

I. Cover Sheet for Research Proposal and Grant Request

Student Name: Christopher Lemon _____

Expected Graduation Date: May 2011 _____

Current GPA: X.XX _____

Total research funds requested: \$35.00 _____

THESIS ADVISOR APPROVING GRANT PROPOSAL:

Advisor Name: Dr. Isabel J Espinoza _____

Department: Languages Telephone: 937-229-2495 _____

I have reviewed the *Research Proposal and Grant Request*. The budget request for \$ 35.00 is consistent with the needs of this research.

Signature: _____ **<Isabel J. Espinoza>** Date: _____

Please note that all expenditures must be documented and receipts included before the expenses can be reimbursed. One copy of the expense report and receipts goes to the department, and a second copy to the University Honors Program office (125 Alumni Hall).

Complete and submit your *Research Proposal and Grant Request* to the Honors Program Office, 125 Alumni Hall, by **March 26, 2010**. Grant awards are announced in early April.

II. Proposed Title and Abstract

Case Studies: The Linguistic Impact of Short-Term Studies Abroad/

Estudios de caso: Impacto lingüístico de estudios en el extranjero de corta duración

This research project studied language gains attained through short-term (4-8 weeks) study abroad programs. The study abroad students chosen for the study all shared English as a common native language and Spanish as the target language. The analysis of linguistic gains focused on these four areas: How did participants' pronunciation of Spanish plosives—/p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/—change from before to after the program? How did their accuracy in the use of direct and indirect pronouns differ? How did the variety and specificity of their adjective usage change? How long and cohesive were their sentences and their utterances before and after? The participants were all in their third year of college and had taken at least one 300-level Spanish course. The researcher participated in addition to two other participants. Data were collected via Modified Oral Proficiency Interview (MOPI) and Modified Writing Proficiency Test (MWPT) assessments before and after a four week study abroad in Central America. The transcripts of these two sets of tests were compared on an individual basis. In addition, language learning diaries kept by the participants during the experience and pre- and post-study abroad interviews provided additional information to direct conclusions of the investigation beyond that provided by analyzing the tests.

Keywords: second language acquisition, short-term study abroad, L2 Spanish, L1 English, qualitative study, pronunciation, direct pronouns, indirect pronouns, discourse, description, Central America, Modified Oral Proficiency Interview, Modified Writing Proficiency Interview, participant observation

[**III. General Audience Abstract:**
Section new to 2011 proposals.]

IV. Project Description

Study abroad students from the US have begun choosing short-term programs, or less than eight weeks, more than long-term programs. Of these students who study abroad for the purpose of learning a foreign language, how do these short-term programs benefit or hinder their language learning process? This study will analyze how the reading and writing abilities of three Spanish students, each of whom has studied third-year or higher university Spanish courses, change after studying in the same Central American university for four weeks focusing on four specific questions: 1. How do participants pronounce the /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/ and /g/ sounds, all of which are sounds made by blocking the airway during speech? 2. With what level of accuracy do participants use direct and indirect pronouns? 3. How specific and varied are the adjectives used by the participants? 4. How long are participants' sentences and how long and cohesive are their utterances?

The participants will take modified ACTFL reading and writing tests for Spanish and complete language learning interviews before and after the study abroad. The Modified Oral Proficiency Test (MOPI) places individuals' speaking abilities on the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale for foreign language learners. The Modified Writing Proficiency Test (MWPT) places individuals' writing abilities on a similar scale also developed by the ACTFL. The tests used in this study will follow the same guidelines as the ACTFL tests, but official tests will not be used since they are property of Language Testing International and the general public cannot access them. These tests will alternately be referred to as modified tests, or MOPI and MWPT. Both tests involve open-ended formats and are double rated with the purpose of maintaining objectivity while recreating realistic situations in

which students would use the language. The tests before the program will diagnose the participants' general speaking and writing abilities for comparison with their perceptions of their language abilities and the level they reach a short time after the program ends. The second round of tests will not be given immediately after the program but rather just before the next school semester in order to analyze how well the program prepared them for their next semester of Spanish classes at their regular institution. These tests will be analyzed to answer the technical questions previously presented.

In addition to these standardized tests, the researcher will conduct language learning interviews with the participants before and after as well as analyze language-learning diaries kept during the study abroad. The interviews will complement the tests by providing participants' views on their language learning and language learning in general. The diaries will show participants' emotions, barriers, accomplishments and thoughts during the program from their perspective. Taken together, these measures will be used to evaluate participants' progress in specific aspects of language usage as well as obstacles and supports to these advancements. As a form of participant observation, the researcher himself will take the same ACTFL tests, answer the same interview questions and keep his own language-learning diary during the study abroad program as the third participant in the study. The first two participants were selected because they will be attending the same study-abroad program and are in close contact with the researcher. One is related to the researcher and the other is a fellow classmate. In order to maintain an impartial presentation of the project, the researcher will include the three participants' interviews, diaries and tests in whole or in large part as support for his conclusions.

By using these open-ended formats—both the tests and the interviews and diaries—the researcher will be able to make a case study of short-term study abroad and formulate new directions for short-term study abroad research as well as focus in depth on unexpected patterns. While quantitative, or large-population, analyses provide convincing evidence of specific trends,

such as the relation between time spent outside of class using Spanish and improvement on the ACTFL Proficiency Scale, this study will focus more closely on several students in order to present their personal learning experience in detail not in the scope of larger studies. Similar studies have been carried out to analyze longer-term studies abroad with the purpose of showing the relationship between participants' emotions and thought processes with the more technical gains made in grammar and communicative competence.

To date, the researcher has gained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and scheduled the first MOPI and MWPT sessions. The IRB process included writing a review of literature, description of the problem and project, and a description of relevant methodology. The review of literature, written in both English and Spanish versions, largely presents studies of students whose native language is English and whose target language is Spanish, and all study language advancement through study abroad. One of the resources reviewed indicates that to date at least 13 scholarly studies of English speakers' improvement in Spanish had used the OPI or MOPI as a principal source of data to analyze patterns regarding narrative abilities, communication strategies, overall speaking ability and specific grammatical areas such as the use of "por" and "para," often considered confusing Spanish words because the English word "for" is typically used to mean either. Of all of the works of research mentioned in this article, only four focused on short-term, or less than eight week, studies abroad (Lafford & Collentine, 2006). Other investigations also suggest the need for research on short-term programs along with data showing a spike in the percentage of students who choose short-term programs as a percentage of all studies abroad, from less than 5% to greater than 50% (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). A diary study of learners in varying countries and language programs was also reviewed (Bailey 1983).

During this review of literature, research into the proposed methodology greatly assisted the researcher in formulation of the combined test, diary and interview model. The qualitative approach, using a few participants and going in depth with each of their experiences, was chosen

because of its versatility and the researcher's interest in creating a holistic case study of short-term studies abroad to influence future research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The diaries, participant observation and interviews were chosen for their potential to contribute to a large body of information with which to test hypotheses, form conclusions and suggest new questions (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Spradley, 1983; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

This investigation intends to make a case study of the ways that three university-level Spanish students advance their skills through a short-term study abroad program by analyzing standard tests of reading and writing and language-learning interviews and diaries. A thorough look at various previous language-learning research projects on studies abroad, modified ACTFL tests, diaries, and interviews reinforced the design of this thesis, a case study approach to short-term studies abroad. The questions for focus introduced at the beginning of this project description will guide the researcher's analysis of the text of the diaries, interviews and official tests, though these questions will be modified or replaced as the researcher narrows the focus of the final draft based on the implications of the tests, interviews and diaries.

V. Timeline

6 October 2009	First meeting with Dr. Espinoza
10 December 2009	Intent to pursue a thesis form
4 January 2010- 30 April 2010	Library research and research design development
25 January 2010	Find volunteers for study
22 February 2010	Review of Literature (Spanish and English versions)
24 February 2010	Apply for IRB Approval (Approved 1 March 2010)
18 March 2010	Arrange MOPI/MWPT assessments
26 March 2010	Research Proposal and Grant Request
April 2010	Complete language-learning interviews with participants

17 May 2010- 15 June 2010	Study abroad program (Costa Rica, director: Dr. Percio Castro, UD) Writing of language learning diaries
June 2010	Review of diaries
20-30 August 2010	Complete second set of OPI/WPT tests and second interview
August 2010- November 2010	Data analysis and writing of the chapters
Fall 2010	Meeting with Honors Program
December 2010	Outside reader(s) give(s) feedback
January 2010	Ohio Foreign Language Association (OFLA) Presentation
January 2010	Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCTFL) Presentation
11 March 2011	Honors Student Symposium: Oral presentation, questions and answers
13 April 2011	Stander Symposium: Poster Presentation
14 April 2011	Turn in final draft of project to Honors Department

VI. Working Bibliography

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Classroom Oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition, 67-103.

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Tilting or Social Science? *Issues in Second Language Acquisition Research*, 188-197.

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- López Ortega, N. (2003). The development of discourse of discourse competence in study abroad learners: A study of subject expression in Spanish as a second language. Ph.D. diss., Cornell University.
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- Ryan, J. & Lafford, B. (1992). Acquisition of lexical meaning in a study abroad environment: *Ser* and *Estar* and the Granada experience. *Hispania* 75: 714-22.
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VII. Budget

Paper, Notebooks, Pens, Printing	\$35.00
TOTAL	\$35.00

[**VIII. Letter of Support**
Separate attachment]

IX. Appendices



Institutional Review Board (IRB) COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

Kettering Laboratories, Rm. 542
300 College Park
Dayton, OH 45469-0104

APPLICATION FOR REVIEW

The federal government and University policy require that the involvement of human participants in research be monitored by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The University of Dayton's IRB works to ensure that appropriate ethical standards and statutory requirements governing the protection of human participants are followed by all researchers affiliated with the University of Dayton and/or those researchers who wish to conduct research on the University of Dayton campus or among University of Dayton students.

One hard copy with original signatures and one electronic copy (CD, disk, or email attachment) of the complete application must be submitted to:

Andrea Hill, IRB Student Assistant
Kettering Labs Room 542
University of Dayton
300 College Park Ave.
Dayton, OH 45469-0104

Please answer all questions on pages 3-5 of this application form. A complete application will include descriptions of ALL of the following:

1. A research question or hypothesis.
2. A review of the relevant literature. The literature review should include coverage of the problem to be addressed, should provide support for the methods and instruments used in the research, and should demonstrate the project's potential impact on the knowledge base.
3. An experimental or research design which will answer the research question or hypothesis.
4. The method for determining sample size, for selecting participants, and for communicating with participants. How will data be collected?
5. How the data will be used to answer the research question or hypothesis. This should include a description of data analysis procedures to be used.
6. Statement of anticipated risks to the physical and mental health, comfort, and privacy of experimental subjects.
7. A description of measures that will be taken to minimize risks and to ensure confidentiality of sensitive personal data during and after the research.
8. The text of any questionnaire, evaluative or diagnostic instrument, or debriefing protocol designed specifically for this research.
9. The text of an informed consent form to be signed by each subject before participation.

If your proposal involves data collection at another site, you must include documentation of approval to conduct research there. For example, if you are collecting data at a public school, you should include a letter of approval from the building principal. If your proposal involves collection of data at other universities, you must submit to those IRBs as well.

For those of you on the UD campus, the IRB office is located in Room 542, Kettering Laboratories. Email submissions should be directed to hillands@notes.udayton.edu.

Research projects on which data collection has already begun cannot be reviewed or approved by the IRB. All student submissions (papers, dissertations, theses) must have faculty sponsorship.

All questions about policy, specific reviews, advisory opinions, and other technical matters should be directed to:

Mary Connolly, PhD
Chair, IRB
Kettering Labs Room 542
Dayton, OH 45469-0104
mary.connolly@notes.udayton.edu
Phone: (937) 229-3493 Fax: (937) 229-2291

Researcher(s): Chris Lemon

Date of Submission: 28 February 2010

Project Title: El efecto de estudiar español en el extranjero de programas de corto plazo /The Effects of a Short-Term Spanish-Language Study Abroad

Department: Languages

Telephone: 419-308-7709

Email address: lemonchj@notes.udayton.edu

Mailing address: 56 Woodland Dr.
Dayton, Ohio 45409

Position in the University (faculty, student, etc.). If student, please indicate faculty sponsor:

Undergraduate student sponsored by Dr. Isabel Espinoza (espinoij@notes.udayto.edu)

Project is for (please check all that apply): scholarly research dissertation

Thesis class project funded project other (specify): _____

Project is: _____ unfunded in process _____ funded (if funded, please complete the following)

Funding agency (actual/potential): University of Dayton Honors Fund (potential)

Contract/Grant No. (if applicable): _____

For evaluation of your project, please check any of the following that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentally or physically challenged participants | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participants studied at UD |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children or minor participants (under 18) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subjects at non-UD locations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners, parolees, or incarcerated subjects | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students as subjects |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Filming, video or audio recording of subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> Employees as subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires or surveys to be administered | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of data banks, archives or other records | <input type="checkbox"/> Involves blood samples |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Subjects major language is not English | <input type="checkbox"/> Subjects to be paid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exclusion of women or children subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral history project |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Involves deception | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual content |

Check the applicable category.

- Research on normal educational practices in commonly accepted educational settings (if yes, please justify below*)
- Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement)
- Research involving survey or interview procedures (if yes, please see below**)
- Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, or records.
- None of the above are applicable to my project.

*If you think your research employs “normal education practices” occurring in common educational settings, please justify below or on another clearly labeled sheet of paper.

**If your research involves use of survey or interview procedures, please indicate:

1. Response will be records in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified (by anyone other than the researcher) either directly or through identifiers linked to the subject yes no. If yes, please specify your method (e.g., pseudonym, code numbers, etc.)
Participants' names will be masked with pseudonyms.
2. Would subjects' responses, if they became known outside the research, reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability?
 yes no.
3. The research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior, including but not limited to illegal drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol
 yes no.

Additional Questions For Research involving Human Subjects

Use additional sheets for answering the following questions. Please submit your answers in typewritten form.

1. A research question or hypothesis

This investigation focuses on 4 linguistic questions and the analysis of the Spanish language production of three students—whose native language is English and whose secondary language is Spanish—before and after a four-week study abroad trip to the same country in Central America: Phonologically, how do the participants pronounce the plosive consonants (/p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/ and /g/)? Syntactically, at what level of sophistication do the participants use direct and indirect pronouns? Lexically, how specific and varied are the adjectives used by the participants? Finally, in terms of discourse, how long are the participants' sentences and how long and cohesive are their paragraphs?

2. An experimental or research design which will answer the research question or hypothesis.

Because all research potentially places subjects at some level of risk, no improperly designed research can be ethically acceptable. If the design cannot answer the research question or hypothesis, either because of confounds or other design errors, then the potential gain in knowledge cannot outweigh the potential risk to the participant.

a. The method for determining sample size and for using the target group

The proposed investigation is a qualitative study involving only three participants. The analysis of the linguistic changes before and after will be judged by semi-official oral and written tests of language aptitude, the Modified Oral Proficiency Interview (MOPI) and the Modified Writing Proficiency Test (MWPT), given by an ex-official tester from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The OPI involves an adaptive, recorded conversation of less than 30 minutes with a certified ACTFL tester which will be graded by two isolated testers and given a composite score on the ACTFL Language Proficiency Scale. The WPT, which involves typing responses to four prompts during the 90 minute session, is graded in the same way. The students will keep journal entries related to their language learning experience including a history of past learning experiences and experiences during the study abroad. The author of each journal will then review his or her diary to denote patterns, to clarify shorthand and to remove entries deemed private.

b. How the data will be used to answer the research question or hypothesis

The researcher will use samples of speech and writing from the OPI and WPT

transcripts and recordings to note patterns of language accuracy as related to the questions. The interviews and journal entries will be used to theorize why certain aspects were acquired more completely than others. Besides linguistic phenomena, the journals and interviews will also serve as a measure of change in cultural views.

3. A statement addressing potential risks of the research versus the anticipated benefits

By participating in this research, participants will explore the learning language process, receive the results of officially recognized measures of language proficiency and compare the actual language learning experience to personal notions of language learning and others' experiences. The research itself carries little risk to participants besides possible test anxiety during the OPI and WPT.

4. A description of measures that will be taken to ensure confidentiality of participants before and after the research

In the final work, pseudonyms will be used to disguise the participants, the university and the place of study abroad. The researcher will use pseudonyms for all citations of the participant's journals and will omit data which may indicate the participant's identity. The researcher will omit any quotations of the journal deemed inappropriate or uncomfortable.

5. Explicit information about the recruiting, selection, and compensation of subjects.

After deciding to conduct a qualitative study, the researcher chose to be part of the study by taking the same tests and keeping his own journal during the course of the study abroad. The two other participants were prior acquaintances of the researcher: one a family member and one a fellow student. Both were chosen because they have been learning Spanish for numerous years.

6. The text of any questionnaire, evaluative or diagnostic instrument, or debriefing protocol designed specifically for this research.

The OPI and WPT are previously existing, standardized tests. The modified versions follow the exact same protocol but without the official ACTFL grade. The interviews will be rather free-form but focused primarily on the aforementioned research questions.

7. The text of an informed consent form to be signed by each subject before participation.

Case Studies: The Linguistic Impact of Short-Term Studies Abroad

Christopher Lemon

Isabel Espinoza

University of Dayton

Introduction

University students majoring in foreign languages must or are strongly recommended to study abroad in a country where their language of study is the native language. Various studies and personal testimonies affirm that such an experience inarguably promotes the development of communicative abilities in the areas of pragmatics, grammar, lexicon and discourse in the second language. For the best results, many studies recommend a stay of between a semester and a year in the chosen country. From the mid-1990's to the mid-2000's, the percentage of study abroad students who chose short-term (4-8 weeks) studies abroad skyrocketed from 3% to 55% (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). The expanding need for professionals proficient in a second language for economic, political and social reasons has coincided with the growing number of programs which offer trips of about one month including condensed cultural experiences, formal classes and a home stay with a family in a specific country. This thesis investigated the following questions: How did linguistic competence change, shown by oral and written production, for students who participated in a short-term study abroad?

This project focused answering four linguistic questions through the analysis of the participants' production before and after the study-abroad program: In terms of phonology, how did students pronounce plosive consonants (/p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/)? In terms of syntax, with what level of accuracy did participants use direct and indirect pronouns? In terms of lexicon, how specific and varied were the adjectives used by participants? In terms of discourse, how long were participants' sentences and how long and cohesive were their paragraphs?

The participants took two proficiency exams adapted from those offered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Modified Oral Proficiency Interview (MOPI) and the Modified Writing Proficiency Test (MWPT), before and after the study-abroad program. The author interviewed participants before and after to grasp the

participants' personal language learning histories as well as their opinions and emotional obstacles related to the stay abroad. As a participant, the author answered the same interview questions in written form. During the program each participant kept his own language-learning diary which was analyzed to contribute to the answers posed to the research questions.

Review of Literature

Many researchers have studied the effects of study-abroad programs on the development of a second language and reached various conclusions. A few have analyzed the linguistic gains of students who attended short-term programs (less than eight weeks). A few have concluded that although the grammatical abilities of study-abroad students did not increase notably compared to their peers who studied in their native country, the narrative ability of the study-abroad students indeed increased significantly. Bailey (1983) focused on personal factors behind the language learning process. Segalowitz and Freed (2004) concluded that the effects of study-abroad programs varied based on the initial proficiency level of participants. Donnelly-Smith (2009) deduced that the only common consequence of studies abroad was a higher level of civic participation and international involvement. While research articles on studies abroad have studied widely varying specific grammatical and sociolinguistic gains, all have concluded that these programs somehow benefit their participants.

In their revision of more than twenty pieces of research on study-abroad programs for students of Spanish whose primary language was English, Lafford and Collentine (2006) suggested that studying abroad has not promoted grammatical learning at a level significantly higher than domestic programs. Nevertheless, they cite notable increases in narrative and pragmatic abilities for study-abroad students (2006, p. 108). The organization of these studies varied widely in terms of the length of the study-abroad program, the analyzed linguistic variables and the methodology (2006).

Collentine (2004) made a quantitative comparison between twenty-six US college-level students who studied Spanish in Alicante, Spain for a semester and twenty who studied Spanish for a semester at a US university. Using segments of the students' production on the OPI, Collentine analyzed their accuracy with seventeen different grammatical features. He concluded that the students who studied in the US, their native country, showed higher improvement in these specific grammatical abilities than their Alicante counterparts. With $p < 0.05$, the US group showed higher improvement than those in Alicante in the correct usage of the copula, subordinate conjunctions, the present and the indicative tenses. The only category in which the Alicante group showed greater improvement than their counterparts was the number of coordinate clauses used, which increased ten times more than the US group. In the other categories the Alicante group showed negative though not always drastic growth (2004, p. 236). On the other hand, Collentine signaled that the narrative ability of the study-abroad students grew notably in comparison (2004, p. 241). He claimed in his review of literature that the use of idiomatic expressions in a study abroad context led to this disconnect between the acquisition of grammar and narrative abilities (2004, p. 229). Nevertheless these expressions, which repeat themselves more in the study abroad context, form part of the development of advanced language and although in the short-term these might not impact grammar they play an important role in linguistic development.

Bailey (1983) noted in her analysis of several second language learning diaries whose writers' native language was English that affective factors such as competition highly influenced their language learning experiences. Through an analysis of these writings from different language learning programs, she presented the idea that anxiety generally helps or hinders learning of a second language depending on the cognitive level of the learner—a higher intelligence quotient correlates with a more constructive response to environmental stressors—as well as the situation: for example, the use of well-learned structures builds confidence while the

use of less automatic forms in front of the class causes notable stress (1983, p. 69). Clearly, the learner's affective state did not always follow this pattern: Bailey added that this changed daily in response to many factors (1983, p. 70). In her conclusion, she implied that competition formed a part of every second language learning experience, that is, competition with oneself, other students and the teachers' expectations (1983, p. 71, 94-7).

Segalowitz and Freed (2004) analyzed the differences in linguistic gains between a group of 18 US students who studied Spanish at the University of Colorado for 16 weeks and a second group of 22 US students who studied in Alicante, Spain for the same duration. Through the analysis of segments of OPI transcripts they concluded that the Alicante group demonstrated better narrative abilities and that gains in general reflected the students' initial levels of language ability. Those who studied in Alicante demonstrated on the OPI better oral production in terms of overall OPI level, length of their longest continuous speech segment, the average length of speech without pause and the length of fluent speech without hesitation or pause. The authors avoid the criticism that those who studied at UC received less hours of direct instruction with the fact that when covaried for hours of language used outside of the classroom the data still showed better production for the Alicante students (2004, p. 192). Also, hours per week spent interacting with host families, another possible source for skepticism of these results, did not correlate positively with the length of speech statistics; the authors believe that interacting with a host family often elicits short and hackneyed responses which do not encourage the acquisition of many lexical entries (2004, p. 193), but they do not adequately support this conjecture nor do they present differences between host families. While most other investigations largely ignored the gender of the participants, Segalowitz and Freed noted that the vast majority was female, 14 of 18 at UC and 18 of 22 in Alicante (2004, p. 178), though they made no hypotheses about gender and language learning.

Interestingly, Segalowitz and Freed (2004) noted a relationship between participants' second language "cognitive readiness" and the overall change in OPI score. They used "lexical access"—speed and efficiency of recognizing characteristics of words judged by an online test of discrete classification of Spanish nouns choosing "living" or "nonliving" as the proper descriptor (2004, p. 173, 180)—and "attention control"—another online test which measured how quickly participants matched up a word from a list of three with a visual (2004, p. 180)—as measures of "cognitive readiness." A higher "lexical access" score in Spanish, the L2, before travel corresponded with greater overall OPI gains (2004, p. 189). Therefore Segalowitz and Freed concluded that the students who had already automatized a number of functions in the second language experienced more success than those with less prior experience or readiness (2004, p. 194-5). They also noted that "attention control" did not correlate to a quicker rate of speech, which they explained by the tendency of more advanced learners to think more completely about what they are saying than concentrating solely on the grammatical aspects of their statements (2004, p. 195).

Aside from linguistic issues, Donnelly-Smith's article suggested that however long the program, experiences abroad relate to heightened civic awareness. Citing a 2009 study by Paige et al, she asserted that study abroad programs of any length correlate to higher involvement in volunteering and citizen participation at the national and global levels (2009, p. 13). This article primarily explored the trend of study abroad programs toward shorter duration (2009). This tendency was clear: although only 2.1% of the US university population replied during the 2006-7 schoolyear that they had at some point studied abroad, 55.4% of these students chose short-term programs (eight weeks or less) in comparison to 3.3% during the 1996-7 schoolyear (2009, p. 12-13, 15).

These studies showed that although short-term study-abroad programs did not cause grammatical gains superior to those of "at home" programs they did correlate to narrative gains.

Moreover, most students who study or travel abroad now do so for less than eight weeks at a time, which adds importance to Segalowitz and Freed's (2004) assertion that students who were more linguistically advanced gained more from studying abroad. This is one of many factors which affect the language learning process which studies such as Bailey's and the present one have analyzed to provide a wider base than traditional studies.

Relation to the Problem

The purpose of this investigation was to measure several specific language production changes—pronunciation of plosive consonants, use of direct and indirect object pronouns, use of varied and specific adjectives, and length and cohesiveness of discourse—before and after studying in a Central American country for four weeks. The two modified ACTFL exams used, the MOPI and the MWPT, obtain spontaneous oral and written samples of language production which were analyzed using the linguistic questions posed in the introduction in conjunction with other insights from the diaries. According to Language Testing International, the ACTFL exams are used worldwide as a measure of linguistic proficiency by language instructors, managers and other professionals who wish to measure language ability. Each exam is graded by two certified ACTFL testers. In the case of this investigation, the ex-ACTFL tester conducted and graded the oral interview and the written test following the same structure of the official test but without a second test rater. The analysis of these grades suggested general changes in proficiency from before to after the program, while the analysis of segments of these allowed the suggestions of more specific changes in conjunction with the participants' commentary in their diaries and interviews.

Validity of Methods

During the process of choosing experimental methods, various resources were consulted resulting in the selection of a qualitative study using interviews and ACTFL proficiency tests before and after as well as language learning journals during the study abroad. The participants

kept the private, original copies of their diaries and provided edited copies to the author. The diaries served as frequent self-interviews through which the participant noted patterns and changes over time after periodical reviews of prior and current entries (Díaz Martínez, 1997, p.273-274; Spradley, 1980, p. 33-34, 50). This is what Spradley calls a “hypothesis-oriented ethnography” (1980, p. 31) because it required a base of cultural knowledge (1980, p. 31). It was necessary to interview the participants before the program in order to more objectively comment on changes proposed after conducting the post-program interview (Spradley, 1980, p. 139).

Bailey and Ochsner (1983) offered several suggestions and steps to consider when writing a personal language-learning diary in “A Methodological Review of the Diary Studies: Windmill Tilting or Social Science?” Maintaining a diary is a dynamic process, but normally consists of the following five steps: 1. Provide language learning/teaching history 2. Systematically and candidly record events, details and feelings with regularity during the experience 3. Review and revise the original diary, add explanation to unclear entries, remove private material and make sure pseudonyms were used in all cases 4. Study the diary, seek patterns and significant events 5. Interpret and discuss factors deemed important (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983, p. 189). The authors also mentioned important characteristics of the diaries and decided that, most importantly, the diaries reveal personal variables, such as cognitive style and sources of stress (1983, p. 191) As such, detailed comparisons with classmates were crucial as well as other details signalling sources of motivation (Spradley, 1983, p. 192-194). In order to function smoothly and honestly, the diarist should narrate in the first person with spontaneous fluency (Spradley, 1983, p. 193).

The ACTFL states that its exams are used by academic institutions and researchers to measure linguistic abilities (Language Testing International). In their review of previous studies of English speakers studying Spanish abroad, Lafford and Collentine noted at least thirteen which used the OPI as a primary source of evidence in the following categories: narration—

Collentine (2004)—, pronunciation—Díaz-Campos (2004), Díaz-Campos (2006), Torres (2003), Simões (1996)—, communication strategies—Lafford (1995), Lafford (2004, 2006)—, overall proficiency—Segalowitz & Freed (2004), Isabelli (2001)—, and specific areas of grammar—Guntermann (1992a, 1992b), Lafford & Ryan (1995), López Ortega (2003), Ryan & Lafford (1992) (Lafford & Collentine, 2006, p. 113-114).

Potential Impact

Looking at Lafford & Collentine's review of literature shows that until recently investigators have placed little attention on the curriculum of the researched programs, including the teaching methods, the courses offered and taken, resources, the focus of the classes, professors' feedback and types of evaluation (2006, p. 111). The diaries revealed details typically ignored by quantitative studies, providing a more holistic analysis, though future studies could build upon the current one by isolating a few patterns suggested by the diarists and exploring them among the experiences of a larger test group. Lafford and Collentine stated that few researchers explored pronunciation (2006, p. 115), but the current investigation did so. Because this investigation used a variety of methods it can be compared with other studies although most limit themselves to a few highly controlled measures to suggest very specific trends among much larger samples (2005, p. 114). They suggested also that, in order to more precisely understand the interrelated, complicated factors involved in the internal learner language, qualitative studies such as the present should record the type of domestic institution of the participants, individual factors such as personality and learning preferences, majors and specializations, type of instruction during the study abroad and retrospective protocol (2006, p. 118).

Another source, that of Denzin & Lincoln, suggested the publication of the whole or large parts of interviews to allow readers to interpret patterns from their points of view and to legitimize the author's assertions (2008, p. 75). For this reason long excerpts representative of

the diaries, tests and interviews have been included. Finally, Donnelly-Smith (2009) showed clearly that studies abroad leaving the US are tending ever more toward short-term programs (2009, p. 12-13, 15). From the author's perspective, the practical purpose of this study was to identify the benefits of a short-term study abroad on language learning so that other researchers, instructors and students can decide if a short-term program will benefit them according to their goals and non-academic factors, such as financial standing.

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Informed Consent to Participate as a Research Subject

Project Title: Case Studies: The Linguistic Impact of Short-Term Studies Abroad/Estudios de caso: Impacto lingüístico de estudios en el extranjero de corta duración

Investigator: Christopher Lemon

Purpose of Research: This research is investigating the perceived and actual benefits of studying abroad for a short (less than a full semester) period of time in terms of linguistic advancement.

Expected Duration of Study: This research will involve a pretest and a posttest, each of which consists of the following—an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) lasting less than 30 minutes, a Written Proficiency Test (WPT) lasting approximately 90 minutes, and a personal interview lasting approximately 60 minutes—and the keeping of a language learning journal during the course of the students' 4 week stay in Costa Rica.

Procedure: The OPI involves an adaptive, recorded conversation with a certified ACTFL tester which will be graded by two isolated testers and given a composite score on the ACTFL Language Proficiency Scale. The WPT, which involves typing responses to four prompts during the 90 minute session, is graded in the same way. The students will keep journal entries related to their language learning experience including a history of past learning experiences and experiences during the study abroad. The author of each journal will then review his or her diary to denote patterns, to clarify shorthand and to remove entries deemed private.

Alternative Procedures: No alternative procedures exist in this research project.

Anticipated Risks and / or Discomfort: Participants may experience anxiety during the official tests.

Benefits to the Participant: By participating in this research, participants will explore the learning language process, receive the results of officially recognized measures of language

proficiency and compare the actual language learning experience to personal notions of language learning and others' experiences.

Confidentiality: The researcher will use pseudonyms for all citations of participant journals and will omit irrelevant data which may indicate the participant's identity. The researcher will omit any quotations of the journal deemed inappropriate or uncomfortable.

Contact Person for Questions or Problems: If a research-related injury occurs, or if you have questions about the research, contact Christopher Lemon, 56 Woodland, 419-308-7709.

Questions about the rights of the subject should be addressed to Mary Connolly, Chair of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, Science Center Room 240C, +2320, (937) 229-3493.

Consent to Participate: I have voluntarily decided to participate in this research project. The investigator named above has adequately answered all questions that I have about this research, the procedures involved, and my participation. I understand that the investigator named above, or one of his assistants, will be available to answer any questions about experimental procedures throughout this research. I also understand that I may refuse to participate or voluntarily terminate my participation in this research at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am entitled. The investigator may also terminate my participation in this research if he feels this to be in my best interest. In addition, I certify that I am 18 (eighteen) years of age or older.

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Investigator

Case Studies: The Linguistic Impact of Short-term Studies Abroad

Chris Lemon

Isabel Espinoza

University of Dayton

Interview questions

0. What is (are) your major(s)? Minor(s)? Age? Academic year?
1. When did you start learning Spanish? What influenced you to learn Spanish?
 - a. What motivated you to continue with Spanish in higher education?
2. Describe your prior learning experiences, both formal (classes) and informal (outside of class). Have you studied or travelled abroad previously? Have you attended any other immersion experience?
 - a. What is/was a typical day in the language classroom?
 - b. What activities helped you the most (linguistically, communicatively, etc)?
3. In what situations do you use Spanish now? How do you plan to use Spanish after the study abroad?
4. When do you feel most comfortable using Spanish? When do you feel uncomfortable or nervous? Give examples.
5. What learning activities do you believe allow you to best practice the language? How do you think you learn best? Give examples.
6. What are your strengths and weaknesses in reading, listening, speaking and writing? Give examples
7. What areas of language would you like to improve in through this study abroad?
8. How extroverted or introverted are you in your language use? Do you feel comfortable making language mistakes in front of teachers? In front of native speakers? Give examples.
9. Do you have any other comments on your language learning experience so far or your thoughts on the language learning process?