orientation session or in the course of the first day of academic classes. Posttests were administered using the same protocol: Surveys were provided to program directors who were asked to administer them to the students during one of the last 2 days of the program. At the conclusion of the programs, each program director mailed the surveys to the investigators' home university in the United States.

ANALYSIS

To evaluate the study's four research questions, all analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Inc. version 11.0). To analyze the change in study abroad participants' self assessments of ability to perform linguistic tasks in the target language (Research Question 1), perceptions of sociocultural challenges (Research Question 2), and identification with native and target cultures after study abroad (Research Question 3), *t* tests for paired samples were conducted. To determine if these cultural learning outcomes were different for homestay and non-homestay students (Research Question 4), one-way ANOVAS were conducted. All *t* tests were two-tailed, and a significance level of .05 was used for all inferential statistics. For all significant findings, measures of effect size were calculated. Scalar reliability was calculated for the SCAS and Acculturation Scale using Cronbach's alpha.

RESULTS

Demographic Data

Of the original 226 students invited to participate in the study, 189 completed both the Pretest and Posttest measures. Of the remaining 37 students, 5 students left their programs (4 students in France Site 2, and 1 student in Spain Site 1) before its completion, and 32 students did not turn in complete Pretest and Posttest measures. The 189 participants included 182 American junior high and high school students and 7 students from outside the United States. These participants' ages ranged from 12 to 19 years, and the average age was 16.1 years. Seventy-eight percent of the participants were female, and 22% were male. For 77% of the participants, this summer study abroad experience was the first time they had participated in an academic, cultural, or immersion program overseas.

In terms of previous target language experience, 74% of the participants had previous study of the target language. For those participants in the France and Spain programs, the percentage of students with previous target language study was high at 97% respectively, whereas only 22% of participants in the Italy programs had previous target language study—a figure that may reflect the absence of Italian teaching at the secondary level in the United States.

Between homestay and non-homestay participants a number of differences existed. First, 97% of homestay participants had previous study of the target language, whereas only 60% of non-homestay students had previous experience. Homestay students also had an average of 3.8 previous target language courses whereas their non-homestay peers had an average of 1.4 courses. However, in terms of gender, the ratio of female to male students was nearly identical in both residential conditions: Homestay students included 86 females (78%) and 24 males (22%) whereas non-homestay students included 62 females (78%) and 17 males (22%).

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: SELF ASSESSMENTS OF ABILITY TO PERFORM LINGUISTIC TASKS IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE

A paired samples *t* test was calculated to compare the mean score for the number of linguistic tasks students claimed able to perform before study abroad to the mean score for the number they claimed able to perform after study abroad (maximum score = 40). The mean score on the Pretest was 17.06 (*SD* = 11.03) and the mean score on the Posttest was 23.12 (*SD* = 10.02). A significant increase from Pretest to Posttest was found (*t*(188)

Table 10.2. Self Assessment of Ability to Perform Target Language Tasks

| <i>Task Type</i> | <i>Mean Pretest (SD)</i> | <i>Mean Posttest (SD)</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> | <i>Effect size (η^2)</i> |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------|--|
| Oral | 5.43 (3.36) | 7.53 (2.32) | 16.177 | <.001 | .73 |
| Listening | 3.30 (2.36) | 4.91 (2.58) | 12.515 | <.001 | .66 |
| Reading | 4.08 (2.88) | 5.20 (2.76) | 7.56 | <.001 | .40 |
| Writing | 4.25 (3.34) | 5.48 (3.37) | 8.65 | <.001 | .37 |

Note: Maximum score for each skill was 10.00. Data for the Linguistic Profile was available for 189 participants.

= 16.01, $p < .001$). The effect size for this analysis was $\eta^2 = .58$. In addition, a significant increase was found from Pretest to Posttest in each of the four skill areas; results and effect sizes for each of the four skill areas are summarized in Table 10.2.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIOCULTURAL CHALLENGES

A paired samples t test was calculated to compare the mean score for the degree of difficulty participants anticipated in the target culture during study abroad (Pretest) to the mean score for the degree of difficulty they actually experienced during study abroad (Posttest). The mean score on the Pretest was 60.13 ($SD = 16.14$) indicating that on average a "slight degree of difficulty" was anticipated in the target culture by participants

Table 10.3. Sociocultural Adaptation

| <i>Subscale</i> | <i>No. of items</i> | <i>Mean Pretest (SD)</i> | <i>Mean Posttest (SD)</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> | <i>Effect size (η^2)</i> | <i>N</i> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------|--|----------|
| Cultural Perspectives | 11 | 22.79 (7.42) | 20.78 (6.95) | 4.398 | <.001 | .28 | 159 |
| Cultural Practices | 16 | 33.32 (8.45) | 29.55 (7.83) | 6.98 | <.001 | .46 | 149 |
| Communicative Practices* | 11 | 22.95 (5.97) | 20.28 (5.69) | 6.954 | <.001 | .46 | 181 |
| Cultural Products | 2 | 3.63 (1.66) | 3.60 (1.66) | .313 | .755 | | 186 |

Note: Maximum scores = Cultural Perspectives = 55.00, Cultural Practices = 80.00, Communicative Practices = 55.00, Cultural Products = 10.00.

* These items were included as Cultural Practices but were also examined separately as Communicative Practices as they entail interaction and language unlike some of the Cultural Practices items such as "using the transportation system" or "dealing with the climate".

before the study abroad experience; the mean score on the Posttest was 54.25 ($SD = 14.82$) indicating that on average students experienced “no difficulty” to “a slight degree of difficulty” during study abroad (maximum score = 145). A significant decrease from Pretest to Posttest was found ($t(130) = 5.68, p < .001$). The effect size for this analysis was $\eta^2 = .38$. In terms of changes in relation to cultural perspectives, practices, communicative practices and products, a significant decrease was found from Pretest to Posttest in the first three areas. Results for all findings and effect sizes for significant findings are presented in Table 10.3 Analysis of internal reliability indicated that the scale proved highly reliable: Both the SCAS Pretest and Posttest achieved a Cronbach’s alpha of .92.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: IDENTIFICATION WITH THE NATIVE AND TARGET CULTURE

Identification With the Native Culture

A paired samples t test was calculated to compare the mean score for the extent to which participants identified with their native culture before study abroad to the mean score for the extent of their identification with their native culture after study abroad. The mean score on the Pretest was 114.2 ($SD = 21.54$) and the mean score on the Posttest was 109.73 ($SD = 20.91$) (maximum score = 147). A significant decrease from Pretest to Posttest was found ($t(124) = 2.57, p = .01$). The effect size for this analysis was $\eta^2 = .21$. In terms of changes in relation to participants’ identifica-

Table 10.4. Identification With Native Culture Before and After Study Abroad

| <i>Subscale</i> | <i>No. of items</i> | <i>Mean Pretest (SD)</i> | <i>Mean Posttest (SD)</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> | <i>Effect size (η^2)</i> | <i>N</i> |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------|-------------|--|----------|
| Cultural Perspectives | 10 | 50.49(11.63) | 49.38 (10.45) | 1.318 | .190 | | 132 |
| Cultural Practices | 7 | 40.14 (7.99) | 38.38 (7.76) | 2.782 | .006 | .22 | 140 |
| Communicative Practices* | 3 | 18.35 (3.52) | 17.27 (3.54) | 3.57 | <.001 | .31 | 159 |
| Cultural Products | 4 | 22.33 (4.74) | 21.09 (4.70) | 3.36 | .001 | .26 | 164 |

Note: Maximum scores= Cultural Perspectives = 70.00, Cultural Practices = 49.00, Communicative Practices = 21.00, Cultural Products = 28.00.

* These items were included as Cultural Practices but were also examined separately as Communicative Practices as they entail interaction and language unlike some of the Cultural Practices items such as “recreational activities” or “cultural activities”.

tion with their cultural perspectives, practices, communicative practices and products, a significant decrease was found from Pretest to Posttest in the last three areas. Results for all findings and effect sizes for significant findings are presented in Table 10.4. Analysis of internal reliability indicated that the scale proved highly reliable: The Acculturation Scale Pretest achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .94 and the Posttest achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .93 for identification with the native culture.

Identification With the Target Culture

A paired samples *t* test was calculated to compare the mean score for the extent to which participants identified with the target culture before study abroad to the mean score for the extent of their identification with the target culture after study abroad. The mean score on the Pretest was 70.49 (*SD* = 19.31) and the mean score on the Posttest was 80.12 (*SD* = 20.51) (maximum score = 147). A significant increase from Pretest to Posttest was found ($t(102) = 4.70, p < .001$). The effect size for this analysis was $\eta^2 = .49$. In terms of changes in relation to participants' identification with the target culture's perspectives, practices, communicative practices and products, a significant increase was found from Pretest to Posttest in all four areas. Results for all findings and effect sizes for all findings are presented in Table 10.5. Analysis of internal reliability indicated that the scale proved highly reliable: The Acculturation Scale Pretest achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .88 and the Posttest achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .90 for identification with the target culture.

Table 10.5. Identification With Target Culture Before and After Study Abroad

| <i>Subscale</i> | <i>No. of items</i> | <i>Mean Pretest (SD)</i> | <i>Mean Posttest (SD)</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> | <i>Effect size (η^2)</i> | <i>N</i> |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------|-------------|--|----------|
| Cultural Perspectives | 10 | 34.78 (9.92) | 39.96 (9.54) | 4.97 | <.001 | .53 | 106 |
| Cultural Practices | 7 | 22.70 (6.85) | 25.96 (7.10) | 4.85 | <.001 | .47 | 130 |
| Communicative Practices* | 3 | 9.97 (3.42) | 11.15 (3.79) | 3.52 | .001 | .33 | 150 |
| Cultural Products | 4 | 13.84 (4.20) | 15.17 (4.78) | 3.406 | .001 | .26 | 151 |

Note: Maximum scores = Cultural Perspectives = 70.00, Cultural Practices = 49.00, Communicative Practices = 21.00, Cultural Products = 28.00.

* These items were included as Cultural Practices but were also examined separately as Communicative Practices as they entail interaction and language unlike some of the Cultural Practices items such as "recreational activities" or "cultural activities".

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL LEARNING OUTCOMES BETWEEN HOMESTAY AND NON-HOMESTAY PARTICIPANTS

Self Assessments of Ability to Perform Linguistic Tasks in the Target Language

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the Linguistic Self-Assessment Profile Posttest scores of homestay and non-homestay participants. A significant difference was found between the two conditions after study abroad ($F(1,187) = 93.68, p < .001$). This analysis revealed that homestay participants scored higher ($M = 28.01, SD = 7.11$) than non-homestay participants ($M = 16.30, SD = 9.51$) in their perceptions of their abilities to perform linguistic tasks. The effect size for this analysis was $\eta^2 = 0.33$. However, when interpreting the results, it should be noted that further analysis comparing Linguistic Self-Assessment Pretest scores for homestay and non-homestay participants revealed that a significant difference existed between the two groups before the study abroad experience: Homestay participants' average score for the Linguistic Self-Assessment Profile Pretest ($M = 22.88$) was higher than non-homestay participants' average score ($M = 8.95$). Results for Pretest and Posttest scores for homestay versus non-homestay participants on each skill area of the Linguistic Self-Assessment Profile are presented in Table 10.6.

Perceptions of Sociocultural Challenges

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the SCAS scores of homestay and non-homestay participants. A significant difference was

**Table 10.6. Self Assessment of Ability
to Perform Target Language Tasks:
Homestay Versus Non-Homestay**

| <i>Task Type</i> | <i>HS Mean Pretest (SD)</i> | <i>HS Mean Posttest (SD)</i> | <i>NHS Mean Pretest (SD)</i> | <i>NHS Mean Posttest (SD)</i> |
|------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Oral | 7.14 (2.22) | 8.71 (1.44) | 3.05 (3.25) | 5.89 (2.33) |
| Listening | 4.29 (1.79) | 5.90 (2.08) | 1.91 (2.38) | 3.53 (2.59) |
| Reading | 5.36 (2.42) | 6.21 (2.37) | 2.30 (2.51) | 3.78 (2.65) |
| Writing | 6.09 (2.54) | 7.19 (2.51) | 1.68 (2.54) | 3.10 (2.96) |

Note: Maximum score for each skill was 10.00. Data for the Linguistic Profile was available for 189 participants.

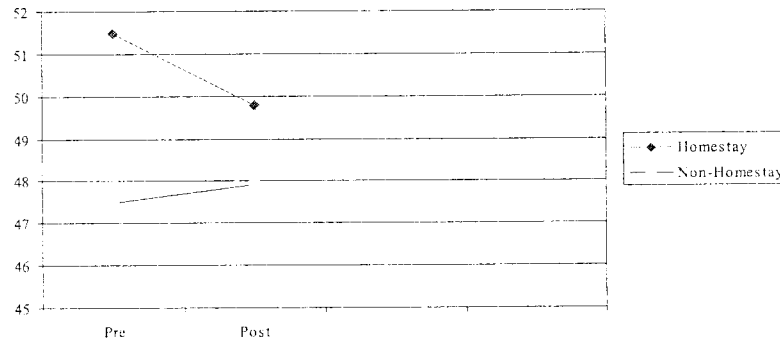
found between the two conditions after study abroad ($F(1,148) = 4.52, p = .035$). This analysis revealed that homestay participants scored higher ($M = 56.21, SD = 15.30$) than non-homestay participants ($M = 51.13, SD = 13.33$) for reported degree of difficulty experienced in the target culture. The effect size for this analysis was $\eta^2 = 0.03$. However, further statistical analysis comparing SCAS Pretest scores for homestay and non-homestay participants revealed that a significant difference existed between the two groups before the study abroad experience: Homestay participants' average score for the SCAS Pretest ($M = 62.67$) was higher than non-homestay participants' average score ($M = 56.92$) indicating that they anticipated more difficulty dealing with the target culture than their non-homestay peers. Results for Pretest and Posttest scores for homestay versus non-homestay participants for cultural perspectives, practices, and products are presented in Table 10.7. The data displayed in Table 10.7 illustrate an important trend that differentiated the two groups: Homestay students' average scores are higher than non-homestay students' average scores on all measures suggesting a higher level of anticipated and actual difficulty in dealing with the target culture for the homestay students.

One-way ANOVAs were also used to determine if significant differences were found between the two groups after study abroad for subscales of cultural perspectives, products, practices, and communicative practices: Significant differences were found for cultural practices and cultural products. These results indicate that homestay participants experienced more difficulty than non-homestay participants in dealing with cultural practices such as shopping, finding their way around, using the transport system, and talking about themselves with others. In addition, they also experienced more difficulty than non-homestay peers in dealing with target culture accommodation and finding food they enjoyed (the two cultural products included in this sub-scale).

**Table 10.7. Sociocultural Adaptation:
Homestay Versus Non-Homestay**

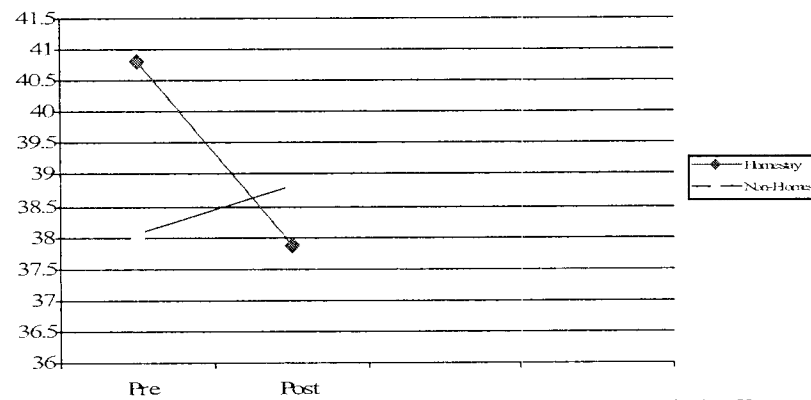
| <i>Subscale</i> | <i>HS Mean Pretest (SD)</i> | <i>HS Mean Posttest (SD)</i> | <i>NHS Mean Pretest (SD)</i> | <i>NHS Mean Posttest (SD)</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Cultural Perspectives | 23.91 (7.50) | 21.23 (6.92) | 21.26 (6.56) | 20.14 (6.91) |
| Cultural Practices | 34.24 (8.93) | 30.64 (7.99) | 31.92 (7.37) | 28.12 (7.13) |
| Communicative Practices | 23.34 (6.26) | 20.73 (5.69) | 22.36 (5.55) | 19.64 (5.55) |
| Cultural Products | 4.10 (1.78) | 4.04 (1.87) | 2.96 (1.18) | 2.92 (1.02) |

Note: Maximum scores = Cultural Perspectives = 55.00, Cultural Practices = 80.00, Communicative Practices = 55.00, Cultural Products = 10.00.



Note: Range = 10 to 70; Homestay M Pretest = 51.47, M Posttest = 49.79; Non-Homestay M Pretest = 47.49, M Posttest = 47.92

Figure 10.1. Identification with native culture perspectives: Homestay versus non-homestay.

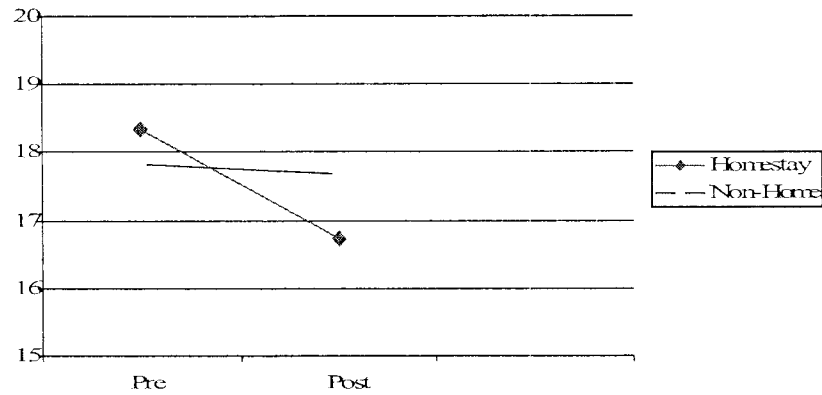


Note: Range = 7 to 49; Homestay M Pretest = 40.81, M Posttest = 37.86; Non-Homestay M Pretest = 38.07, M Posttest = 38.83

Figure 10.2. Identification with native culture practices: Homestay versus non-homestay.

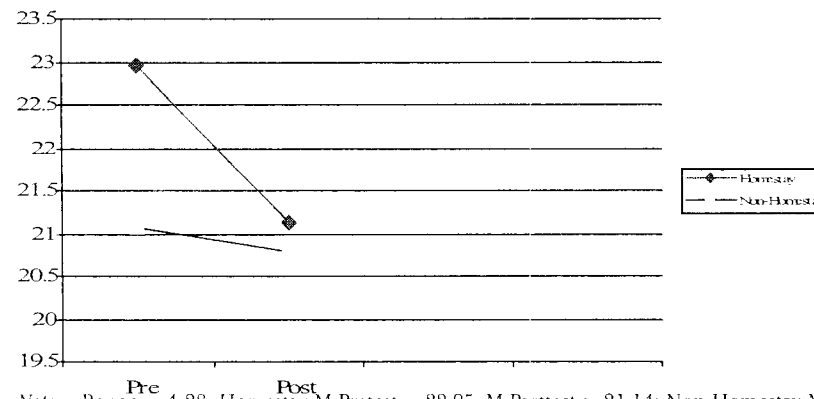
Identification With the Native Culture After Study Abroad

The Acculturation Scale Posttest scores for homestay and non-homestay participants' identification with their native culture were compared using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found ($F(1,140) = 0.19, p = .664$). In addition, additional analysis using one-way ANOVAs revealed no significant differences between the two groups in Post-



Note: Range = 3 to 21; Homestay M Pretest = 18.34, M Posttest = 16.71; Non-Homestay M Pretest = 17.84, M Posttest = 17.68

Figure 10.3. Identification with native culture communicative practices: Homestay versus non-homestay.



Note: Range = 4-28; Homestay M Pretest = 22.95, M Posttest = 21.14; Non-Homestay M Pretest = 21.07, M Posttest = 20.79

Figure 10.4. Identification with native culture products: Homestay versus non-homestay.

test scores for cultural perspectives, cultural practices, and cultural products. However, it is of interest to note that one-way ANOVAs reveal significant differences existed on Pretest measures for the Acculturation Posttest and three of its four sub-scales for participant identification with his or her native culture between homestay and non-homestay participants. Figures 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, and 10.4 display results for Pretest

and Posttest Acculturation Scale results for homestay versus non-homestay participants' identification with their native culture's cultural perspectives, practices, and products and illustrate the change in both groups' reported identification with the native culture before and after study abroad.

Identification With the Target Culture After Study Abroad

The Acculturation Scale Posttest scores for homestay and non-homestay participants' identification with the target culture were compared using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found ($F(1,126) = 3.34, p = .07$). Moreover, additional analyses using one-way ANOVAs revealed no significant differences between the two groups in Posttest scores for cultural practices, yet significant differences emerged for cultural perspectives and cultural products. It is also of interest to note that one-way ANOVAs revealed significant differences on Pretest measures for the Acculturation Posttest and two of its four sub-scales for participant identification with the target culture between homestay and non-homestay participants. Figures 10.5, 10.6, 10.7, and 10.8 display results for Pretest and Posttest Acculturation Scale results for homestay versus non-homestay participants' identification with the target cul-

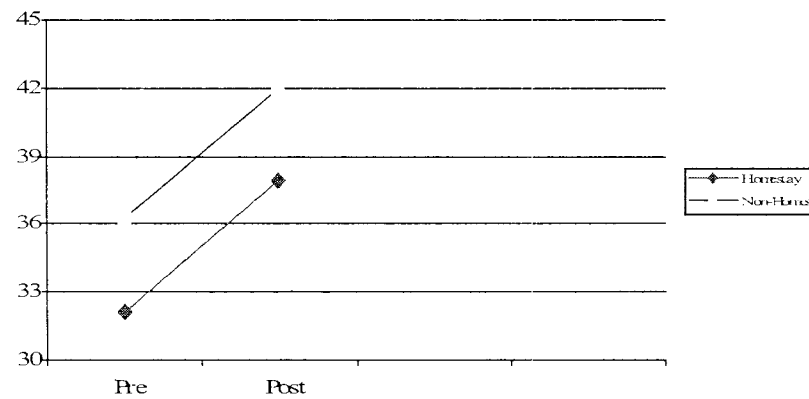


Figure 10.5. Identification with target culture perspectives: Homestay versus non-homestay.

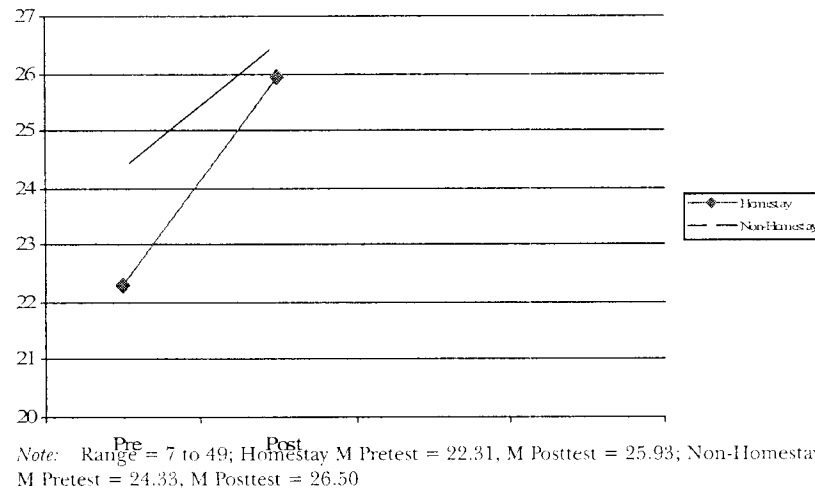


Figure 10.6. Identification with target culture practices: Homestay versus non-homestay.

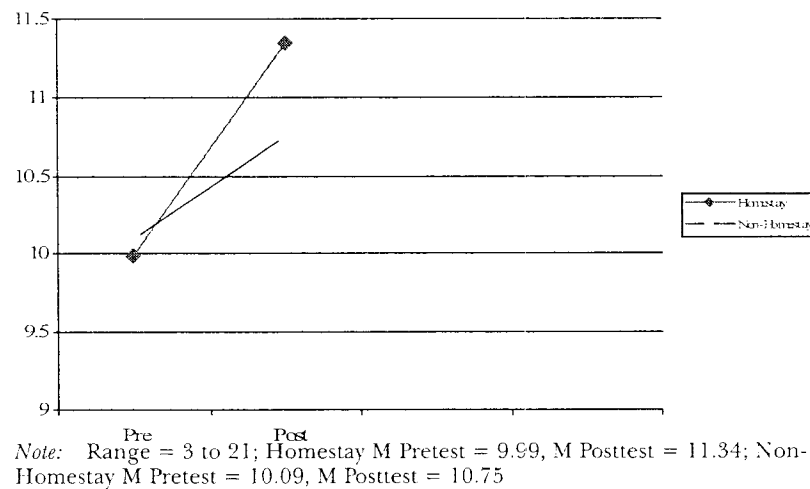


Figure 10.7. Identification with target culture communicative Practices: Homestay versus non-homestay.

ture's cultural perspectives, practices, and products and illustrate the change in both groups' reported identification with the target culture before and after study abroad.

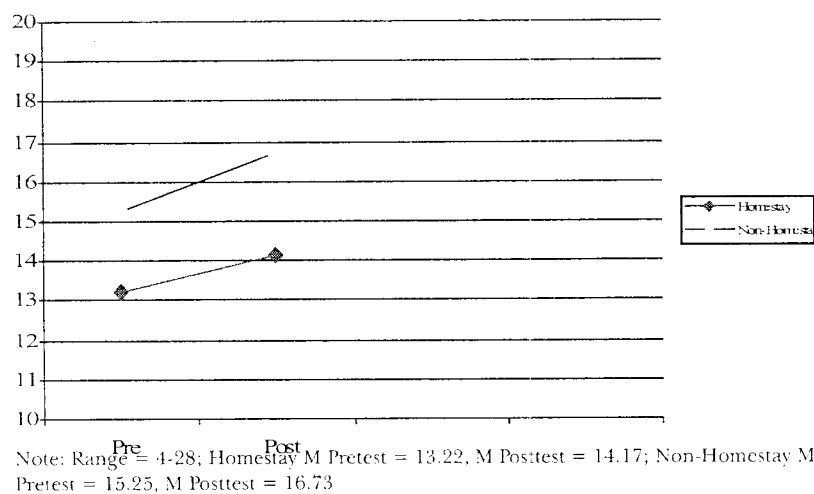


Figure 10.8. Identification with target culture products: Homestay versus non-homestay.

DISCUSSION

The objectives of this study were to determine if significant changes occurred in study abroad participants' self assessments of their ability to perform linguistic tasks in the target language, self reports of challenges in the target culture, and identification with native versus target culture; in addition, this study explored whether differences existed after study abroad between homestay and non-homestay students for self assessments in each of these areas. Results indicate that there was a significant change in all participants' self-assessments of their ability to perform listening, reading, writing, and speaking linguistic tasks after study abroad. These results are consistent with research that states that students studying and living in another cultural and linguistic environment attain enhanced language abilities (Allen & Herron, 2003; Freed, 1995; Matsumara, 2001; Yager, 1998). Although proficiency ratings were unavailable for these participants, self-report instruments indicated that participants perceived improvement in all four linguistic skills. Such results counter Freed's (1990) findings that minimal linguistic changes occur after short stay study abroad programs and suggest that shorter study abroad stays can serve as valuable experiences in language development.

In addition, these findings reveal a significant difference between participants' anticipated degree of cultural difficulty at the beginning of the

study abroad program and participants' reported degree of difficulty at the end of the study abroad program although the average difficulty anticipated before the experience and reported after the experience was low. From these results, we can interpret that the experience was less culturally difficult than anticipated for the participants. One could infer that, because of the limited time spent in the target culture, the sojourners were not given sufficient opportunities to explore the target culture and to experience cultural difficulties. A possible vacation mentality, similar to the phenomenon described by Day (1987) may have prevented the participants from encountering cultural challenges. The Program Directors and Coordinators of these study abroad programs organized a variety of daily afternoon and evening activities and excursions for the participants. Program staff, who were, in most cases, non-native yet fluent speakers of the target languages, were available to troubleshoot and help resolve cultural misunderstandings on the participants' behalf. For such reasons, the participants may not have experienced or faced substantial cultural difficulties, and, as a result, they did not report such difficulties. The low level of cultural difficulty reported by participants in this study is consistent with findings reported by Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2004) for cultural practices and products. The participants' level of cultural understanding may have not yet been sufficiently challenged to allow for recognition of the difficulties and conflict in diverse cultural viewpoints. However, the results could also suggest that the sojourners perceived themselves to be more capable of managing a variety of sociocultural tasks after the study abroad experience. Cultural experiences such as making friends, shopping, and using the transport system, although initially daunting to the participants, may have become easier for the participants as these experiences became a part of their daily life in the target culture.

Findings also reveal a significant difference between the participants' identification with their native culture and the target culture before and after the study abroad experience. In changing their perception of how they identify with the target culture, the participants reported that their daily life experiences were less similar to Americans and more similar to the target culture than at the beginning of the study abroad program. These results suggest that the experience abroad allowed the participants to re-evaluate their cultural identity and move toward a more hybrid understanding of identity. This "third place" (Kramsch, 1998) created by the sojourners was characterized by a repositioning of their place between the two cultures. However, it is possible that participants made facile comparisons based on observation and limited evidence, viewing the target culture through a native lens. Galloway (1992) cautions that the most "ominous potential for interpretational error arises precisely from that which looks familiar" (p. 92). Qualitative research that could delve deeper

into how cultural identity evolves during study abroad is needed to further evaluate the participants' identification with the target and native culture.

In reference to the present study's final research question, results point to both similarities and differences in cultural learning outcomes and self-assessment of linguistic abilities for homestay and non-homestay students. In both contexts, after study abroad participants reported higher linguistic abilities, less cultural difficulty than anticipated before study abroad, greater identification with the target culture, and less identification with the native culture.

On the other hand, homestay participants' reported target language linguistic abilities were significantly higher after study abroad than those of their non-homestay peers. This finding is consistent with Lybeck's (2002) conception of the relation between language-learning success and engagement in interactive networks with native speakers. However, it is essential to note that homestay students had more previous experience with the target language before the study abroad experience and higher Pretest scores on self reports of linguistic abilities in the target language than non-homestay participants.

A second difference existed between homestay and non-homestay participants for both anticipated and actual cultural difficulties before and after study abroad: Homestay participants reported a significantly higher degree of both anticipated and actual cultural difficulty. A plausible interpretation of this finding is that the students who chose to enroll in a homestay program expected a certain degree of difficulty in negotiating an immersion experience in the homestay environment, whereas those students who chose to take part in a non-homestay program may have expected cultural difficulties to be mediated by program staff and their impact to be minimized in the group setting. The items from the SCAS Posttest where homestay and non-homestay students differed after the study abroad experience (with homestay students reporting "slight difficulty" to "moderate difficulty" and non-homestay students reporting "no difficulty" to "slight difficulty") were "Finding your way around," "Accommodation," "Following rules and regulations," and "Understanding the target culture's world view." However, on the remaining 25 SCAS items, the differences between the two groups were less pronounced. One might expect that for the above-mentioned items where more pronounced differences were observed, the homestay students may have encountered situations where they navigated cultural challenges independently without the immediate assistance of program staff or others in their study abroad peer group. Although such situations present immediate challenges, they also represent important steps toward functioning in the target language and culture.

Despite the higher degree of cultural challenges faced during study abroad, homestay students' identification with the target culture's per-

spectives, practices, communicative practices, and products was significantly stronger after the study abroad experience. This finding suggests that although homestay students faced certain cultural challenges not experienced to the same degree by their non-homestay peers, they nevertheless reported similar levels of identification with the target culture after study abroad (see Figures 10.5-10.8).

A third distinction of note between homestay and non-homestay students was observed in the direction of change from before to after study abroad in reported identification with the native culture (see Figures 10.1-10.4). While homestay students identified less with their own culture's perspectives, practices, communicative practices, and products after study abroad, their non-homestay peers identified more strongly with their native culture's perspectives and products. In their identification with native culture communicative practices and products after study abroad, non-homestay students changed very little in relation to their reported preprogram self reports.

The maintenance of native-culture identification among non-homestay participants and the evolution of homestay participants' identification to their native culture is consistent with Lybeck's (2002) premise that close-knit exchange networks tend to enforce social norms whereas interactive networks are unlikely to enforce norms and are open to variation and change. Moreover, non-homestay students also identified more strongly with the target culture after study abroad than before. The finding that non-homestay students felt both more strongly about the target and the native cultures after study abroad provides empirical evidence that study abroad participants may not have a "we" versus "them" mentality but instead are finding the "third place" which Kramsch (1998) envisioned as a space where learners redefine their relationship to themselves and to the foreign language and culture. The results of this study do not support Lybeck's (2002) assertion that "learners who have native speakers as only part of their interactive networks ... will have more cultural distance ... due to the lack of target language norm enforcement in their networks" (p. 177). In fact, non-homestay students identified more closely after study abroad than non-homestay students in regard to target language perspectives, practices, and products. However, it is possible that non-homestay participants' reported post-program identification with the target culture's perspectives, practices, and products may be based on limited or superficial experiences.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Before drawing conclusions from the results of this study, it is important to remember that implications should be interpreted in light of several

limitations. The first involves the nature of self-report instruments: These instruments may not appropriately capture the participants' perceptions and feelings and may not reflect actual individual experiences or linguistic capabilities. Ensuring participant anonymity and using measures with strong empirical qualities, however, can minimize this threat. The researchers are also aware that self-assessment measures of linguistic gain do not replace linguistic proficiency evaluation measures. In the case of the present study, evaluation of students' linguistic proficiency was not possible due to the large number of participants in various study abroad locations. A second limitation of the study is related to the homogeneity of the participants who were high school and junior high school students studying in Western Europe. As such, caution is urged in generalizing to other populations and settings. Further research should evaluate cultural learning outcomes for students studying abroad at other educational levels and in other contexts. The final limitation deals with the duration and nature of summer study abroad programs. However, because this study seeks to evaluate the cultural learning outcomes of study abroad students, the use of program sites in Spain, France, and Italy as well as both homestay and non-homestay programs allows for increased generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

Results of this study demonstrate that both homestay and non-homestay environments are meaningful contexts for the evolution of learners' cultural identity and self-confidence in target language linguistic abilities during study abroad. Nonetheless, potential study abroad participants should consider their own linguistic and cultural learning goals when researching program options, and it should not be assumed that programs of the same duration or program sites in similar locations lead to comparable outcomes. It should also be noted that despite the type of program that a participant chooses, great variations exist within both homestay and non-homestay environments. Lastly, the importance of each participant's contact with the target culture, communication with native speakers of the target language, and individual perceptions with regard to the language and culture should not be understated.

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