

# ***Applied Language Learning***

***Volume 26, Number 1  
2016***

Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center  
Presidio of Monterey

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*PB 65-16-01*

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Additionally, you may obtain the journal on microfilm from ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistics, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

### **Postmaster**

Send change-of-address information to:

*Applied Language Learning*  
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### **Readers and Authors**

Contact Editor, Dr. Howard (ATFL-APAS-AJ), *Applied Language Learning*

E-mail: [jiaying.howard@dliflc.edu](mailto:jiaying.howard@dliflc.edu) or [jiaying.howard.civ@mail.mil](mailto:jiaying.howard.civ@mail.mil).

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# *Applied Language Learning*

Volume 26, Number 1, 2016

## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

- 1      Differentiating Heritage and Foreign Language Learners of Spanish:  
Needs, Perceptions, and Expectations  
*John S Hedgcock & Natalie Lefkowitz*
- 39     Short-Term Study Abroad: Perspectives on Speaking Gains and  
Language Contact  
*Todd A. Hernández*
- 65     A Comparison of Two Approaches for Assessing L2 Writing: Process-  
based and Impromptu Timed Writing Exams  
*Virginia David*

---

### REVIEW

- 83     *Postsecondary Foreign Language Teaching in the United States* by  
Janet Swaffar and Per Urland (eds.)  
*Murray R Thomas*

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### GENERAL INFORMATION

- 86     *ALL* Indexes (2006-2016)
- 92     Upcoming Events 2016
- 94     Information for Contributors
- 97     Call for Papers

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*Applied Language Learning* relies on expert reviewers for quality of the journal. Special thanks go to the individuals listed below. The publication of *Applied Language Learning* was made possible with their generous support.

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# Differentiating Heritage and Foreign Language Learners of Spanish: Needs, Perceptions, and Expectations

JOHN S. HEDGCOCK

*Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey*

NATALIE LEFKOWITZ

*Central Washington University*

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*Research on heritage language (HL) development and education has characterized the unique linguistic, sociocultural, and affective profiles of heritage-language (HL) students, yet foreign-language (FL) education has only begun to understand HL students in relation to non-heritage students (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Felix, 2008). To deepen our understanding of the unique characteristics of HL and FL populations, this investigation examines: (1) how HL learners' language learning goals, perceptions of language proficiency and learning needs, and habits of language use distinguish them from those of their English-speaking FL counterparts, and (2) how FL and HL students' perceptions of (and attitudes toward) Spanish implicitly or explicitly reflect attitudes expressed in the classroom and elsewhere. This mixed-methods study explores and compares the perceptions and experiences of 109 university-level HL students and 138 FL students as reported in survey responses and ethnographic interviews. Socio-affective variables distinguishing HL and FL groups include attitudes toward Spanish, judgments of linguistic norms, learners' efforts to achieve legitimacy as users of Spanish, and obstacles to interaction, including anxiety and social inhibition. Quantitative and qualitative analyses depict participants' self-images as fragile users of Spanish, with many characterizations paralleling instructor and peer perceptions.*

**Keywords:** *heritage language; foreign language; Spanish; beliefs; socialization*

The robust discipline of heritage language (HL) education has ignited a dynamic research agenda and a re-evaluation of the foreign language (FL) curriculum. As the number of HL students seeking instruction in their home languages continues to rise,<sup>1</sup> the need to develop appropriate language and literacy programs for this diverse population has become acute (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Roca & Colombi, 2003; Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, & Pérez, 2006; Valdés, 2006; Webb & Miller, 2000). Studies at institutions such as the National Heritage Language Resource Center and the Center for Applied Linguistics, and by a growing cadre of researchers, have enhanced our understanding of HL students and provided a framework for HL-appropriate research, instruction, and assessment (see Brinton, Kagan, & Bauckus, 2008; Grieco et al., 2012; Montrul, 2008b; NHLRC, 2009; Peyton, 2008; Wiley, Peyton, Christian, Moore, & Liu, 2014). Recognizing the shortcomings of traditional FL instruction in serving HL students, this work has identified the challenges of simultaneously serving HL and FL students. As Colombi and Schleppegrell (2003) pointed out, “multicultural classrooms are the norm in our schools today” (p. 3), yet traditional approaches to FL instruction rarely target the unique educational needs of HL speakers who represent diverse linguistic, cultural, educational, and socioeconomic profiles (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Magnan, Murphy, & Sahakyan, 2014; Oh & Au, 2005; Peyton, Carreira, Wang, & Wiley, 2008; Valdés, 2001).

### **HL Research, Instruction, and the Case of Spanish**

Duff (2004) observed that research had just begun “to study heritage-language learners in comparison with non-heritage students, especially in terms of their ultimate attainment [and] identity issues” (p. 3). Since that time, studies of learner progress, proficiency, and achievement have produced rich insights into the learning outcomes of speakers of numerous HLs, in addition to curricular recommendations for serving them more effectively (see Brinton, Kagan, & Bauckus, 2008; Carreira & Kagan, 2011; García, Zakharia, & Otcu, 2012; NHLRC, 2009; Peyton, 2008). The teaching of Spanish to HL speakers, in particular, “has grown exponentially” and captured great interest in the field (Del Valle, 2014, p. 362). The HL population nonetheless continues to be underserved for several reasons, including insufficient institutional resources and only partial progress toward developing HL-specific curricula. Beaudrie (2012) recently reported that under half of U.S. colleges and universities surveyed even offered heritage-track Spanish courses. Large numbers of HL speakers must consequently pursue Spanish language and literacy instruction designed chiefly for monolingual, Anglophone learners.

Considerable strides have been made in the field’s recognition of HL speakers’ multilingual, multicultural backgrounds and skills, which distinguish them from learners for whom Spanish is truly a *foreign* language. These distinctions have been amply documented in the literature, yet a persistent



obstacle to improving Spanish HL instruction involves the ongoing need to sensitize educators to the unique characteristics of HL learners, particularly in settings where the two populations are not differentiated. Indeed, few studies have systematically compared the socialization patterns of FL and HL students in classroom contexts where the two populations are intermingled and where HL-designated courses are offered only at advanced levels (Beaudrie, 2011, 2012; Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Kondo-Brown, 2005; Kondo-Brown & Brown, 2007; Lacorte & Canabal, 2003; Lynch, 2003; Potowski, 2002).

### **FL and HL Learners in the Spanish Classroom: Attitude, Affect, and Interaction**

A salient challenge of serving both FL and HL learners in Spanish-as-a-foreign-language contexts entails the inter- and intra-group dynamics of combined FL/HL classrooms where attitudinal and affective factors can influence each group's learning in distinct ways. Tallon (2009), for example, observed that little research had explored the affective needs of HL students or their susceptibility to language anxiety in Spanish classrooms. In a large-scale quantitative analysis of FL and HL learners' scores on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), Tallon concluded that HL students generally evinced less anxiety than did FL students in Spanish courses. However, HL students reported *higher* anxiety levels than their FL peers in "grammar-intensive" second- and third-semester courses, where HL students "typically struggle with ... [metalinguistic] terms" (pp. 123-124). This finding parallels research demonstrating that HL students feel inhibited by competent Anglophone learners who develop explicit knowledge of Spanish grammar and metalinguistic terminology—contrary to a somewhat pervasive perception that HL students find Spanish courses to be "easy" (Valdés, González, García, & Márquez, 2008). At the same time, Anglophone learners reported feeling intimidated by HL speakers' oral fluency, a clear pattern that emerged in the present study.

Oh and Nash (2014) similarly investigated motivation and attitude in the classroom performance of HL and FL students enrolled in non-differentiated first-semester Spanish courses. Informed by Gardner's Socioeducational Model (Gardner, 1985a, 1985b; Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997), their study revealed that both learner groups exhibited "quite similar" instrumental and integrative motivational inclinations, parallel to Noels's (2005) findings. Oh and Nash (2014) further indicated that, within the two groups, the strength of association among motivational and attitudinal factors was highly comparable. They nevertheless reported salient differences between the HL and FL samples: Whereas measures of anxiety, integrativeness, and instrumentality predicted HL students' language learning success, it was only interest in Spanish that predicted the FL cohort's success. Concluding that background factors "play different roles in [HL and FL students'] language learning success" (p. 39), Oh and Nash (2014) recommended "unmasking ... subtleties in motivations" of the

two populations (p. 40) and pursuing a nuanced understanding of variability among HL students, a heterogeneous constituency exhibiting complex motivational profiles and identity construction processes (Carreira, 2004; Kanno, Hasegawa, Ikeda, Ito, & Long, 2008; Kondo-Brown, 2005; Leeman, Rabin, & Román-Mendoza, 2011; Valdés, 1995; Valdés, González, García, & Márquez, 2008; Yanguas, 2010).

Recognition of HL development as a vital dimension of the second language acquisition (SLA) research agenda has likewise generated interest in the learning of HL students (Montrul, 2008b). In a rigorous study of the task-based interactions of intermediate-level FL-FL and FL-HL students in university Spanish courses, Bowles, Toth, and Adams (2014) compared the extent of oral production and form-focused talk across the two dyad types. Noting that “such classroom research is sorely needed,” the authors targeted “the nature of learner-learner interactions” in classrooms serving both HL and FL learners (p. 500). Whereas interactions in the FL-FL and FL-HL dyads exhibited similar characteristics, distinct advantages were observed among the mixed pairs: FL-HL dyads produced more talk and engaged in more target-like focus-on-form episodes than did FL-FL pairs. Moreover, FL participants produced substantially more Spanish in interactions with their HL counterparts than with fellow (Anglophone) FL students, “suggesting that different conversational norms may be at play in the two pair types” (p. 497). Congruent with prior work comparing the affective states of FL and HL students (Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2008, 2011, 2012), Bowles et al. (2014) reported that FL participants “perceived their HL interlocutors to be stronger speakers,” evincing lower levels of confidence when interacting with their HL counterparts (p. 506). Also notable was that FL participants may have made greater learning gains by interacting with HL participants than did HL participants interacting with FL learners, raising the “important question of how Spanish language classes enrolling both [FL] learners and HLs could better promote the linguistic development of HL learners” (p. 511).

The HL research agenda has thus highlighted the need to examine the effects of HL-FL learner interactions, outlined convergent and divergent HL and FL motivational profiles, and revealed the complexity of HL and FL learners’ socio-affective responses to instruction. Studies of HL and FL learner socialization (e.g., Blake & Zyzik, 2003; Hornberger & Wang, 2008; Reyes, 2007; Valdés, 2008; Watkins-Goffman, 2001) have additionally sensitized us to learners’ attitudes toward the Spanish language, Hispanophone discourse communities, and the classroom milieu. We have come to question how educational practice may influence FL and HL students’ self-appraisals, beliefs about language, and predispositions toward language and literacy development (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 2000, 2011; Lefkowitz, 2011; Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012). These variables differentiate HL students of Spanish from their (primarily Anglophone) FL counterparts in systematic ways. Moreover, we recognize the ongoing need to inquire into the

two groups' *literacy* development, including what students "wish to do with written Spanish" (Callahan, 2010, p. 1).

Acknowledging that FL and HL students represent inherently distinct demographic, linguistic, and sociocultural traits, we aim to delve more deeply into the two populations' distinct socio-affective motivations for studying Spanish, their habits of language use, and their responses to classroom instruction. Our investigation thus addresses these research questions:

1. In what ways do HL students' language learning goals, perceptions of language proficiency and learning needs, and habits of language use distinguish them from those of their English-speaking FL counterparts?
2. How do FL and HL students' perceptions of (and attitudes toward) Spanish implicitly or explicitly reflect attitudes expressed in the classroom and elsewhere?

## METHOD

This descriptive investigation reflects a multi-phase, convergent, mixed-methods design that examines qualitative data as a complement to quantitative data analyses (Creswell, 2014; Hashemi & Babah, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2013). Data sources include the findings of two independent, sequential investigations (reported in Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 2011; Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012), which we combined in the framework of a parallel-databases convergent design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This approach allowed us to merge parallel research strands, synthesize pooled findings, and compare the outcomes of multiple data analyses. Our classroom-based study can also be described as action-oriented, as it seeks to identify directions for evaluating and reshaping FL and HL instruction (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

## Participants

Recruited through convenience sampling (Nunan & Bailey, 2009), the 247 participants in the study included 109 HL students, Spanish-English bilinguals enrolled in Spanish language and literature courses at a medium-sized university in the Western U.S. The HL cohort consists of 74 (68%) female and 35 (32%) male students, ranging in age from 18 to 52 years ( $M=22.2$ ,  $SD=4.66$ ). A majority of HL students (59, or 54%) were U.S.-born; 37 (34%) reported Mexico and 13 (12%) reported another Central American country as their birthplace. Uniformly describing their ethnic background as "Hispanic" or "Mexican," all HL participants had completed high school in the U.S., and 96% reported interacting mainly or exclusively in Spanish at home. HL participants classified themselves as *heritage students* based on criteria proposed by Carreira and Kagan (2011). Specifically, HL students are those who: (1) have acquired English "in early childhood, after acquiring the HL"; (2) have "limited exposure to the HL outside the home"; (3) exhibit high-level oral-aural skills but limited

HL literacy; (4) evince “positive HL attitudes”; and (5) undertake HL study “to connect with communities of speakers” and “to gain insights into [their] roots” (Carreira & Kagan, 2011, p. 40). Also worth noting is that 30 of the 109 HL participants (28%) reported majoring or minoring in Spanish; 23 participants (21%) were pursuing degrees in education.

As for the 138 U.S.-born FL students who participated in the investigation, all were enrolled in Spanish language and literature courses at the same university; many had completed the same courses as their HL counterparts. The FL group consists of 102 (74%) female and 36 (26%) male participants, ranging in age from 18 to 34 years ( $M=21.3$ ,  $SD=2.63$ ). All respondents self-identified as native, monolingual speakers of English.

Our analysis focuses chiefly on HL and FL student perceptions and language socialization processes. To shed additional light on the needs of HL students in Spanish classrooms, we make occasional reference to the insights and attitudes of eight instructors who teach Spanish language and literature courses at our research site. Lefkowitz (2011) presents an in-depth account of the beliefs, perceptions, and practices of instructors with extensive experience working with HL students.

## **Materials**

The primary data sources examined here derive from survey results and interviews with selected participants. We modeled our questionnaires on a detailed survey instrument developed by Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, and Pérez (2006) (see Appendices A-C). As the Valdés et al. (2006) survey was crafted solely with HL learners (Spanish-English bilinguals) in mind, we constructed a comparable instrument for FL participants, guided by Fink (2013). The corresponding surveys consist of a combination of 54 controlled and constructed response items. Both versions elicit demographic details and information about habits and contexts of language use, goals for developing language and literacy skills in Spanish, and self-appraisals of language skills. The final sections ask participants to share their opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about varieties of Spanish and about ideal methods of language instruction. The HL version differs from the FL version in that the former includes items pertaining to HL students’ bilingual histories and the distribution of Spanish and English use in their daily lives.

Using methods of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2011), we developed a semi-structured interview guide (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). Guided interviews queried HL students’ perceptions of, and orientations toward, language education in general and their experiences as language users in specific sociolinguistic contexts. Interviews with instructors were similarly structured and focused on their perspectives as educators; questions and follow-up prompts queried their instructional practices, beliefs about effective methods of instruction, and attitudes toward HL speakers’ linguistic repertoires (Lefkowitz, 2011; also see Appendix D).

## Procedures

After collecting survey and interview data over a span of four academic years, we coded completed surveys and entered responses into an electronic database. We then generated descriptive statistics from the latter to identify recurring patterns in FL and HL students' responses. When warranted, significance tests were performed. Tendencies and trends emerging from these results guided thematic analyses of the qualitative data, which highlighted patterns that were not initially apparent in the tabulated survey outcomes or interview transcripts, although we "quantitized" a subset of open-ended survey and interview passages (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). Collation of these patterns produced a global sense of our sample demographics and a framework for approaching the particular in the interview data. Procedures were thus recursive in that quantitative and qualitative analyses informed and guided each other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). We frame the following discussion of findings with respect to the salient themes that emerged in response to our research questions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Goals for HL and FL Learning

Our first research question addresses students' motivation for studying Spanish, as well as self-appraisals of their language performance and use. Table 1 displays results comparing the FL and HL samples' incentives for pursuing language study. Rather than eliciting rankings, the survey invited respondents to select any and all subskills that they deemed important for their learning and in most urgent need of improvement.

Table 1

*FL and HL Students' Reported Motivation for Taking Spanish Courses*

<i>Belief Statements</i>	<i>Subskills</i>	<i>FL</i>	<i>HL</i>
Proficiency in standard Spanish will be useful or extremely useful for my future education and career.		93%	95%
Skill areas most important for my future education and career <sup>a</sup> :	Speaking	96%	90%
	Listening	91%	75%
	Reading	55%	74%
	Writing	54%	89%
Skill areas that I would most like to improve <sup>b</sup> :	Speaking	91%	46%
	Listening	57%	15%
	Reading	38%	35%
	Writing	48%	87%

<sup>a</sup> Comparison of FL and HL frequencies:  $\chi^2 = 14.54$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p \leq 0.002$

<sup>b</sup> Comparison of FL and HL frequencies:  $\chi^2 = 55.15$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p \leq 0.000$

A side-by-side comparison of the values assigned to learning Spanish reveals that the FL and HL groups share several goals, including mastery of all subskill areas. Beyond their motivation to develop their oral-aural and literacy skills, however, the FL and HL cohorts diverge in striking ways. For instance, Table 1 demonstrates that HL students are by far the most concerned with enhancing their writing skills, whereas FL students identify speaking as the skill in greatest need of improvement. As Figure 1 indicates, HL students identified reading and writing skills as significantly more important for their future endeavors than did FL students. The obverse relationship illustrated in Figure 2 accentuates even more dramatic contrasts between the FL and HL groups: Whereas a vast majority of the latter view themselves as weak writers, the former view themselves as weak speakers of Spanish.

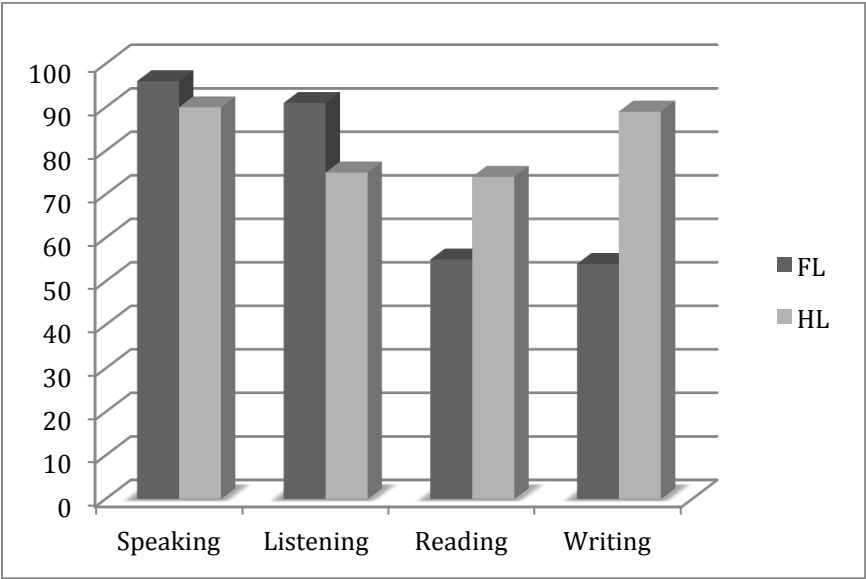


Figure 1  
*Comparison of Skill Areas Identified as Most Important for FL and HL Students’ Future Studies and Career*

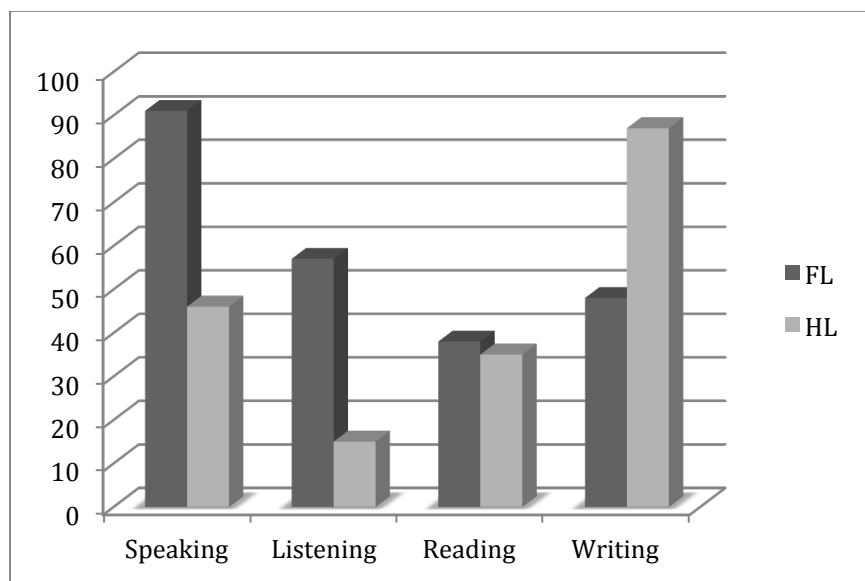


Figure 2

*Comparison of Skill Areas Identified by FL and HL Students as Most Urgently Needing Improvement*

These findings largely parallel results of the *National Heritage Language Survey* (NHLS), which revealed that 67.8% of the 1,732 HL respondents surveyed rated their listening skills as advanced or native-like and that 44.4% rated their speaking skills as equally proficient (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Kagan & Dillon, 2009). In contrast, only 27.6% of HL learners rated their reading skills as advanced or native-like; a mere 18.8% assigned the same ratings to their writing skills (p. 46). Similar investigations have shown that HL students report and exhibit reading and writing skills that are much weaker than their oral-aural skills, even relative to FL acquirers of the same language (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Hornberger & Wang, 2008; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007; Schwartz, 2003). Valdés (2001) noted similarly uneven subskill profiles, observing that, compared to learners “who have acquired the language exclusively in the classroom, the [HL] student may seem quite superior in some respects and quite limited in others. For example, there may be little or no proficiency in reading and writing the language” (p. 47).

In view of empirical research, Callahan (2010) highlighted the need to understand students’ goals for developing literacies in Spanish—writing skills, in particular. Callahan examined Latino (HL) students’ reported use of written Spanish, their purposes for using it, and their experiences learning written

registers; she concluded that HL students perceive a strong need to develop mastery of academic writing skills, while conveying a vague need to become proficient in non-academic (e.g., professional) genres. These perceived skill-area needs among HL students do not match with those of the FL learners in our study (cf. Chevalier, 2004). As Table 1 and Figures 1-2 indicate, whereas nearly 90% of our HL participants identified writing as a valuable skill area required in their future studies and careers, just over half of FL students evinced similar concerns. In contrast, the vast majority of FL students (96%) assigned the highest value to developing speech skills; 91% indicated that they would most like to improve their oral production skills. These divergent needs and goals underscore the unique characteristics of HL and FL student profiles.

### **Self-Appraisals of Language Proficiency and Learning Needs**

A second variable targeted in our first research question entails participants' perceived Spanish proficiency levels. Table 2 presents FL students' Likert-scale responses to indices of their developing Spanish-language subskills and strategies. Figure 3 graphically represents these data by showing rank-ordered frequencies of respondents' relative agreement with statements pertaining to these subskills and strategies. When asked to rate their subskills in Spanish, FL students characterized their grammatical knowledge as the strongest, followed by reading accuracy, vocabulary size, and reading fluency. FL learners ranked their productive skills at the bottom of the scale, with writing achieving a slightly higher rating than speaking. Also noteworthy is that FL students ranked their reading and writing fluency as low relative to accuracy, with a majority (60.1%) reporting modest to heavy reliance on translation from English when writing in Spanish (see Figure 3). This item achieved a mean agreement score of 3.67 out of six ( $SD=1.42$ ), exceeding FL participants' high self-appraisals of grammatical knowledge and reading accuracy (see Table 2). Although we recognize the limitations of performance self-appraisals, FL respondents' perceptions of their language and literacy skills are consistent with observations of their measured performance and reflective of the greater attention devoted to grammatical accuracy and reliance on written text in post-secondary curriculum and instruction (Bowles et al., 2014; Carreira, 2012; Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2009). Similarly, in line with Lefkowitz's (2011) findings, Spanish instructors' impressions of their FL students' skill levels coincide with students' self-appraisals, as discussed below.



Table 2  
FL Students’ Rank-Ordered Skill and Strategy Self-Appraisals <sup>a</sup> (n = 138)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
1. When I write in Spanish, I translate from English.	14	17	24	36	39	8	3.67	1.42
2. My knowledge of Spanish grammar is very good.	4	16	42	50	19	7	3.62	1.11
3. My comprehension of Spanish texts is very accurate.	7	14	37	56	21	2	3.55	1.08
4. I have a very large vocabulary in Spanish.	5	23	39	52	15	4	3.44	1.09
5. I am a fluent reader of Spanish.	13	25	38	42	17	3	3.25	1.23
6. My written Spanish is very accurate.	8	35	41	39	12	3	3.15	1.14
7. I write fluently in Spanish.	13	32	45	34	12	2	3.04	1.16
8. I am a fluent speaker of Spanish	17	39	41	28	11	2	2.88	1.19

<sup>a</sup> 1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat Disagree 4=Somewhat Agree 5=Agree 6=Strongly agree

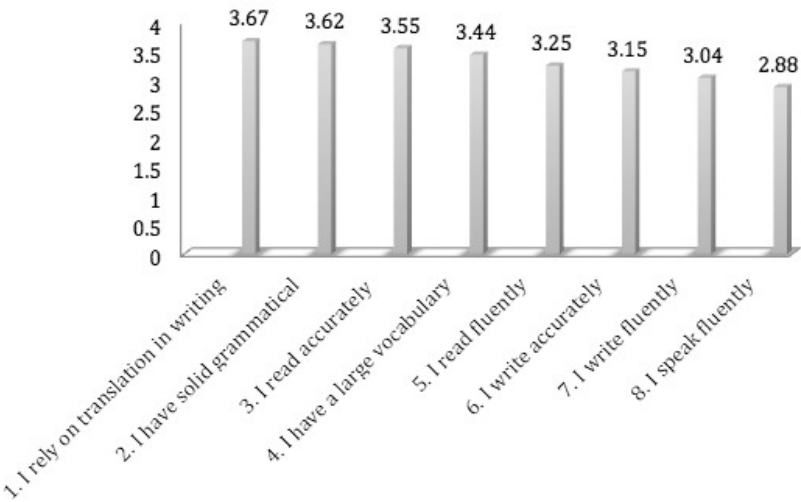


Figure 3  
FL Students’ Rank-Ordered Skill and Strategy Self-Appraisals Based on Reported Agreement (“Strongly Agree” (6) to “Strongly Disagree” (1)) (n = 138).

This profile of FL student skills contrasts sharply with the self-appraisals of HL students, all of whom claimed to speak Spanish “well” or “fairly well,” as shown in Table 3 and in line with NHLS results. Although our survey did not directly query HL students’ evaluations of their specific skill-area strengths and weaknesses (as in the FL survey), Table 1 shows that most participants rated all linguistic subskills as valuable (cf. Ramírez, 2000)<sup>2</sup>. Significantly, results shown in Table 1 suggest that HL students perceived their writing skills in Spanish to be in most profound need of improvement. Also noteworthy are HL students’ assessments of their English-language subskills. Table 3 results show that HL participants perceive themselves to be more proficient in Spanish than in English, although self-ratings of “extremely well” and “fairly well” in speaking may suggest balanced bilingualism in terms of oral production—unlike NHLS results demonstrating overwhelming English dominance among HL students.

Table 3

*HL Students’ Bilingual Skills Self-Appraisals (n = 109)<sup>a</sup>*

	<i>Extremely well</i>	<i>Fairly well</i>	<i>Not very well</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
I understand spoken Spanish . . .	90 (83%)	19 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I speak Spanish . . .	62 (57%)	46 (42%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
I understand spoken English . . .	75 (69%)	31 (29%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
I speak English . . .	70 (64%)	37 (34%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)

<sup>a</sup> Comparison of Spanish and English Self-Appraisals:  $\chi^2 = 2.03$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p \leq 0.362$

Ongoing debates over the complexity of assessing linguistic competence demonstrate that accurate measurement of productive and receptive skills is problematic, especially when learners evaluate their own performance (Montrul, 2004, 2008a, 2008b; Montrul, Foote, & Perpiñán, 2008). We acknowledge the limited reliability and representativeness of our self-report data as indices of Spanish-English bilingual skills. Isolated data points can often contradict global trends, such as the pattern in Table 3, which suggests balanced English-Spanish bilingualism. For instance, as questionnaire and interview extracts (1)-(3) illustrate,<sup>3</sup> numerous HL students overtly characterized their Spanish proficiency as threatened by the frequency of their English use:

- (1) “English is by far my dominant language” (Amelia);
- (2) “I feel more conforable with the English language because it has over ruled my Spanish. Im not as good in Spanish” (Blanca);
- (3) “I sometimes use wrong words because of the combination of English and Spanish ... I translate the words [like] *Vamos a tomar un break* ... It’s like not standard” (Oswaldo).

Such self-portrayals of English dominance cannot be overlooked when considering HL participants’ overall tendency to characterize themselves as Spanish-dominant.

Data from instructor interviews similarly support the impression that, whereas HL students exhibit sophisticated speaking and listening skills, their (academic) literacy skills frequently lag behind (Cohen & Gómez, 2008; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 2011; Hornberger & Wang, 2008; Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2011; Parodi, 2008). Table 4 reports the raw frequencies with which instructors rated FL and HL students' strongest and weakest skill areas. The trends seen in HL students' self-appraisals (Tables 1 and 3), as well as in Spanish instructors' impressions (Table 4) are remarkably consistent with those of the NHLS (Carreira & Kagan, 2011), which highlight recurring gaps between oral-aural skills, on the one hand, and reading, writing, and metalinguistic skills, on the other (cf. Chevalier, 2004; Parodi, 2008; Valdés, 2001).

Table 4

*Instructors' Appraisals of FL and HL Students' Strongest and Weakest Skill Areas (n = 8)<sup>a</sup>*

	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Speaking</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Grammar</i>
FL Students' Strongest Skill Areas	5	1	2	1	3
FL Students' Weakest Skill Areas	1	4	1	4	1
HL Students' Strongest Skill Areas	4	7	0	0	0
HL Students' Weakest Skill Areas	1	1	2	6	2

<sup>a</sup> Instructors were invited to name more than one skill area, accounting for column and row totals exceeding eight.

Though useful in corroborating empirical findings on HL students' bilingual and biliterate profiles, our quantitative results provide only a partial picture. Interview and open-ended questionnaire data illuminate the sociolinguistic and educational factors that underlie and color students' perceptions of their language and literacy skills, as well as attitudes that influence their Spanish language and literacy development. A majority of HL students claimed better oral-aural skills in Spanish than in English (Table 3), a trend confirmed by most interviewees. Also consistent with research on Hispanic students' literacy (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 2011; Hornberger & Wang, 2008; Schwartz, 2003; Valdés, 1995, 2001; Valdés, Haro, & Echevarriarza, 1992) is our finding that 87% of HL participants identified writing as the Spanish skill area in greatest need of improvement (Table 1). Indeed, HL participants often expressed a need to cultivate their Spanish literacy skills — writing, in particular — as extracts (4)-(6) illustrate:

- (4) “My writing is not professional” (Manuel);
- (5) “I would most like to improve in writing . . . [I need] more essay writing, writing skills, papers, write more . . .” (Ana);
- (6) [Before studying Spanish] “I had no notion of [writing]. I made lots of mistakes as far as writing goes . . . I might be at a higher level as far as conversating and speaking” (César).

Another subtle but notable feature distinguishing HL from FL students is the overwhelmingly high proportion of HL participants (96%) who rated proficiency in “standard” Spanish to be useful (if not essential) to their studies and careers. Not only did HL students almost uniformly assign top priority to mastering a high-prestige variety of Spanish, their reflections on the topic implied a sense that their own variety of Spanish was somehow inferior, as extracts (7)-(8) indicate:

- (7) “Sometimes I don’t know if what I’m saying in my dialect is correct according to where [teachers] learned it” (Verónica);
- (8) “I use colloquial—I want to make it more standard . . . now I’m aware that I was poor in Spanish and need to improve it . . . I know that I’m limited to some parts of my language” (Jorge).

HL students expressed similarly unfavorable appraisals of their formal accuracy, often describing their grasp of high-prestige regional and social dialects as weak.<sup>4</sup> Many HL speakers likewise voiced concerns about their modest control of high-register written genres. These patterns correspond with prior studies in which HL students of Spanish ranked developing their writing skills as among their highest priorities (Alarcón, 2010; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 2011; Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2011).

In a similar vein, a striking number of HL participants identified enhancing their grammatical accuracy and metalinguistic knowledge as important goals in their language development, as the insights in questionnaire and interview extracts (9)-(10) demonstrate:

- (9) “...we learned orally not seeing what we are saying, so it is much harder to get all the technical things right” (Raúl);
- (10) [I would like to] “become an expert on grammar—For me it’s like a challenge. I would like to write some day something without any errors. . . . We think that we speak correctly, but with writing it’s totally different because we can write something and we know what we meant to say but when somebody read it, it’s totally different” (Oswaldo).

Our second research question targeting the potential interaction of student beliefs and attitudes prevalent in the classroom environment now comes into play. Significantly, HL student self-assessments in the study were consistent with the evaluative opinions expressed by instructors. Six of eight instructors identified writing as HL students’ weakest skill area (Table 4); several described HL students’ grammatical control as underdeveloped. Interview extracts included instructor observations of classroom performance that consistently converged on the unique challenges facing HL students, who:

- exhibit oral and aural fluency in Spanish while demonstrating “non-standard,” “colloquial,” and Anglicized lexical choices, as well as non-idiomatic grammatical patterns;
- exhibit developing literacy skills, including those required to read and write “critically” and “academically” about canonical Hispanophone literature;
- display a modest degree of explicit grammatical knowledge alongside a high level of motivation to develop greater metalinguistic expertise;
- express insecurity with regard to their global proficiency as Spanish speakers, readers, and writers;
- report reading in Spanish very infrequently (for school or for pleasure) (see Table 6).

These trends closely parallel those reported in prior studies of HL learners and their performance in university classrooms (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Chevalier, 2004; Tallon, 2009). Educators’ views, as well as those of HL students themselves, point to mismatches between a curriculum geared toward English-speaking FL learners and one that methodically addresses HL students’ real and perceived needs as speakers, readers, and writers of Spanish.

Recurring instructor comments coincided with students’ views of their own reportedly tenuous grasp of Spanish grammar, vocabulary, and formal registers. These opinions may reflect faulty assumptions about HL speakers’ underlying linguistic competence and an implicit expectation that HL students should have already mastered high-prestige academic registers and explicit grammar rules. In fact, HL students’ metalinguistic skills tend to be modest: “As is the case with most native speakers of a language, the [HL] speaker ‘knows’ the language and uses ... internalized grammatical rules but does not have the metalanguage to talk about the grammatical system itself” (Valdés, 2001, p. 47). Interview and questionnaire extracts (11)–(13) provide an illustrative sampling of HL students’ reflections on their oral and written production, their perceived weaknesses, and their instructors’ expectations of their performance in Spanish:

- (11)[Instructors think of me] “as a native speaker and then hold me to a higher standard than other [Anglophone FL] students. They expect me to succeed more because I am a native speaker. It’s bad to have different expectations” (César);
- (12)[Professors] “expect [HL students] to know everything” (Manuel);
- (13)[HL speakers should] “focus on grammatics because some students know how to write but they don’t know how to do it grammatically correct” (Natalia).

Instructor interviews frequently mirrored HL students’ impressions of their speech and written production. One instructor portrayed HL students’ varieties as “colorful,” “colloquial,” and “not always correct”—sufficient for communicating “about simple things,” but “not good for abstract . . . or sophisticated ways of thinking.” Others observed that HL students sometimes “feel ashamed” of their home varieties, which diverge from the high-prestige

dialect targeted in the classroom. Our limited data sources prevent us from drawing inferences about relationships between instructors’ attitudes toward HL students’ home varieties and linguistic competence. Nevertheless, the similarities between students’ and instructors professed views and beliefs should not be overlooked: Students’ beliefs consistently echo the views of some instructors, namely, that HL students’ oral and written production does not satisfy the pedagogical standard (Lefkowitz, 2011; Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2008; Montrul, 2008a, 2008b; Paradis, 2004).

**Habits of Language Use**

The third factor featured in our research questions involves HL students’ habits of language use. Previous research has shed light not only on the distribution of language varieties in HL students’ daily lives and developmental histories but also on their uneven proficiency profiles (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; NHLRC, 2009). Patterns of language use can reflect individuals’ opportunities to use and practice a language; in turn, the availability of such opportunities may coincide with performance and proficiency levels. Table 5 presents the relative distribution of Spanish and English use reported in HL students’ home environments. Table 6 displays HL students’ reported frequency of engagement in literacy events in Spanish at home and in oral communication activities in Spanish in the workplace.

Table 5  
*HL Student Home Language Use Profile (n=109)*

<i>When addressed in Spanish by a family member, I respond in . . .</i>	
Spanish	68 (62%)
English	4 (4%)
A mixture of Spanish and English	37 (34%)

Table 6  
*Settings for HL Skill Use (n=109)*

	<i>Always</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
I read in Spanish at home	7 (6%)	13 (12%)	49 (45%)	32 (30%)	8 (7%)
I write in Spanish at home	6 (5%)	15 (14%)	39 (36%)	40 (37%)	8 (7%)
I speak Spanish in my workplace <sup>a</sup>	5 (5%)	25 (23%)	35 (31%)	23 (21%)	10 (9%)

<sup>a</sup> 10 (9%) not applicable or not reported.

Table 5 shows that HL students reported speaking Spanish frequently at home, though not as frequently as the Mexican immigrants in Cortina’s (2009) study of New York high school students, 95% of whom claimed to speak Spanish exclusively with family members. In contrast, of the 396 Spanish-

speaking HL students in the NHLS, 48% reported using Spanish exclusively, 48% reported using Spanish and English, and 4% reported using English exclusively at home (Carreira & Kagan, 2011). The utter lack of reported use of English at home in our HL sample is noteworthy, perhaps suggesting a decisive boundary between the private, familial domain (predominantly Spanish) and public domains such as school, the workplace, and social spheres (Spanish, English, and a mixture of the two). HL students' reported frequency of literate activity at home (Table 6) also provides insight into participants' developing reading and writing proficiency in Spanish (see Tables 1, 3, and 4). Only 18% of students reported reading in Spanish at home more often than "sometimes," with a similar proportion (19%) reporting writing activity at home. The uncommon practice of engaging in HL literacy events at home is not surprising; prior studies have reported similarly infrequent reading and writing among HL and minority language learners at home (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; McQuillan, 1998; Pucci, 2000, 2003; Schon, Hopkins, & Vojir, 1984).

Perhaps more telling than language use distribution are HL participants' accounts of literacy events that typify their lives in and out of school. In interviews and survey responses, students reported a limited need for — and use of — Spanish-language literacy skills outside the academic context (Alarcón, 2010; Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Magnan et al., 2014), although a number indicated a need to read and write for practical reasons such as translating documents for family members. Survey extracts (14)–(16) reflect representative responses to questions about the circumstances in which HL students speak, read, and write Spanish:

- (14) "I watch a lot of Spanish soap operas, try and read to my daughter in Spanish, and translate paper in English to Spanish for my parents" (Iris);
- (15) [I write] "when translating letters, papers for people; class also; listening to music in Spanish" (Hortensia);
- (16) "I write in Spanish when in my Spanish classes, to my family in México when I write them letters, notes in church, and when I translate documents for my family members. I speak Spanish whenever I can because I will not forget my language this way, with friends, family and co-workers" (Verónica).

These extracts call attention to HL students' frequent references to the practical reading and writing activities in their everyday lives (28 occurrences out of 109, or 26%). These uses include a process known as *language brokering* (Weisskirch, 2006), which includes "re-explaining," "helping," "interpreting," and translating "when it's necessary"—functions that are often underappreciated as legitimate literate activities. Reading and writing in Spanish for many HL students serves salient instrumental purposes outside the classroom, though students may not view these functions as representative of complex biliterate knowledge (Draper & Hicks, 2000). Fought (2003, 2006) pointed out that linguistic brokering demands sophisticated processing (Hornberger, 2003), carries emotional and affective weight (Hornberger & Wang, 2008; Martínez,

2006), and produces highly practical benefits. In work focusing on other dimensions of the present study (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 2011; Lefkowitz, 2011; Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2011), we reported that instructors' impressions of HL students' language and literacy needs coincided with students' reportedly infrequent literacy-related activities outside the classroom. One professor claimed that "some students don't have any experience with the written language," although we suspect that "written language" here refers to written *academic* language. In addition to the numerous references to brokering, HL students made recurrent references to writing in their social media communications, literate activities that researchers have only begun to explore systematically (Carreira & Kagan, 2011).

## LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Ours is not the first investigation to characterize differences and similarities between classroom HL and FL learners of Spanish: Our results affirm commonsense assumptions about the two populations—namely, that they exhibit distinct learning profiles worthy of carefully differentiated instruction. Moreover, the inferences generated from our results are limited by the descriptive nature of the study, its reliance on self-reported data, and the localized aspects of the research setting. These shortcomings notwithstanding, our findings and conclusions might contribute to sensitizing researchers and educators to the unique beliefs, expectations, and needs of FL and HL learners. For example, our findings challenge certain presuppositions about HL students and the perceived linguistic advantages that they may have over their FL counterparts. Oh and Nash (2014) stressed the importance of understanding how HL learners' backgrounds differ from those of FL learners, "especially with regard to factors that may affect their language learning success," including their goals for pursuing formal language study (p. 31). Further, as Bowles et al. (2014) recently argued, research in this area should "probe learner perceptions more deeply" to ensure that both HL and FL learners undergo instruction "that appropriately addresses their needs" (p. 512).

With respect to our first research question, our findings affirm that both groups want to learn Spanish for functional purposes and strongly value achieving a high level of proficiency. When carefully scrutinized, however, HL and FL students' profiles diverge significantly. Parallel to prior research comparing HL and FL learners' background variables and goals, our study suggests a pronounced literacy divide, amply expressed in student self-assessments and reiterated by experienced teachers. Whereas a vast majority of FL students ranked mastery of oral and aural skills in Spanish as top priorities, HL students assigned a correspondingly high rank to becoming skilled writers, a decidedly obverse relationship that aligns with both groups' subskill strengths, weaknesses, and habits of language use (notably reading and writing in Spanish).



Our second research question, while focusing explicitly on HL and FL participants' attitudes toward Spanish and its user communities, dovetails with the motivational and performance constructs targeted in the first. Evidence pertaining to participants' patterns of language learning and language use, in conjunction with instructors' observations of learner development and socialization, replicate aspirations to master pedagogical standards prevalent in the classroom. That is, we observed a consistent alignment between Spanish language instructor attitudes and HL students' perceptions of themselves, their linguistic skills, and their biliterate development (Lefkowitz & Hedgcock, 2008, 2011). Survey and interview data further revealed pervasive preferences for high-prestige varieties of Spanish over vernaculars, including those most typically used by HL students in their own speech communities.

Despite our study's limitations, the learning and socialization patterns that we have extrapolated from our data accentuate the degree to which HL and FL students of Spanish represent unique populations. Our outcomes further affirm that "[the] question of how best to support heritage learners' linguistic development is a complex one involving not only linguistic and pedagogical questions but also a host of other factors" (Bowles et al., 2014, p. 511). To address pedagogical questions, we would amplify appeals by researchers and policy makers to embrace the precept that HL students' linguistic and educational needs are not well served by instruction geared toward FL learners. HL education must develop, implement, and evaluate HL-specific courses and programs (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Brinton, Kagan, & Bauckus, 2008). These efforts should entail designing content-based and experiential HL curricula featuring authentic materials and community-based experiences grounded "in task-based approaches stemming from what HL [students] do in real life ..." (Kagan & Dillon, 2009, p. 13).

Our findings additionally suggest that Spanish HL curricula should systematically target the cultivation and maintenance of academic and professional literacies (Beaudrie, 2015; Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Bowles et al., 2014; Carreira, 2012; Leeman, Rabin, & Román-Mendoza, 2011). HL instruction should likewise promote critical language awareness, recognition of dialectal variation across the Hispanic world, and an understanding of language ideologies (Del Valle, 2014; Valdés et al., 2008). Whether delivered in mixed or HL-track courses, instruction should feature goals, materials, projects, and tasks that "make use of factors unique to HLLs' experiences" (Oh & Nash, 2014, p. 41) — optimally by capitalizing on HL students' sometimes overlooked bilingual and biliterate skills (e.g., translanguaging, translation, interpretation, and brokering abilities). Doing so would broaden and strengthen language skill development while acknowledging and legitimizing HL students' bilingual repertoires and vernaculars. Finally, the continued growth of HL student populations calls for systematic instructor training that stresses awareness of social and regional variation, appreciation for dialect diversity, and strategies to "make the learning context less stressful" for both HL and FL students (Tallon, 2009, p. 126).

**NOTES**

1. The 2010 U.S. Census reported that approximately 40 million individuals (13% of the total population) were foreign-born and were thus likely to speak a language other than English at home (Grieco et al., 2012).
2. As data collections took place sequentially and informed subsequent iterations, some thematic categories in our analysis (e.g., the rank-ordered skill and strategy self-appraisals in Tables 2 and 3) do not uniformly present parallel findings across the HL and FL cohorts (we were unable to administer new instruments to participants who were no longer available).
3. All extracts are presented verbatim as transcribed by student respondents. Where necessary, wording is occasionally inserted in square brackets to clarify meaning.
4. Interestingly, in response to an open-ended item querying where the “best Spanish” is spoken, 36 participants (33%) selected Spain, even though 88% of participants reported Mexico or the U.S. as their birthplace. This folk view that assigns high prestige to Castilian, a distant regional dialect, may reflect linguistic inferiority and the long tradition of favoring a cultivated “Spanish peninsular center-north variety” as the pedagogical norm (Del Valle, 2014, p. 363).

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**APPENDIX A****HL Student Survey*****Language Learning History, Attitudes, and Beliefs***

ID Number:		E-Mail Address:	
<b>Demographic Information</b>			
1. Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male		2. Age:	3. Birthplace:
4. Current Place of Residence:			
5. What is the highest degree you have earned? Select all that apply:			
<input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Degree (Community College) <input type="checkbox"/> Trade/Technical Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe):			
6. What is your major?			
7. Did you study Spanish in high school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			15. For how long?
8. Which Spanish courses have you completed?			
9. Have you ever studied in a Spanish-English bilingual program? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
10. What languages other than Spanish or English have you studied?			
<b>Spanish Language Proficiency and Use</b>			
11. How well do you understand spoken Spanish?		<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Very little <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly well <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely well	
12. How well do you speak Spanish?		<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Very little <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly well <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely well	
13. How well do you understand spoken English?		<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Very little <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly well <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely well	
14. How well do you speak English?		<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Very little <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly well <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely well	
15. If Spanish was spoken to you at home during your childhood, in which language did you respond? Select all that apply.		<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> A mixture of Spanish and English <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

16. If you spoke Spanish at home, with whom did you most frequently interact? Select all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Sibling(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		
17. If you spoke English at home, with whom did you most frequently interact? Select all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Sibling(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		
18. If you spoke a mixture of Spanish and English at home, with whom did you most frequently interact? Select all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Sibling(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		
19. If Spanish is currently spoken to you at home, in which language do you respond? Select all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> A mixture of Spanish and English <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		
20. Do you read in Spanish at home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always		
21. Do you write in Spanish at home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always		
22. Do you speak Spanish at your workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always		
23. In what other circumstances do you speak, read, or write in Spanish? Please explain.			
24. In what circumstances do you speak, read, or write in English? Please explain.			
25. In what circumstances do you feel most comfortable speaking, reading, and writing in English? Please explain.			
26. Could you briefly explain your language choices? Where, with whom, why, and about what do you use one language or the other, or both? For example, if you speak Spanish at church, write "church" in the first box.			
	Spanish	English	Mixture of English and Spanish
Where?			
With whom?			
Why?			
About what?			

27. How useful do you think being proficient in standard Spanish will be for your future education and career?	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely useful <input type="checkbox"/> Useful <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat useful <input type="checkbox"/> Not useful
28. What areas of Spanish would be most important for your future studies and career? Check all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Listening <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> (Please explain):
29. What areas of Spanish would you most like to improve personally? Check all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Listening <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> (Please explain):
30. What would you need to improve your skills? Select all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Taking further Spanish courses <input type="checkbox"/> Studying independently <input type="checkbox"/> Using Spanish more frequently when I have the chance <input type="checkbox"/> Traveling in Spanish-speaking countries <input type="checkbox"/> Living or working in a Spanish-speaking community <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<b>Opinions, Attitudes, and Beliefs</b>	
31. Where do you think the best Spanish is <i>spoken</i> ?	
32. Where do you think the best Spanish is <i>written</i> ?	
33. In what ways is this variety of Spanish better than others?	
34. Many students from homes where Spanish is spoken and who have been educated entirely in English study Spanish in high school or college. Do you think that schools and universities should offer special Spanish language courses for these heritage students? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
35. If you answered "yes" to question 43, what variety(-ies)/dialect(s) of Spanish should be taught in these courses for heritage students?	
36. Should these varieties/dialects be taught to students from different Spanish-speaking countries? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Explain:	
37. Do you think that literature written in your selected varieties/dialects should be studied in courses for heritage students? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

38. Which language is most important for students from Spanish-speaking homes to use with Spanish-speaking Latino friends outside of school? <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> A mixture of Spanish and English <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____						
39. Which language is most important for students from Spanish-speaking homes to use with Spanish-speaking Latino friends at school? <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> A mixture of Spanish and English <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____						
40. Which language is most important for students from Spanish-speaking homes to use with Spanish-speaking family members older than they are? <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> A mixture of Spanish and English <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____						
41. Which language is most important for students from Spanish-speaking homes to use with Spanish-speaking family members their own age? <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> A mixture of Spanish and English <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____						
42. Which language is most important for students from Spanish-speaking homes to use with Spanish-speaking family members younger than they are? <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> A mixture of Spanish and English <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____						
43. What recommendations would you offer for high schools or colleges as they design Spanish courses for heritage students?						
44. Do you think Spanish courses for heritage students should be different from courses for English-speaking students studying Spanish as a <i>foreign</i> language? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No   Explain: _____						
<b>Beliefs about Language Learning and Teaching</b> Please share your responses to the following statements, using the following scale: <b>6=Strongly agree   5=Agree   4=Somewhat Agree   3=Somewhat Disagree</b> <b>2=Disagree   1=Strongly Disagree</b>						
	6	5	4	3	2	1
45. It is important for me to develop excellent reading skills in Spanish.						
46. It is important for me to develop and demonstrate excellent writing skills in Spanish.						

47. Developing a solid knowledge of Spanish grammar is important to me.						
48. Developing a large vocabulary in Spanish is important to me.						
49. When I write in Spanish, expressing my ideas fluently is a high priority.						
50. The accuracy of my written Spanish is a high priority for me.						
51. I am often nervous about getting instructor feedback on my writing in Spanish.						
52. I expect instructor comments about the ideas expressed in my writing in Spanish.						
53. I learn from instructor comments about the ideas expressed in my Spanish writing.						
54. Professors should correct my written work for grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.						
55. I learn from professors' corrections focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.						
56. I learn from the use of written correction symbols.						
57. Multi-draft assignments are useful to me.						
58. In multi-draft assignments, each draft should be graded.						
59. I benefit from reading my peers' writing assignments.						
60. I benefit from the feedback given by peers on my writing assignments.						
61. Peer editing should focus on ideas and organization.						
62. Peer editing should focus on grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and mechanics.						

***Thank you for participating in our survey!***

Adapted from Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, & Pérez (2006)

**APPENDIX B****FL Student Survey*****Foreign Language Learning Survey***

<b>Contact Information</b>		
ID Number:		E-Mail Address:
<b>Learner Background Information</b>		
1. Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	2. Age:	3. Native Language(s):
4. Major:	5. Did you study Spanish in high school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	6. For how long?
7. Which Spanish courses have you taken?		
8. What language(s) other than Spanish or English have you studied?		9. Why did you select Spanish over another language?
10. Have you lived or traveled in a Spanish-speaking country? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If so, where and for how long?		
<b>Foreign Language Learning Goals</b>		
11. How useful do you think being proficient in standard Spanish will be for your future education and career?	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely useful <input type="checkbox"/> Useful <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat useful <input type="checkbox"/> Not useful	
12. What areas of Spanish would be most important for your future studies and career? Check all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Listening <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> (Please explain):	
13. What areas of Spanish would you most like to improve personally? Check all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Listening <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> (Please explain):	
14. What would you need in order to improve your skills? Select all that apply. <input type="checkbox"/> Take further Spanish courses <input type="checkbox"/> Study independently <input type="checkbox"/> Use Spanish more frequently when I have the chance <input type="checkbox"/> Travel in Spanish-speaking countries <input type="checkbox"/> Live or work in a Spanish-speaking community <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please explain):		

<b>Attitudes towards Working with HL Students</b>							
15. Many students from homes where Spanish is spoken and who have been educated entirely in English study Spanish in high school or college. Have you taken Spanish courses with students from homes where Spanish is spoken (heritage students)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No							
16. If you answered "yes" to question 15, list the course numbers here:							
17. Do you think that schools and universities should offer special Spanish language courses for heritage students? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No							
18. If you answered "yes" to question 17, what variety(-ies) or dialect(s) of Spanish should be taught in these courses for heritage students?							
19. Should these varieties/dialects be taught to students from different Spanish-speaking countries? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Explain:							
Please share your responses to the following statements, using the following scale: 6=Strongly agree 5=Agree 4=Somewhat Agree 3=Somewhat Disagree 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree							
	6	5	4	3	2	1	
20. Heritage students and monolingual English speakers should take the same Spanish courses.							
21. It is beneficial for monolingual English speakers to take Spanish courses with heritage students.							
22. I seek opportunities to interact with heritage students in my Spanish courses.							
23. I am comfortable interacting with heritage students in my Spanish courses.							
24. I sometimes feel nervous about speaking with heritage students in my Spanish courses.							
25. If heritage students were to edit my writing, I would feel self-conscious.							
26. I wouldn't feel comfortable peer-editing the writing of heritage students.							
<b>Foreign Language Skills Self-Appraisal</b>							
Please share your responses to the following statements, using the following scale: 6=Strongly agree 5=Agree 4=Somewhat Agree 3=Somewhat Disagree 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree							
	6	5	4	3	2	1	
27. I am a fluent speaker of Spanish.							
28. I am a fluent reader of Spanish.							
29. My comprehension of Spanish texts is very accurate.							



30. I write fluently in Spanish.						
31. My written Spanish is very accurate.						
32. My knowledge of Spanish grammar is very good.						
33. I have a large vocabulary in Spanish.						
34. When I write in Spanish, I translate from my first language.						
<b>Beliefs about Language Learning and Teaching</b> Please share your responses to the following statements, using the following scale: <b>6=Strongly agree 5=Agree 4=Somewhat Agree 3=Somewhat Disagree</b> <b>2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree</b>						
	6	5	4	3	2	1
35. It is important for me to develop excellent reading skills in Spanish.						
36. It is important for me to develop and demonstrate excellent writing skills in Spanish.						
37. Developing a solid knowledge of Spanish grammar is important to me.						
38. Developing a large vocabulary in Spanish is important to me.						
39. When I write in Spanish, expressing my ideas fluently is a high priority.						
40. The accuracy of my written Spanish is a high priority for me.						
41. I am often nervous about getting instructor feedback on my writing in Spanish.						
42. I expect instructor comments about the ideas expressed in my writing in Spanish.						
43. I use instructor comments about my ideas to improve later drafts of my writing.						
44. Professors should correct my written work for grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.						
45. I learn from professors' corrections focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.						
46. I learn from the use of written correction symbols.						
47. Multi-draft assignments are useful to me.						
48. In multi-draft assignments, each draft should be graded.						

49. I usually feel at ease when giving feedback to my peers on their writing.						
50. I usually feel comfortable receiving feedback from my peers on my writing.						
51. I benefit from reading my peers' writing assignments.						
52. I benefit from the feedback given by peers on my writing assignments.						
53. Peer editing should focus on ideas and organization.						
54. Peer editing should focus on grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and mechanics.						
55. My writing improves more as a result of my professor's comments and corrections.						

*Thank you for participating in our survey!*

Adapted from Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, & Pérez (2006)

## APPENDIX C

### Guided Interview Prompts: HL Students

1. What aspects of your Spanish skills do you consider to be strongest?
2. What skill areas would you most like to improve? Why? How will improving these skill areas benefit you?
3. In what ways do you think taking Spanish courses might help you improve?
4. How would you rate the usefulness and effectiveness of your Spanish courses? Are there ways in which your courses could have helped you to learn more or improve certain skill areas?
5. How do you feel about taking Spanish courses with English-speaking students who, unlike you, have no other language background?
6. Are there social circumstances where you feel especially comfortable or uncomfortable speaking Spanish or English? Why?
7. Would you describe yourself as bicultural? Bilingual? Why or why not?
8. How do you describe yourself ethnically? Has your attitude toward your ethnic heritage changed over time?
9. In what ways is speaking Spanish (and perhaps reading and writing it) an important part of identifying with your family and other Spanish speakers?
10. Do you enjoy speaking Spanish? When, where, and why? Are there any situations or setting where you feel that it makes you feel like an insider or gives you higher status? How about English?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Guided Interview Prompts: FL/HL Instructors**

1. What is your first language?
2. What language do you teach? Are you a native speaker? Are you comfortable as a native/non-native teaching these students?
3. What is your background/degree—literature, linguistics?
4. Do you have training in teaching composition other than on the job practice?
5. What is your overall impression of FL students?
6. Are your expectations of FL students different from those of HL students? How is this experience the same/different from teaching HL students? Do you enjoy it?
7. What is your goal for the students in courses that serve both HL and FL students?
8. How do you take steps toward achieving these goals?
9. What materials do you use?
10. Is culture part of this class? Sociolinguistic appropriateness norms?
11. What would you describe as typical linguistic tendencies of these learners?
12. What are their weakest skills? Strongest?
13. What do you think of their language skills?
14. What do they think of their language skills?
15. What are their most common composition errors? Rate errors in order of importance as an indication of when you feel correction is necessary.
16. What kinds of correction techniques are most effective for you?
17. Is it important for them to know metalinguistic terminology?
18. How many writing assignments do you give? Favorite? Least favorite?
19. How many drafts per assignment? How many paragraphs per draft?
20. Do you correct all drafts?
21. How do you approach giving feedback? (comments, correction symbols, color)
22. Do you assign peer-editing? Why? How? Describe.
23. Do you focus primarily on form, content, organization or a combination?
24. Do you teach rhetorical devices/mode? Which ones (comparison/contrast, argumentation, persuasion, reporting, other?)
25. What genres are covered (type of writing, i.e., purpose, structure, content (essay, research article
26. Please provide typical examples of your classroom practice: vocabulary study, dictation, grammar explanation, oral practice of grammar, language style appropriateness for different texts, compositions, peer editing, extensive reading, research, dialectal differences, other?
27. How would you define academic literacy?
28. What is necessary for them to achieve academic literacy? To what degree is it possible for them to achieve it during or after the course?

29. How are reading and writing connected?
30. Do you use writing as a way of teaching language vs. teaching just writing?
31. What are the purposes of using writing? How do you think learning to write in an a second language benefits the students? How necessary is it for success in their studies and beyond? How does the practice contribute to the students' communicative competence, self-esteem, level of confidence as bilingual readers and writers?
32. What is your impression of their reading habits and skills, their oral language, their vocabulary?

## AUTHORS

**John S. Hedgcock**, *Professor of Applied Linguistics, Graduate School of Translation, Interpretation, and Language Education, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to [jhedgcoc@miis.edu](mailto:jhedgcoc@miis.edu).*

**Natalie Lefkowitz**, *Distinguished Professor, Department of World Languages, Central Washington University. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to [nataliel@cwu.edu](mailto:nataliel@cwu.edu).*

# Short-Term Study Abroad: Perspectives on Speaking Gains and Language Contact

TODD A. HERNÁNDEZ  
Marquette University

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*Previous studies have shown that study abroad has a positive effect on second language (L2) learning outcomes for students who spend at least a semester abroad. It is unclear, however, whether a short-term experience also has a measurable impact on L2 development. The present study examines the relationship between speaking proficiency gains made by students during a short-term study abroad program and their target language use outside of class in the host environment. To determine the potential relationships between speaking gains and language use, a background information questionnaire, a two-part modified language contact profile (LCP), and a pre-program and post-program simulated oral proficiency interview (SOPI) were administered to 20 students in a traditional short-term study abroad program in Spain. Findings indicate that the group did improve their speaking proficiency. At the same time, data taken from the LCP suggest that study abroad learners did not engage in extensive social interaction with native speakers throughout the duration of the program. To improve traditional short-term study abroad programs, the author uses these results to discuss aspects of the programmatic structure that could strengthen the program's linguistic benefits.*

**Keywords:** language contact, oral proficiency, simulated oral proficiency interview, Spanish, study abroad

## INTRODUCTION

The study abroad experience continues to be a core aspect of undergraduate foreign language (FL) education. Previous studies demonstrate that study abroad has a positive effect on second language (L2) learning outcomes for those students who spend at least a semester abroad (e.g., Bataller, 2010; Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; Cohen & Shively, 2007; Collentine, 2004; Díaz-Campos, 2004; Freed, 1995; Hernández, 2010a, 2010b; Isabelli-García, 2006; Magnan & Back, 2007; Lafford, 2004, 2006; Lord, 2009; Marqués-Pascual, 2011; Regan, 2003; Shively, 2011; 2013a, 2013b). It remains uncertain, however, if a short-term study abroad experience can also have a measurable effect on L2 development. With increasing numbers of U.S. undergraduates participating in short-term study abroad programs of eight weeks or fewer (Institute of International Education, 2013), it is essential to examine the linguistic gains students make during a short period abroad and what programs can do to maximize language learning opportunities. The present study focuses on three critical questions about a traditional short-term immersion experience: Do study abroad learners improve their speaking proficiency during short-term study abroad? How much do study abroad learners use the target language outside of class during the short-term study abroad experience? Does a relationship exist between target language use and speaking improvement?

### **Language Learning During Study Abroad**

Previous studies have concluded that study abroad has a positive impact on a wide range of L2 outcomes for students who spend a semester or more abroad. Second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have now begun to turn their attention to investigating L2 development during short-term study abroad programs (e.g., Allen & Herron, 2003; Allen, 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Cubillos, 2013; Cubillos, Chieffo, & Fan, 2008; Ingram, 2005; Martinsen, 2010; Reynolds-Case, 2013). Even though a few researchers have found that study abroad participants can make measurable target language improvement after a few weeks abroad (e.g., Allen & Herron, 2003; Cubillos, 2013; Cubillos, Chieffo, & Fan 2008; Martinsen, 2010; Reynolds-Case, 2013), others are skeptical about the linguistics benefits of short-term immersion programs (e.g., Davidson, 2007, 2010; Freed, 1990; Wilkinson, 1998, 2002). Reporting on data from a 25-year longitudinal investigation of L2 outcomes during study abroad in Russia, Davidson (2007) found that short-term study abroad had little measurable impact on L2 development. Allen and Herron (2003), however, reported speaking gains for study abroad learners in a six-week program in France. Cubillos, Chieffo, and Fan (2008) found that study abroad participants improved listening comprehension after a five-week program abroad, whereas Martinsen (2010) reported speaking gains for most study abroad participants during a short-term study abroad experience in Argentina. Reynolds-Case (2013) found that a group

of students in a four-week study abroad program in Spain made significant progress in their comprehension and production of region-specific linguistic forms.

In sum, although some researchers have questioned whether a short-term study abroad experience can contribute to improved L2 outcomes, others have found that students can make measurable gains during a short-term study abroad program.

### **Language Contact During Study Abroad**

An important factor affecting potential L2 development in both short- and long-term study abroad programs is the amount of exposure students have to the target language (Dufon & Churchill, 2006; Hernández, 2010b; Kinginger, 2009; Magnan & Back, 2007; Reynolds-Case, 2013). SLA research has often used a language contact profile (LCP; Freed, Dewey, & Segalowitz, 2004) to measure the relationship between amount of target language use outside of class and language learning outcomes during study abroad. At the same time, research with the LCP has yielded conflicting results (Back, 2013). Some studies have indicated that students with more frequent contact with the target language outside of class outperformed students with less contact (Díaz-Campos, 2004; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Hernández, 2010a, 2010b; Shively & Cohen, 2008). Using a modified version of the LCP, Hernández (2010b) discovered a relationship between target language use and speaking improvement for students who participated in a study abroad program in Spain. Shively and Cohen (2008) reported a significant relationship between target language use and more target-like pragmatic performance. Other studies have found no relationship between target language use and linguistic development (Magnan & Back, 2007; Martinsen, 2010; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Magnan and Back (2007) reported no relationship between target language use and speaking gains in French. After reviewing post-program questionnaires about the study abroad experience in France, the authors concluded that most of the study abroad participants did not invest in social relationships with native speakers of French. Instead, students spent much of their time with American classmates, and this deprived them of the language contact needed for linguistic improvement.

In addition to previous SLA research that has examined the quantitative relationship between amount of target language use and L2 outcomes, several qualitative studies have focused on describing the nature of social interaction during study abroad (e.g., Allen, 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Douglass, 2007; Kinginger, 2008; Wilkinson, 1998). In general, their findings suggest that language contact with native speakers during study abroad is often not so extensive as the FL profession once assumed. Kinginger (2008) found that students often had limited contact with native speakers despite their expressed intention to interact with them during study abroad. Some students discovered that because their own language competence in English was often in demand, native speakers responded to them in English rather than the target language.

While some study abroad participants reported using the target language with their host families to speak about a wide-range of topics, others did not (Kinging, 2008; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004; Rivers, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998, 2002). Although some study abroad students developed large social networks with native speakers, others spent most of their time with L1 peers or connected to home-based communication resources (Allen, 2010a; 2010b; Back, 2013; Hernández, 2010b; Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2008; Magnan & Back, 2007; Mendelson, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998, 2002). Notwithstanding these unsuccessful experiences, the important role of social interaction with native speakers is unequivocal. Hernández (2010b), for example, found that students with higher motivation had more contact with native speakers outside of class and increased language acquisition. Isabelli-García (2006) discovered that students who expanded their social networks with members of the target culture made significant gains in their L2 development.

Concerns about social interaction with native speakers during study abroad are even more striking with regard to the short-term immersion experience, where the short duration of the program and its traditional “sheltered” structure may often prevent students from adequate integration into host communities. Castañeda and Zirger (2011) identified the brief time that students had to develop social relationships with native speakers as an inherent limitation of short-term study abroad. Allen and Herron (2003) found that most of their study abroad participants did not invest enough time in establishing contacts with target culture members during a six-week program in France. Indeed, after the conclusion of the study abroad experience, 25% of their participants expressed disappointment about not having had significant interactions with native speakers of French during their time abroad. Mendelson (2004) reported that her study abroad learners in Spain spent more time with L1 classmates than with native Spanish speakers. Allen (2010a, 2010b) also found that some of her study abroad students did not take full advantage of potential language learning opportunities during study abroad, instead spending most of their time with American peers. When students did use the target language to interact with native speakers, it was often with their host families or during brief service encounter exchanges rather than in longer conversations with members of the host culture.

A review of the literature therefore suggests that despite the linguistic gains documented in some studies, it remains uncertain the extent to which short-term study abroad contributes to L2 development. Of similar concern is the fact that study abroad participants often report having had few opportunities for meaningful target language use with native speakers during their short-term study abroad experience. Some researchers suggest that students in traditional short-term study abroad often experience superficial cultural contact, insufficient language practice, and isolation from the target culture (Allen, 2010a, 2010b; Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Ingram, 2005; Kinginger, 2008). Davidson (2007) goes so far as to suggest that given the rigid structure of



traditional short-term study abroad, most students will not make significant linguistic gains during a short-term study abroad experience.

To better understand the effect of a traditional short-term study abroad on L2 development and to elucidate the relationship between target language use and L2 learning, the author posed three research questions as the focus of this investigation:

1. Do study abroad learners improve their speaking proficiency during a short-term study abroad experience?
2. How much do study abroad learners use the target language outside of class during a short-term study abroad experience?
3. Does a relationship exist between amount of target language use and speaking proficiency gains made during short-term study abroad?

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **The Study Abroad Participants**

The study abroad group consisted of 20 undergraduates (16 females and 4 males) participating in a four-week study abroad program in Madrid, Spain, in the summer of 2011. All were native speakers of English. Most of the study abroad participants had eight semesters of high school Spanish, and an additional four semesters of college Spanish. None of them had previous study abroad experience (see Appendix A for participant information).

### **The Study Abroad Program**

Study abroad participants attended a required two-hour pre-orientation and preparation program at their home institution prior to departure. During the first week of the program, the participants attended a second two-hour orientation at the host institution. This session was given in Spanish. The goal was to introduce students to life as an exchange student, and to language and cultural opportunities available through the program. At the conclusion of the orientation, students were given a placement examination that assigned them to an intermediate or advanced language sequence. Intermediate students took a combination of two three-credit courses: grammar review and practice; oral and written communication; or Spanish culture and civilization. All courses in the intermediate sequence were designed for FL learners. Advanced students chose two three-credit content-based courses in literature, linguistics, or culture. With the exception of the culture course, courses in the advanced sequence were designed for native speakers. Both intermediate and advanced students attended classes for a total of 20 hours per week. Classroom instruction was combined with a series of required academic-cultural excursions. The guide for these activities was a native Spanish instructor from the host institution. All excursions and activities were conducted in Spanish. All 20 of the study abroad participants lived with Spanish host families.

## Data Collection and Assessment

Assessment data were gathered through the use of three instruments: a background information questionnaire, a language contact profile (LCP), and a pre- and post-program simulated oral proficiency interview (SOPI).

The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Inc. version 21.0) to investigate the LCP, and the pretest and posttest SOPI. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to address the research questions. An alpha level of 0.05 was used for all tests.

### *Background Information Questionnaire*

A background questionnaire was administered to study abroad participants during their on-site orientation in Spain. The questionnaire was given in English. In the first part, students were asked to provide their age, gender, school and academic major, and previous Spanish coursework. In the second part, students described their cultural and linguistic goals for the study abroad experience and discussed what they intended to do to attain those goals.

### *Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview*

To measure speaking proficiency gains made during study abroad, one form of the SOPI was administered to all study abroad participants before their departure for Spain, and another form of the SOPI was administered again during the final week of the four-week program abroad.<sup>1</sup> The SOPI, available from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL; Stansfield, 1996), is a tape-mediated test of oral proficiency. The SOPI<sup>2</sup> requires the examinee to listen to 15 speaking tasks on an audio file, and record his or her responses to those tasks on a digital recorder or other recording device. A global rating is assigned to the speech sample by comparing the examinee's responses on the individual tasks with the criteria in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines (ACTFL, 1999). The speech functions and ACTFL levels of these tasks are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Format of Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview*

<i>Speech Function</i>	<i>ACTFL Level</i>
Warm-up	Novice-Intermediate
Asking Questions	Intermediate
Describing Activities	Intermediate
Giving Directions	Intermediate
Narrating in the Present Time	Advanced
Narrating in the Past Time	Advanced
Discussing Personal Activities	Intermediate
Explain a Process	Advanced
Stating Advantages and Disadvantages	Advanced
Supporting an Opinion	Superior
Hypothesizing on an Impersonal Topic	Superior
Speaking with Tact	Advanced
Speaking to Persuade Someone	Superior
Proposing and Defending a Course of Action	Superior
Giving a Talk	Superior
Giving Advice	Advanced

Using the *Multimedia Rater Training Program (MRTP): Spanish Version* (CAL, 2006), two trained raters scored all pre-program and post-program SOPI tests. The raters agreed on 33 out of the 40 scores. There was disagreement on seven of the tests. The second rater reviewed the individual task ratings on these tests against the criteria in the ACTFL Guidelines in order to understand the discrepancies between the two raters, and thereupon adjusted the scores. The percentage of absolute agreement was high (83%), and the correlation between the two raters was also high (0.94).

### *Language Contact Profile*

To measure language contact, a two-part modified LCP (Freed et al., 2004) was administered to students four times during the study abroad experience. The first part of the LCP (Appendix B) asked study abroad participants to estimate the number of hours per week they spent engaging in speaking, reading, writing, and listening activities in Spanish outside of class. Unlike the LCP used in most studies, which is administered at the end of the SA experience, the current LCP was given to study abroad participants at the end of each week of their time abroad with the intent of yielding a more accurate estimate of their language use. In the second part of the LCP (Appendix C), study abroad learners were asked to describe the nature of their specific interactions with native and non-native speakers.

## RESULTS

*Research Question 1: Do study abroad learners improve their speaking proficiency during a short-term study abroad experience?*

Pre- and post-program SOPI scores are shown in Table 2. Pre-program speaking scores ranged from Novice High to Advanced Low. Three (15%) out of the 20 SA students received a pre-program SOPI rating of Novice High, seven students (35%) a rating of Intermediate Low, six students (30%) a rating of Intermediate Mid, three students (15%) a rating of Intermediate High, and one student (5%) was rated Advanced Low.

Table 2  
*Pre-Program and Post-Program SOPI Scores*

<i>Student</i>	<i>Pre-Program SOPI</i>	<i>Post-Program SOPI</i>	<i>Gain</i>
1	Novice High	Intermediate Low	+1
2	Novice High	Intermediate Low	+1
3	Novice High	Intermediate Low	+1
4	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid	+1
5	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	+2
6	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	+2
7	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	+2
8	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	+2
9	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	+2
10	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	+2
11	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate Mid	+0
12	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate Mid	+0
13	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	+1
14	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	+1
15	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	+1
16	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	+1
17	Intermediate High	Intermediate High	+0
18	Intermediate High	Intermediate High	+0
19	Intermediate High	Advanced Low	+1
20	Advanced Low	Advanced Low	+0

Post-program speaking scores ranged from Intermediate Low to Advanced Low. Three students (15%) received a post-program rating of Intermediate Low, three students (15%) a rating of Intermediate Mid, 12 students (60%) a rating of Intermediate High, and two students (10%) were rated Advanced Low.

In comparing pre-and post-program scores, Table 2 shows that 15 of the 20 participants made a SOPI gain of at least +1 on the ACTFL scale during their time in Madrid. Six students made a gain of +2, and another nine students made a gain of +1. A total of five study abroad participants did not improve their scores during the study abroad program. In order to examine whether the

group's gain scores were significant, and to compare them to those in previous studies, the researcher adopted the conversion procedures used in Magnan and Back (2007) and Hernández (2010a, 2010b). Both authors used the following conversion scores: 3 = Novice High, 4 = Intermediate Low, 5 = Intermediate Mid, 6 = Intermediate High, and 7 = Advanced Low. A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test found that the difference between the group's pre- and post-program scores was significant:  $Z = -3.520$ ,  $p = 0.000$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), thus confirming that the study abroad group improved their speaking proficiency during the short-term program.

Although the difference between pre- and posttest SOPI scores was significant for the study abroad group, it is important to note that those differences were not consistent for all students. Students with lower pre-program scores made more substantial gains than students with higher pre-program scores (see Figure 1), a matter that will be further addressed in the discussion about research question one.

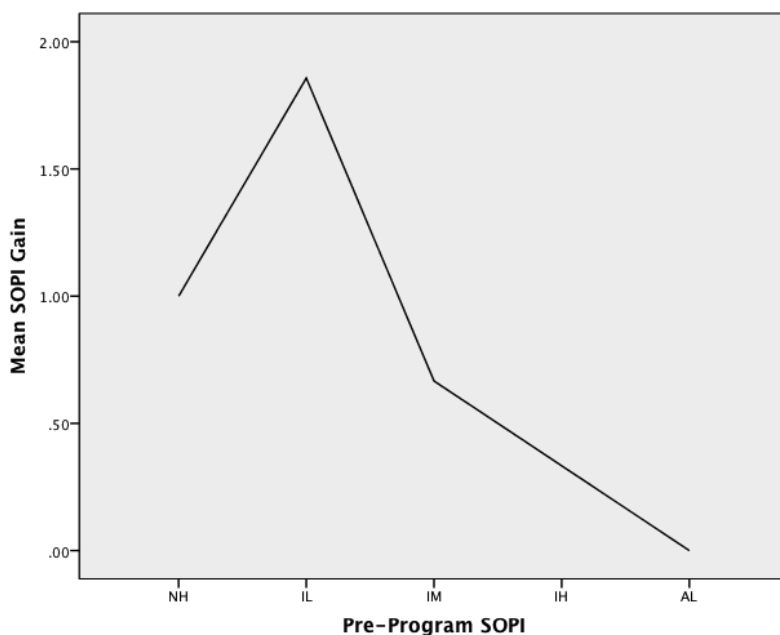


Figure 1  
*Relationship Between Pre-Program SOPI Scores and Mean SOPI Gains*

*Research Question 2: How much do study abroad learners use the target language outside of class during a short-term study abroad experience?*

A two-part LCP was administered to students four times during the study abroad experience. The first part of the LCP consisted of 10 items depicting the average number of hours per week students spent in speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities in Spanish outside of class.

Table 3  
*Language Contact Profile*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Speaking	11.46	3.03	6.13	16.75
Listening	11.51	2.69	7.63	20.63
Writing	6.82	1.99	2.88	11.25
Reading	7.47	1.42	4.75	10.00
Combined LCP Score	37.26	5.20	28.00	50.14

LCP mean scores represent the overall average number of hours of language use per week. For example, since the LCP was administered four times during the study abroad experience, the LCP mean score of 11.46 for speaking indicates that students engaged in speaking activities for an average of 11.46 hours per week during their time in Spain.

As Table 3 shows, students spent more hours per week engaged in speaking and listening activities than in writing and reading activities. Standard deviations were low compared to mean scores across all language use activities. In the case of the amount of speaking per week, for instance, the standard deviation of 3.03 hours, compared to the mean score of 11.46, indicated that there was not a significant amount of variation in how much time the group spent speaking outside of class. With regard to listening, the standard deviation of 2.69 hours per week was also low compared to the mean score of 11.51.

The second part of the LCP asked students to describe specific interactions with native and non-native speakers. Students reported that most of their target language contact with native speakers took place with members of their host families. In most cases, their interlocutor was their host mother. When asked if their host families contributed to their language and cultural learning, 14 of the 20 study abroad learners gave an affirmative response. Several participants observed that host mothers were more patient and understanding of their Spanish language skills than other native speakers. One student commented that she liked knowing that her host mother was available to speak with her at all times. Study abroad learners were also appreciative that host mothers often took on a teacher-like role by speaking slower with them, engaging them in discussion about language and culture, explaining the meaning of Spanish words or expressions, and providing them with feedback about their language use. When asked to describe their most memorable or successful exchanges, six students, all of whom made speaking gains of at least +1 on the ACTFL scale during the study abroad experience, cited long dinner conversations with their

host families about politics, current events in Spain and the United States, cultural differences between the two countries, sports, or American pop culture.

Although most of the students reported positive experiences with their host families, a few did not. For various reasons, some study abroad participants found it difficult to develop a strong relationship with their host families. One student, for example, lamented that it took her longer than she had expected to develop a sense of trust in conversing with her host mother. Four study abroad participants acknowledged that their own lack of self-confidence about their Spanish made it difficult to make meaningful contributions to dinner conversations. Five students identified the rigid time constraints of the study abroad program as an obstacle to allowing them to spend more time with their host families. One student, who did not improve her SOPI score, commented that her host mother seemed disinterested in her experience. She stated that her conversations with her host mother were often brief and superficial. Along the same lines, two students remarked that their host mothers became impatient when asked to elaborate or explain something again in Spanish.

In addition to interactions with host families, service encounters were also reported as an important source of language and cultural learning. Students mentioned using Spanish to go shopping at department stores and markets, order food and drinks in restaurants and bars, buy tickets at bus and train stations, purchase movie tickets, rent bikes, and obtain other goods and services. Five students identified service encounters as their most memorable or successful language exchanges during the study abroad experience. Furthermore, a number of participants took pride in describing how their L2 performance in these service encounter exchanges improved during their time abroad.

Notwithstanding the time spent with host families and during service encounters, students otherwise reported little contact with native speakers. Whereas on the pre-program questionnaire students expressed their intention to meet native speakers as a means of improving their Spanish, most found it difficult to do so once they were in Spain. In fact, 16 out of the 20 study abroad participants were dissatisfied with this aspect of their study abroad experience. Eight students were critical of the study abroad program structure, mentioning that their time spent together as a large American peer group interfered with meaningful interactions with native speakers. Four students made explicit reference to the program's frequent excursions and activities as contributing to their isolation from the host culture. Two students remarked that the goal of the program seemed more focused on seeing places and landmarks in Spain than on linguistic and cultural development. Three students expressed their frustration that during some service encounter exchanges native speakers would respond in English to questions posed to them in Spanish.

*Research Question 3: Does a relationship exist between amount of target language use and speaking proficiency gains made during short-term study abroad?*

Descriptive statistics were calculated in order to examine the relationship between target language use and SOPI gain scores. As shown in Table 4, mean LCP scores and standard deviations were similar for students regardless of their speaking gains.

Table 4  
*Relationship Between Language Contact Profile Scores and SOPI Gains*

<i>SOPI Gain Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>LCP Mean Score</i>	<i>LCP SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
0	5	36.55	5.10	28.00	39.88
1	9	36.76	6.28	30.75	50.14
2	6	38.61	3.97	31.76	42.51

A univariate ANOVA using a General Linear Model was performed to measure the relationship between the three groups of SOPI gain scores and the LCP scores. The ANOVA confirmed that the differences between these groups were not significant:  $F(2, 17) = 0.268, p = 0.768$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). These results affirm that there was no quantitative relationship between amount of target language use outside of class and speaking proficiency gains made during the short-term study abroad experience.

**DISCUSSION**

In response to the first research question, the results demonstrated that most of the study abroad participants improved their SOPI scores. Fifteen of the 20 students made a gain of at least +1 on the ACTFL scale. This means that this short-term study abroad did indeed have a positive, measurable effect on improving speaking proficiency. Furthermore, the results suggest an inverse relationship between pre-program speaking scores and SOPI gain scores. Students with pretest SOPI scores of Intermediate Low and Intermediate Mid made stronger gains than those students with pretest scores of Intermediate High and Advanced Low. Cubillos (2013) also found a clear inverse relationship between pre-program speaking scores and gains made during study abroad. Taken together, these findings suggest that it may be more difficult for more advanced students to make measurable speaking proficiency gains on the ACTFL scale during a short-term study abroad program than for novice and intermediate language users. Previous studies support this same conclusion (Davidson, 2010; Magnan & Back, 2007; Mendelson, 2004). Whereas some SLA researchers would suggest that the expanding nature of the ACTFL scale itself may not be a sensitive enough instrument to measure the linguistic progress of more advanced students during study abroad (e.g., Collentine, 2004; Lafford & Collentine, 2006), other researchers would argue that the structure of



the traditional short-term study abroad does not give the more advanced students sufficient opportunities to practice using ACTFL advanced and superior language functions. As other studies (e.g., Allen, 2010a, 2010b; Martinsen, 2010; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004) suggest, the conversations that students experience with host families and other native speakers are often short and formulaic, and might not help the development of advanced language proficiency.

As for the second research question, the results of the first part of the LCP indicated that students used the target language outside of class for an average of 37.26 hours per week. The low standard deviation of 5.20 compared to the mean score of 37.26 suggests that as a group there was not much variation in their target language use. The low means and standard deviations on the LCP might reflect an inherent limitation of the traditional short-term study abroad experience, which often promotes American group cohesion at the expense of linguistic immersion and interactions with native speakers. As seen in previous studies (e.g., Allen, 2010a, 2010b), the rigid structure of the traditional “sheltered” short-term study abroad program, where students often take 20 or more hours of coursework per week with American peers, form strong friendships with those same peers, socialize among themselves, and participate in frequent group academic-cultural excursions in a short, intense time period has the unintended consequence of encouraging students to remain in their L1 peer group without deeper integration and assimilation into the surrounding target language culture.

To corroborate whether extensive social interaction with native speakers took place during this short-term study abroad experience, the second part of the LCP asked students to describe their interactions with native and non-native speakers during their time abroad. As in previous studies, some students identified the time spent with their host families as an important contributor to their study abroad experience, whereas others did not find this to be the case (e.g., Allen, 2010a, 2010b; Hernández, 2010b; Kinginger, 2008; Magnan & Back, 2007; Wilkinson, 1998, 2002). Although some students reported positive experiences with their host families, it appears that the study abroad experience was too short for most to have developed strong, personal relationships with their host families. In some cases, host families might not have understood how to best contribute to their guest’s L2 development or did not see it as their explicit role to do so. In other cases, it could be that some learners did not invest enough time in nurturing relationships with members of their host families. Regardless, the intense nature of the study abroad program left little time for students to spend with their host families.

Students have reported infrequent contact with native speakers during their study abroad experience (e.g., Allen, 2010a, 2010b; Hernández, 2010b; Kinginger, 2008; Magnan & Back, 2007; Mendelson, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998, 2000). Findings from the second part of the LCP found that this was also true for this group of students. Aside from some time spent with their host families, students did not develop extensive social networks with other native speakers. It could be that the brief time abroad was not sufficient to foster friendships with

native speakers. Indeed, the fact that most of the study abroad learners reported spending most of their time with American study abroad peers calls into question once again the extent to which the structure of the traditional short-term study abroad program can support extensive social interaction with native speakers.

Students reported that service encounters were a valuable source of language learning. Kinginger (2009) argues that service encounters often stand out to learners as important language use activities because of their real life consequences. As in previous studies (Shively, 2013b), students reported a strong sense of empowerment after experiencing success obtaining products and services through their exchanges with native speakers. Shively (2013a, 2013b) noted that service encounters, although brief at times, provide study abroad learners with important opportunities for social interaction and target language use. In requiring students to engage in task-oriented L2 comprehension and production, service encounters encourage students to notice and process target language forms (Schmidt, 2001), test their hypotheses about the target language, and receive crucial feedback about their linguistic performance (Swain, 2000).

Regarding the third research question, no significant relationships were found between LCP scores and SOPI gains. Although this finding is consistent with several previous studies (e.g., Magnan & Back, 2007; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004), it also contradicts research that has identified a strong quantitative relationship between amount of target language exposure and L2 development (e.g., Hernández, 2010b). Further, the low mean scores of 11.46 hours per week for speaking and 11.51 hours per week for listening suggest that the study abroad group had little interactive contact with native speakers of Spanish. The second part of the LCP appears to substantiate this finding in that the students described spending most of their time with American peers, despite their stated intent on the pre-program background questionnaire to do their best to interact with native speakers at all times and forgo extensive contact with their peers. Whereas it is certain that some students did not invest sufficient time in social relationships with their host families and with other native speakers, the quantitative and qualitative data from the LCP support the contention that the structure of this short-term experience did not provide most students with frequent and targeted opportunities to practice using advanced- and superior-level language functions in conversations with native speakers.

## IMPLICATIONS

Programs can do much to improve L2 learning during short-term study abroad. Several possibilities such as the following seven are worth considering. First, the findings suggest that colleges and universities might consider a two-tiered approach to study abroad. Students with beginning and intermediate coursework could be advised to participate in a short-term program, whereas it might be advantageous for those students with more advanced coursework or more advanced language competence to participate in a semester or longer program. Although service encounter exchanges might be sufficient for lower-

level language users to make linguistic progress during a short-term immersion experience, more advanced students must be provided with opportunities for extensive interaction with native speakers.

Second, in order to make short-term study abroad more efficient, programs might begin with deliberate, planned pre-departure tasks and activities to support language and cultural learning. During pre-departure orientation, study abroad staff could collaborate with students to establish realistic expectations about their study abroad experience and language acquisition. As Allen (2010a) noted, forging friendships with target language peers is often more the exception than the rule. Students must understand this, and therefore invest more time in developing the appropriate contexts to interact with native speakers. Some might attend a cooking class, register for dance lessons, take part in a conversation exchange, participate in a book club, join a sports team, or undertake service-learning work for a non-profit group. To be sure, in short-term study abroad where students do not have the time to develop extensive social networks for themselves, study abroad staff should work with students to locate these opportunities and coordinate their participation in them.

Third, empowering students to make more informed choices is all the more essential in short-term study abroad where the structure and time limitations of the program often encourage students to remain in their American study abroad peer group rather than seek contact with native speakers. Programs should therefore support students in creating personalized goals for language and cultural learning and work with them to develop explicit strategies for how to attain those goals. While abroad, participants should be asked to engage in ongoing reflection about their experiences as a language learner. The study abroad director, for example, could provide feedback and assistance to students about their linguistic development, discuss and reformulate goal statements, and examine strategic approaches to language learning (Allen, 2013).

Fourth, students must also understand that language learning during study abroad is not automatic, and requires them to take a proactive role in their own learning. In order for study abroad participants to be able to do so, however, programs must support them with strategies for maximizing target language use and development before, during, and after the study abroad experience. It is here that the pre-departure orientation, whether delivered online or in a traditional classroom format, has the potential to take on new importance in contributing to L2 development during short-term study abroad. During pre-departure, study abroad staff should guide students in developing appropriate target language communicative and cultural strategies (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2006), and then provide them with reflection sessions during and after the study abroad experience to increase awareness of language learning and use (Kinging, 2008).

Fifth, given the importance of social interaction in L2 development and the inherent challenge of establishing social networks outside the home during traditional short-term study abroad, pre-departure tasks and activities should support students in developing relationships with native speakers prior, during, and after the experience abroad. During pre-departure, study abroad staff should

use telecollaboration to foster social interaction between study abroad students and native speakers in the host culture. During the study abroad experience, programs might provide students with structured opportunities (e.g., language exchange program, sports, clubs, social events) for students to meet age peers from the target culture (Hernández, 2010b; Shively, 2013a). After returning from study abroad, students could use social media to maintain their friendships with native speakers.

Acknowledging the fact that it can take significant time for students to develop a strong relationship with their host families, programs should also seek to increase communication between study abroad participants and their families prior to study abroad. Using email or video chat, students could discuss their likes and dislikes, hobbies, personal and academic interests, and goals for their time abroad. Students might then ask questions to become more acquainted with their host families and the target culture in general.

Sixth, because host families might be unaware of the importance of their role in the study abroad experience or how to best contribute to an L2 learner's language development, study abroad staff must create clear expectations and guidelines for host families working with students. Castañeda and Zirger (2011) discuss how study abroad programs can be more effective through better communication with and expectations for host families during pre-departure. Vande Berg et al. (2009) suggest that study abroad programs should give training to host families on how to engage students in meaningful conversational exchanges. Students, for their part, should be encouraged to take the initiative to seek as much interaction as possible with their host families. Meanwhile, in order to facilitate interaction, Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2010) suggest incorporating task-based assignments into the study abroad curriculum that would require students to gather information from their host families and then discuss their findings in class.

Seventh, better integration of the at home institution language curriculum with the overseas experience is required so that students can make significant and sustained L2 development during their time abroad. As one example of integrating the two educational experiences, language educators must devote significant attention to the development of advanced language competence throughout the undergraduate curriculum. Attention to this matter must begin with the at home language curriculum and continue with pre-departure so that study abroad participants can maximize their L2 learning once abroad. During the study abroad experience, for example, students should have frequent opportunities to practice using the advanced- and superior-level language functions identified in the ACTFL Guidelines (1999). In order to do so, some researchers suggest that programs incorporate targeted task-based language activities (Cadd, 2012) or service encounters (Shively, 2010) into the study abroad curriculum that require students to engage in conversations with native speakers. Study abroad staff could then engage students in guided reflection and feedback about their experiences.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are at least three limitations of this research. First, as a self-report instrument, one might question whether LCP scores were an accurate depiction of how much students used the target language outside of class during their study abroad experience. At the same time, however, it might be argued that the current modified LCP was more reliable than those versions used in previous studies (e.g., Hernández, 2010a, 2010b; Magnan & Back, 2007). The current LCP was given to students four times during the study abroad program with the expectation that the more frequent reflection about language use would produce richer and more reliable data. Second, there was no control group. To better understand the true impact of short-term study abroad, it would be valuable to compare the L2 development of a study abroad cohort with a group of at home students taking language courses during a summer program in the United States. Third, some SLA researchers have questioned whether the SOPI and other assessment instruments using the ACTFL Guidelines are sensitive enough to measure the speaking gains of more advanced students during study abroad (Collentine, 2004; Davidson, 2010; Di Silvio et al., 2014; Lafford & Collentine, 2006; Magnan & Back, 2007). In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic progress advanced language users make during study abroad, SLA researchers should consider expanding and triangulating their methods of data collection and assessment within the same research design.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has demonstrated that a traditional short-term study abroad experience can indeed have a measurable impact on L2 development. Findings indicated that most study abroad participants improved their speaking proficiency during the short-term study abroad experience. With regard to the LCP, the findings indicated that study abroad learners, however, did not engage in extensive social interaction. Further, whereas some students identified their time spent with host families as an important aspect of their study abroad experience, others did not find that this was true for them. Given that this was a traditional “sheltered” short-term study abroad program, in which students took 20 hours of coursework per week with American study abroad peers and participated in frequent group academic-cultural excursions, it is not surprising that students were by and large unsuccessful at developing strong relationships with their host families or accessing social networks in the surrounding target language culture.

Taken together, these findings suggest that although a traditional short-term study abroad experience can have a measurable effect on L2 development, programs should continue to consider how to best maximize the potential of the study abroad environment to improve L2 learning for all study abroad participants.

**NOTES**

1. The SOPI was administered after the conclusion of the spring semester, about two months prior to the first week of the study abroad program, so that all students would be available to take the tests at the same time. In addition, the researcher believed that having a longer time period between the pretest and posttest would limit potential practice effects. Although this lag might raise the question of whether or not the students had practiced their Spanish during the two-month period, this was not the case. In order to confirm that students had not used Spanish before arriving in Spain, the author included a specific question about Spanish language use during the two months before the program. Results affirmed that students did not use Spanish during the intervening period. In order to further minimize practice effects, two different versions of the SOPI were used for the pretest and posttest.
2. Stansfield and Kenyon (1992) reported high correlations between the SOPI and OPI. See also Kuo and Jiang (1997) for further discussion on the similarities and differences between the SOPI and OPI.

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## APPENDIX A

**Participant Information**

<i>Student</i>	<i>Previous Spanish</i>	<i>Pretest SOPI</i>	<i>Posttest SOPI</i>	<i>LCP</i>
1	College = 2 HS = 2	Novice High	Intermediate Low	30.75
2	College = 2 HS = 6	Novice High	Intermediate Low	30.76
3	College = 2 HS = 8	Novice High	Intermediate Low	39.88
4	College = 4 HS = 8	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid	34.75
5	College = 4 HS = 6	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	41.38
6	College = 4 HS = 8	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	42.51
7	College = 6 HS = 8	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	37.39
8	College = 3 HS = 8	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	31.76
9	College = 4 HS = 8	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	37.51
10	College = 4 HS = 6	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	41.13
11	College = 1 HS = 2	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate Mid	28.00
12	College = 3 HS = 8	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate Mid	35.63
13	College = 4 HS = 6	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	33.51
14	College = 4 HS = 8	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	36.38
15	College = 4 HS = 8	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	41.75
16	College = 3 HS = 8	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	50.14
17	College = 3 HS = 8	Intermediate High	Intermediate High	39.50
18	College = 4 HS = 8	Intermediate High	Intermediate High	39.88
19	College = 4 HS = 8	Intermediate High	Advanced Low	32.88
20	College = 4 HS = 8	Advanced Low	Advanced Low	39.76

**APPENDIX B****Language Contact Profile Part 1**

1. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week speaking in Spanish outside of class with native or fluent Spanish speakers.
2. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week reading Spanish language newspapers outside of class.
3. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week reading novels, books, or textbooks in Spanish outside of class.
4. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week reading Spanish language magazines outside of class.
5. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week reading e-mail in Spanish or in reading other Internet websites in Spanish outside of class.
6. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week listening to Spanish language television and radio outside of class.
7. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week listening to Spanish language movies or videos outside of class.
8. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week listening to Spanish language music outside of class.
9. Indicate the average number of hours you spent this week writing homework assignments in Spanish outside of class.
10. Indicate the average number of hours you spent writing e-mail, using Facebook, or doing other Internet activities in Spanish outside of class.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Sample Questions from Language Contact Profile Part 2**

1. With whom did you spend your time this week? Did you speak Spanish or English during your interactions with them? Give specific examples and explain as best as you can.
2. Did your host family contribute to your language and cultural learning during your study abroad experience? Give specific examples and explain as best as you can.
3. Are you satisfied with the amount of Spanish you spoke with native speakers during your study abroad experience? Give specific examples and explain as best as you can.
4. Did you learn as much Spanish during your study abroad experience as you thought you would? Give specific examples and explain as best as you can.
5. If you are not satisfied with your language learning during study abroad, what challenges or obstacles did you encounter that made it difficult for you to attain your goals?

**AUTHOR**

***Todd A. Hernández***, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Spanish, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Marquette University.

# A Comparison of Two Approaches for Assessing L2 Writing: Process-based and Impromptu Timed Writing Exams

VIRGINIA DAVID

*Western Michigan University*

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*This study compares learners' writing in an impromptu, timed writing (ITW) exam and in a process-based, timed writing (PBTW) exam to investigate the differences between these two types of assessments. A secondary objective of this study is to examine the test takers' attitudes towards the two exams. Forty participants taking ESL writing classes volunteered to participate. They had 45 minutes to write an ITW essay. Each also wrote a PBTW exam, with the order of the tests counterbalanced. For the PBTW exam, participants learned about the topic through videos, articles, and discussions; they planned their writing and wrote for 45 minutes. The participants finished by responding to a questionnaire about their attitudes toward the tests. The results revealed only a moderate correlation between the scores on the two exams ( $r = .417$ ): Most participants scored higher on the PBTW exam. The participants wrote significantly longer essays and used more verb phrases per T-unit on the PBTW exam. Sixty-two percent of the participants thought that the PBTW exam was easier for a variety of reasons—they received background information about the topic before they wrote, they discussed their ideas in groups, and they had time to plan their essays. Limitations of the study and implications for ESL programs and construct validity issues are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *academic writing, L2 writing, timed writing, process-based writing, writing exams*

## INTRODUCTION

Standardized tests and ESL programs often use impromptu timed-writing (ITW) exams both to place students and to test learners' progress. These exams are efficient to administer and are cost-effective for institutions. White (1995) argues that, although impromptu timed-writing exams have problems, they can at times generate the best essays, and they provide teachers with much of what they need to evaluate students' writing skills. In addition, there is assurance that the student has not copied from other sources or received help on the text. However, as Lee (2006) explains, "timed single-draft essay tests where students are given 30–50 minutes to write on an assigned topic without an opportunity to reflect, interact with others, and revise do not provide an authentic writing environment" (p. 308). Academic writing is a *process* that is integrated with reading, discussing, planning, editing, and revising. ITW exams do not allow students to go through each of these steps. Another possible disadvantage of timed writing exams is the informal nature of the prompts, which, for the most part, require students to write about personal experiences. These types of prompts are more appropriate for ITW exams because they are provided with no outside sources for students to draw upon as they write. However, these types of essays may not be the most informative regarding students' academic writing skills, because by nature, reflections on personal experiences generate informal, non-academic writing.

This study compares students' scores and writing in an ITW exam and in a process-based timed writing (PBTW) exam and seeks to explore the differences between these two types of exam in detail. An additional goal of this study is to uncover students' attitudes toward the two exams, an area of inquiry yet to be investigated in-depth. First, concerns about ITW exams and a review of the literature will be provided. Next, the research questions and methodology used in this study will be outlined. Then the results of each research question will be presented and discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study and implications for ESL academic writing classes will be reviewed.

## CONCERNS ABOUT IMPROMPTU TIMED WRITING EXAMS

The topics of ITW exams are often general and may include slightly controversial issues, e.g., health or lifestyle choices, or reflections of personal experiences. Many ITW tests provide no materials from which learners may draw and are thus called impromptu tests. Learners must draw solely on their background knowledge of the topic in these timed-impromptu or bare-prompt writing tasks (He & Shi, 2012). Some ITW exams, such as the integrated writing task in the *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)*, provide learners with background readings before engaging in writing (referred to as reading-to-write tasks) or listening activities that are combined with readings (referred to as integrated tasks). Jennings, Fox, Graves, and Shohamy (1999) claim that these integrated language tests may be more valid than ITW exams because such tests are more similar to other academic tasks done by college students. Other major



problems that researchers claim ITW exams have are outlined below.

### **Lack of Topic Familiarity**

One of the main issues that concern researchers about ITW exams is that students who take such tests may have varying levels of familiarity with the topic (or topics) about which they are asked to write. Researchers have long noted that it is difficult to find individual topics with which international students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds are familiar (i.e., Haswell, 1998). Beyond that, studies have shown that when students are asked to write about an unfamiliar topic, their test scores often fail to reflect their underlying writing skills (He & Shi, 2012; Hamp-Lyons & Kroll, 1996; Tedick, 1990).

### **Lack of Planning Time and Its Negative Effects on Writing**

Most writing teachers value the teaching of writing as a *process*, and with an ITW exam, there is a greatly truncated process. One of the first steps to writing is planning. Of the four studies investigating the issue of planning in writing (Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Kellogg, 1988; Shi, 1998; Worden, 2009), three have found a positive relationship between time spent planning and the quality of essays (Kellogg, 1988; Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Worden, 2009). These studies have shown that planning can result in longer, more complex, and higher quality essays.

### **Lack of Authenticity**

Another problem with ITW exams is their lack of authenticity. Horowitz (1986) finds that the majority of writing assignments given to college students involves incorporating sources—summary/critique, annotated bibliography, research projects, etc. Weigle (2002) argues that ITW exams are inauthentic in English for academic purpose courses for four reasons: writing in the academic context 1) generally requires students to incorporate outside sources, such as course readings and lectures; 2) is most often not timed (e.g. students write papers outside of class); 3) the person who reads the students' papers is not a randomly assigned rater, but rather the students' instructor; and 4) writing is assessed more heavily on content and not language. Integrated writing tasks mirror what ESL students must do in college level classes more closely than ITW exams. Researchers have found some benefits for these types of writing tasks, which will be outlined below.

### **The Benefits of Integrated Writing Tasks**

Many exams incorporate reading and listening in writing tasks. For example, the writing portion of the TOEFL exam now has a reading-to-write task along with an independent writing task. Many researchers have examined the differences between integrated and independent writing tasks (Cumming,

Kantor, Baba, Erdosy, Eouanzoui, & James, 2005; Esmaeili, 2002; Gebril, 2009; Lee, 2006; Weigle, 2004). The results of these studies have revealed that students can write longer, more lexically complex, and sometimes even more grammatically accurate essays in integrated tasks, which lead to higher scores.

As discussed earlier, if a learner lacks the background knowledge to perform a specific writing task, integrated tasks may partially solve the problem by providing the learner with background information that can be used in writing. A more process-based approach to testing writing may allow learners to share ideas in groups and possibly gain more background knowledge through group discussions. Lee's study (2006) includes group discussions in addition to reading and listening passages and time for planning. Because planning can have a positive effect on production, it is a factor that needs to be considered when students are asked to complete integrated tasks.

One important point to consider about integrated versus ITW exams is whether test-takers perform similarly on both exam types. In other words, is an ITW exam a good predictor of how a student will perform on a longer, integrated exam? If test-takers' scores on both exams correlate strongly, then why not use the ITW exam, which is more cost-effective and faster to administer? However, if the scores do not have a strong correlation, then it is probably the case that the two exams are measuring different skills, as Cumming et al. (2005) suggested.

## THE STUDY

Most American universities that have ESL programs spend a considerable amount of money, time, and resources on writing placement exams; writing exams are also used to evaluate students' progress in a writing course. Regardless of the purpose of the writing exam, there is no denying that they are an important tool for evaluating L2 writing and are of extreme importance for both universities and students. A more process-based approach to evaluating writing is more appropriate if incoming students could be placed higher or exempted from writing classes when they were given background information about the topic and time to plan. The goal of this study, then, is to find out: 1) whether there is a correlation between the scores that ESL learners get in an ITW exam and a PBTW exam; 2) if there are any differences between the essays that the learners write; and 3) what students think about the two exams. The research questions that drive the study are as follows:

1. Do test takers' scores from an ITW exam correlate with their scores on a PBTW exam?
2. How do the students' writings across exams differ in terms of:
  - a. lexical complexity?
  - b. syntactic complexity?
  - c. fluency?
3. What are students' attitudes toward the two types of writing exams?

## Participants

The participants of this study were 40 ESL learners enrolled in an academic writing course at a large Midwestern university in the United States. The course met six hours a week and focused on grammar and writing. Table 1 provides details (age, length of residence in the United States, and years of receiving formal English instruction) about the participants.

Table 1  
*Participants*

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Age</i>	<i>Mean LoR*</i>	<i>Mean FI**</i>
Chinese	34	19	0.9	7.7
South Korean	3	27	1.6	6
Saudi Arabian	2	21	0.79	1.25
Taiwanese	1	19	3	-
Total	40	20	1	7

\* LoR = length of residence (in years)

\*\* FI = formal instruction (in years)

## Procedure

### *ITW Exam*

The ITW exam included two different prompts. This study intended to mimic the real test that the ESL students at this university take—the students chose one prompt about which to write for the impromptu timed writing exam. The prompts that the participants in this study could choose from are in Appendix A.

### *PBTW Exam*

The PBTW exam was administered within the same week of the ITW exam. The prompt that they had to answer is in Appendix A. All of the materials had been piloted before this study was conducted. Table 2 describes the procedures followed for the PBTW exam.

Table 2  
*Procedures for the PBTW Exam*

<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Procedures</i>
5 minutes	Introducing the topic	1) The proctor introduced the topic by asking students the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is obesity?</li><li>• What causes obesity?</li><li>• What are the consequences of obesity?</li><li>• How can we encourage people to eat healthier foods?</li></ul>
10 minutes	Videos	2) The proctor briefly explained what the videos were about and played them for students. The students were encouraged to take notes while watching the videos.
20 minutes	Readings	3) The students read the articles.
10 minutes	Group discussion	4) The proctor read the essay prompt aloud to students. 5) The students discussed the essay prompt in groups of four.
10 minutes	Planning	6) Students planned the essay.
45 minutes	Writing	7) Students wrote their essays.

**Rating**

Two experienced teachers rated the students’ essays using a holistic rubric on a scale of 0 to 4. The Cronbach’s alpha inter-rater reliability coefficient obtained was .68.

**Post-writing Questionnaire**

The students answered a post-writing questionnaire after they took the ITW exam and the PBTW exam. The questionnaire contained both multiple-choice and short-answer questions about the participants’ opinions about the tests.

## RESULTS

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the two writing exams.

Table 3  
*Descriptive Statistics of ITW and PBTW*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
ITW exam	40	0	3.5	2	.51
PBTW exam	40	1	3.5	2.25	.56

The findings for each of the three research questions will be presented next.

*RQ1: How do scores in the ITW exam correlate with the scores in the PBTW exam?*

To determine how the scores in the two exams are related, a Pearson correlation was performed. The Pearson correlation between the two exams is moderate and not significant, with  $r = .417$ ,  $p = .008$  ( $N=40$ ). These results indicate that the scores in the two different types of writing exams do not correlate strongly, and so we cannot conclude that the two tests are measuring the same construct. In addition, Table 3 shows that the mean scores for the PBTW exam are only slightly higher than the mean scores for the ITW exam. A  $t$  test shows that the participants' scores in the two exams do not differ significantly ( $t = 1.92$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $d = .34$ ,  $r = .17$ ). A closer look at individual participants reveals that 55% of the participants received a higher grade on the PBTW exam; 50% of these participants received a score 0.75 or higher than their scores on the ITW exam. Twenty percent of the participants received the same scores for both exams.

*RQ2: How does the students' writing differ in the two exams?*

**a. Lexical complexity.** RANGE, developed by Heatley, Nation, and Coxhead (2002), compares the essays with three different word lists. In a study testing the effectiveness of RANGE, Chung (2003) concludes that the program is "a reasonably simple, valid and practical way of identifying terms using word types which is reliable and easy to replicate" (p. 242). The first list is of the 1,000 most common words (Range 1), the second is the 1,000 second most common words (Range 2), and the third is a list of university words (Range 3).

After obtaining the results for the three lists, a  $t$  test was performed in SPSS to determine if there were any significant differences between the two essays. Table 4 shows the results of the  $t$  tests. Two different types of effect sizes are reported for each statistical analysis, as Larson-Hall (2010) suggests

researchers can do. Cohen's  $d$  is used with  $t$  tests. According to Larson-Hall (2010), Cohen's  $d$  "has no range limits and measures differences in terms of standard deviations" (p. 110). In other words, Cohen's  $d$  describes the difference between the two means. The  $r$  family of effect sizes shows the variation that can be found between two variables (Larson-Hall, 2010). Larson-Hall provides an example to explain  $r$ : "the more closely the variables are related the higher the effect size" (2010, p. 110).

Table 4  
*Lexical Complexity Measures*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Effect size</i>
<u>Range 1</u>					
TW	87.17	4.55	.71		$d = .21$
PBTW	86.37	2.6	.41	.268	$r = .11$
<u>Range 2</u>					
TW	6.78	3.17	.49		$d = .62$
PBTW	5.17	1.83	.28	.001	$r = .30$
<u>Range 3</u>					
TW	1.14	1.02	.16		$d = -.09$
PBTW	1.22	.66	.10	.700	$r = -.04$

The  $t$  test revealed a significant difference in the use of the 1,000 second most common words and a medium effect size. The participants used more of those words in the ITW exam than in the PBTW exam. There were no significant differences in the use of the 1,000 most common words or university words.

**b. Syntactic complexity.** All of the essays were computed into the L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer, developed by Lu (2010). The L2 Syntactic Analyzer generated 14 syntactic complexity measures: mean length of sentence, mean length of T-unit<sup>1</sup>, mean length of clause, clause per sentence, verb phrase per T-unit, clause per T-unit, dependent clause per clause, dependent clause per T-unit, T-unit per sentence, complex T-unit ratio, coordinate phrase per T-unit, coordinate phrase per clause, complex nominal per T-unit, and complex nominal per clause. Once again,  $t$  tests were performed to determine whether there were any significant differences between the two essays. The  $t$ -test results revealed significant differences in the use of verb phrases per T-unit (VP/T) and coordinate phrases per clause (CP/C), again with medium effect sizes. The results for these two measures are displayed in Table 5. The other measures of syntactic complexity revealed no significant differences. The participants used more verb phrases per T-unit in the PBTW exam. In contrast, they used more coordinate phrases per clause in the ITW exam.

Table 5  
*Syntactic Complexity Measures*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Effect size</i>
<u>VP/T</u>					
TW	2.19	.47	.07		$d = -.60$
PBTW	2.48	.49	.07	.003	$r = -.29$
<u>CP/C</u>					
TW	.24	.19	.03		$d = .32$
PBTW	.19	.11	.01	.034	$r = .16$

**c. Fluency.** In this study, fluency was operationalized as the total number of words per essay, following measures of fluency used by Johnson, Mercado, and Acevedo (2012), Cumming et al. (2005), and Kellogg (1988). A  $t$  test was performed to discover if there was a significant difference in fluency between the two essays. The  $t$  test revealed that the participants wrote significantly longer essays in the PBTW exam (Table 6). Once again, the effect size for this relationship was medium.

Table 6  
*Fluency Measures*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Effect size</i>
TW	305.05	107.10	16.93		$d = -.58$
PBTW	368.33	108.41	17.14	.000	$r = -.28$

*RQ3: What are students' attitudes toward the two different types of writing exams?*

The first question in the post-writing questionnaire asked which exam the participants thought was easier. More than 62% of the participants thought that the PBTW exam was easier, 15% thought that the ITW exam was easier, and 22% felt that the two exams were equally difficult or easy. When asked which exam the participants preferred, 70% preferred the PBTW exam and 30% preferred the ITW exam. The participants were then asked to explain why they thought one exam was easier and why they preferred taking one exam over the other. The following five themes emerged from students' answers: classmates' ideas, time to plan, ideas/facts from sources, difficulties with the videos and articles, and test preparation. Table 7 summarizes student opinions on each of these themes.

Table 7

*Students' Attitude toward the ITW Exam and the PBTW Exam*

<i>Themes</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Quotes from Students</i>
Classmates' ideas	6	Participant 001: "I could see other people's ideas and then develop my idea." Participant 029: "My group members gave me some ideas." Participant 046: "Through the discussion (...) I can have more ideas."
Time to plan	8	Participant 002: "We did brainstorming before we started writing." Participant 024: "I had more time to think about the topic." Participant 033: "I had more time to brainstorm and arrange my essay" Participant 035: "I had enough time to consider what I wanted to write."
Ideas/facts from sources	18	Participant 018: "The videos and articles can inspire me." Participant 022: "[The PBTW exam] provided a lot of sources to use." Participant 028: "I could use ideas from the videos and articles." Participant 045: "The videos and articles gave me ideas."
Difficulties with the videos and articles	6	Participant 060: "I don't like the video." Participant 062: "The video opposed my idea." Participant 005: "I could not fully understand the videos." Participant 013: "It's difficult to collect ideas from the video." Participant 078: "[In the ITW exam] you don't have to think about resources and viewpoints, which takes a lot of time." Participant 068: "I needed more time to decide which information should be added in the essay."
Test preparation	2	Participant 007: "It [the ITW exam] prepared me for the real test." Participant 068: "It [the ITW exam] was better practice."



## DISCUSSION

ITW exams are widely used in ESL programs for placement and evaluation purposes. According to the research, this procedure may not be effective. For example, researchers know that the amount of time for planning and topic familiarity influences the quality of learners' essays (Ellis & Yuan, 2004; He & Shi, 2012; Tedick, 1990), and conclude that integrated writing tasks provide more directed and structured planning and may counteract the effects of task familiarity (Cumming et al., 2005). Prior studies have also indicated that learners score higher in integrated writing tasks than in independent writing tasks (Gebriel, 2009; Weigle, 2004). Yet ITW exams are still administered because they are less time consuming to administer, easier to construct, and generally assure that students are doing their own writing. Nevertheless, integrated writing exams are known to be much more in tune with actual academic classroom activity, in which all four skills are integrated (Hamp-Lyons, 1996). In a special issue of *Language Assessment Quarterly* devoted to integrated writing tasks, Cumming (2013, p. 2) outlines five promises of such tasks:

- “[they] provide realistic, challenging literacy activities;
- engage test takers in writing that is responsible to specific content;
- counter test method or practice effects associated with conventional item types;
- evaluate language abilities consistent with construction-integration or multiliteracies models of literacy; and
- offer diagnostic value for instruction or self-assessment.”

Despite the fact that some programs use ITW tests so that students cannot get outside help, test takers often memorize entire essays on various topics and simply regurgitate them when taking tests. He and Shi (2008), for example, found that most students in a group of 16 Chinese ESL students in Canada succeeded in a high-stakes writing test through memorization. If writing tasks are based on reading and/or listening passages, and if students are required to incorporate them in their essays, there will be less room for more “canned” or “generic” essays.

In this study, the correlation between the scores that the participants received in the ITW exam and in the PBTW exam was not significant. This supports, as Educational Testing Service (ETS) research has concluded (Cumming et al., 2005), that the ITW and PBTW exams measure separate skills. The question remains: is one set of skills more representative of the academic writing process? The answer is most likely yes, and the PBTW is most likely the better representative, as has been concluded by other researchers (Cumming et al., 2005; Gebriel 2009; Weigle, 2004).

The mean score of the PBTW exam in this study was slightly higher than the mean score for the ITW exam; more than half of the participants scored higher in the PBTW. In addition, the participants wrote significantly longer essays. Research suggests that longer essays are correlated with higher test

scores (Guo, Crossley & McNamara, 2013). If students do not know enough about a topic, they will not be able to include supporting details for their main ideas. The participants in this study had plenty of material from which to draw background information and supporting details to use in their writing; they heard other learners' ideas about the topic that they could incorporate in their essays; and, the planning time allowed them to organize their thoughts so as to write more effectively. The results are similar to those of other researches that indicate that learners write more effectively when they are familiar with the topic they are writing about (He & Shi, 2012; Jennings et al., 1999; Tedick, 1990), when they have planning time (Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Kelllogg, 1988), when they perform integrated writing tasks (Esmaeli, 2002; Lee, 2006), and when they have background knowledge on the topic of their writing (Tedick, 1990; Jennings et al., 1999; He & Shi, 2012). The findings of this study suggest that the PBTW exam may be a better indication of students' academic skills.

After a more detailed analysis of the students' writing in the two exams, four main differences stand out. First, the participants used more uncommon words in the ITW exam. One reason for this could be related to the topics given to the participants. Many of the participants chose to write about international rules to govern the distribution of resources in the ITW exam. This topic might have generated more unmarked lexical entries than the topic of obesity for the PBTW exam. Second, participants used significantly more verb phrases in the PBTW exam, which could be partially attributed to their use of quotations from the articles. Third, learners used more coordinate phrases in the ITW exam, which could indicate their writings had many fragments and run-on sentences. Finally, the students wrote significantly longer essays in the PBTW exam. One could argue that because of the articles they read, the videos they watched, and the discussions they participated in, students had more material to write about. To better understand the test results, it is important to turn to the post-writing questionnaire.

The participants' responses in the post-writing questionnaire demonstrate that they not only thought the PBTW exam was easier, but that they also preferred it to the ITW exam. Among the reasons for this, 18 students noted that the videos and articles gave them ideas that they could use in their writing. Other participants (n=8) indicated that their preference for the PBTW exam was due to the time that they had to plan their essay, which in turn helped them write better. Another positive element of the PBTW exam, according to six participants, was the exchange of ideas during group discussions. Some noted that they benefited from the discussion by hearing ideas presented that they themselves did not think of. Two students noted that they liked the PBTW exam because it better prepared them for the ITW exam they had to take as part of their Academic Writing class.

On the other hand, six participants noted that they had difficulties understanding the videos and readings. There is no denying that the participants needed other skills, such as reading and listening, in addition to writing skills to perform effectively on the PBTW exam. These skills are often taught with writing in communicate classrooms. An added benefit of the PBTW exam might

be the positive “washback” that it potentially has in ESL classrooms. Messick (1996) explains that washback “refers to the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things that they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning” (p. 241). Some writing teachers may not focus enough on reading, even though reading and writing are interconnected. Integrated writing tests may encourage writing teachers to focus more on skills in addition to writing, which is a common teaching practice in communicative language classrooms. The PBTW exam measures learners’ academic writing skills, but as part of the exam, students are additionally tested in reading and listening skills, indicating a difference in test construct. Cumming (2013) notes that this is one of the dangers of using integrated writing tasks. “They [integrated writing tasks] confound the measurement of writing abilities with abilities to comprehend source materials” (p. 3).

The other issue that students had with the videos and readings was an inability to incorporate what they had learned into their essays. In fact, some of the participants chose not to incorporate this material at all. Because the data was collected at the beginning of the academic semester, many students had not yet received any classroom training on how to incorporate sources in their writing. Many teachers in the academic writing classes in which the data were collected mentioned that they valued and taught these three “bonus” skills (reading, listening, and incorporating sources), which were tested in the PBTW exam. Indeed, one could argue that incorporating sources is an academic writing skill that university students need, so it is a highly valued part of the academic writing construct, i.e., a skill that needs to be tested to provide evidence of academic-writing preparedness. A further argument is that most teachers spend an enormous amount of time preparing students for writing tasks like those found in the PBTW exam. In this context, then, the ITW exam itself has a construct validity issue because it does not measure what most students learn in class. There are few writing tasks that the students encounter in their academic lives that require writing on a random topic.

Washback is a crucial issue to be discussed in any type of writing exam. ITW exams could negatively impact the way writing is taught in the classroom. Even though most teachers believe in teaching writing as a process, they may have to prepare their students to take ITW exams, which is counter to the educational process they are trying to promote. Therefore, teachers may end up spending precious class time teaching test-taking strategies instead of focusing on the process of writing.

## **LIMITATIONS**

One limitation of this study is the use of a holistic rubric to rate the students’ essays. The reason a holistic rubric was chosen was to ensure the ecologic validity of the study. The rubric used in this study is the same instrument used by teachers at the university when they score the ITW exams that the ELS students are required to take. The results might have been different

if an analytic rubric had been used, which would allow for more variance of scores, depending on the category one took into account during rating.

For future reference, it is also important to reflect on the fact that for the ITW exam, the students had two prompts from which to choose, whereas the PBTW exam offered only one. One problem with the data collection for this study is the effort to mimic a high-stakes exam; participants in the study knew that the scores they received in the two tests would not affect their grades.

In addition, the population in this study does not reflect the population of every ESL program in the country, which means that the results cannot be generalized for all ESL students. Moreover, it was difficult to obtain an accurate measure of proficiency for the students who participated in the study. The participants had varying lengths of residence and years of formal instruction, an indicator that they did not have the same level of proficiency. TOEFL scores were not obtained because many participants had taken the test months prior to data collection.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study and the results of other studies suggest that learners do better when they have planning time (Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Kellogg, 1988), when they complete integrated tasks (Esmaeli, 2002; Lee, 2006), and when they are familiar with the topic of the essay that they are writing (He & Shi, 2012; Jennings et al., 1999; Tedick, 1990). Given the results of these studies, test administrators may consider substituting ITW exams for PBTW exams. Not only did students write better essays in this study, but they also preferred the PBTW exam because they felt they could write better.

The PBTW exam used in this study is also more in tune with the methodology used by writing teachers in their classes. It is difficult to teach writing without reading, listening, or speaking in communicative language classes. This is one reason why PBTW exams are more appropriate for ESL academic writing classes. Moreover, implementing PBTW exams can have a positive washback in the language classroom. Teachers will value a more integrated approach to teaching a second or foreign language if tasks are integrated. This will be particularly important for foreign language classrooms because of the lack of emphasis given to writing in such contexts.

In addition, because a large portion of ESL students continue their academic studies in the United States after leaving the ESL program, it is crucial that they know how to incorporate sources in their writings. The results of this study support Black (1992), who states that "a single-sitting, impromptu essay exam neither tests the skills these students have been taught nor supports the connections between learning and writing that a process approach assumes" (p. 9).

The results of this study indicate that PBTW exams may be a better way to evaluate L2 writing, at least in academic writing classes. ITW exams do not always allow students to use background knowledge, or allow them enough time to plan what they are going to write. If writing teachers value the teaching

of writing as a process, then the way they test writing skills should mirror what is done in the classroom (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). ITW exams may be an appropriate tool to test writing at lower levels of proficiency, but the types of prompts used to evaluate *academic* writing may not yield academic essays. The writing that most international students do in upper-level writing classes, and in other academic classes, usually requires them to incorporate sources, which is another reason to include integrated tasks when evaluating their writing performance.

## NOTE

1. T-unit refers to the minimal terminable unit of language, or the smallest group of words that can be considered a grammatical sentence. The length of a T-unit is usually regarded as an index of syntactic complexity.

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## APPENDIX A

### Prompts for ITW Exams

1. With globalization, the economies of nations are increasingly dependent on one another. Given likely shortages of resources in the future, should there be international rules governing the distribution of food, water, and fuel? Why or why not? Be sure to fully develop your essay by including clear explanations, logical supporting ideas, relevant examples and specific details.
2. You are the assistant to a brilliant scientist who invented a time-travel machine. He has asked you to go backwards in time 50 years or more and return with a prominent person from history. When you return, you would take this person to your home city and to MSU. Who would you choose, and what would you show that person about our modern world? Why? Be sure to fully develop your essay by including clear explanations, logical supporting ideas, relevant examples and specific details.

### Prompts for PBTW Exams

Obesity is a healthcare concern worldwide, but especially in the United States. Two solutions being proposed are: 1) to tax junk food to discourage people from buying it; and 2) to ban the sales of large sodas in some establishments. Do you believe these solutions would encourage people to reduce their consumption of unhealthy foods? Propose other solutions to the problem in the United States. Be sure to fully develop your essay by including logical supporting ideas, clear explanations, relevant examples and specific details. *Use ideas from the videos we watched and the articles we read about the topic. Do not forget to give credit to the authors.*

## AUTHOR

*Virginia David, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education and Literacy Studies, Western Michigan University.*



## REVIEW

***Postsecondary Foreign Language Teaching in the United States.*** By Janet Swaffar and Per Urland (eds.). Springer, New York, 2014, 225 pp. ISBN 1572-0292 (hbk), ISBN 978-94-017-9159-5 (eBook)

Reviewed by MURRAY R THOMAS  
*University of California, Santa Barbara (Emerita)*

This book is Volume 21 of the Springer series titled *Educational Linguistics* that is “dedicated to innovative studies of language use and language learning”. It consists of ten chapters, each based on a lecture delivered by its author during a 2007 symposium sponsored by the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas, Austin. The two editors were professors in that department. The other eight authors who contributed chapters were from universities in the United States. They represented departments of Western-European languages—seven from departments of Germanic studies and one from a department of French and Italian.

Its intent, as described by Per Urland in the opening chapter, is not to “make suggestions for particular curricular innovations” but, to present “a compendium of offerings that explore the mechanisms of language, literacy, and content acquisition” (p.1). Thus, readers of *Postsecondary Foreign Language Teaching* are informed at the outset that they can expect a potpourri of chapters loosely linked together by proposals about foreign-language curricula.

The focus of individual chapters, and the diversity of curricular matters addressed, can be suggested by the following five examples:

Coeditor Janet Swaffar in Chapter 2 traces divergent paths that foreign-language-teaching in the United States has taken since radical changes in such instruction were introduced during World War II. From her “thumbnail history” she draws the conclusion that the niceties of formal grammar and parlance should not dominate foreign-language instruction. Rather, the use of everyday language, suited to the cognitive skills and social requirements of the individual learner, should be the focus. She proposes using Benjamin Bloom’s *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives 1* as a guide to determining suitable instructional objectives.

Glenn S. Levine in Chapter 3 departs from the book's curricula-theme by urging America's foreign-language instructors to assume a politically active role in public-discourse settings (Congressional hearings, TV interviews, op-ed pieces, political speeches) so as to convince the populace that "foreign language study remains significant both personally and in the national interest" (p. 55). Levine's concern is that foreign-language education in the United States has traditionally been marginalized as a result of "a long and entrenched history of language learning as a luxury . . . for a select number of exceptionally well-educated adults" (p. 57).

Johanna Watzinger-Tharp contends in Chapter 6 that foreign-language departments in American colleges and universities have failed to assume a leading role in promoting international and global studies for students who are sent to study abroad during a portion of their college career. She then proposes curricular collaborations with departments of international-and-global-studies in order to "reposition language departments as an indispensable partner in higher education internationalization" (p. 123).

Kenric Tsethlikai (Chapter 7) describes a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program in which students pursue a double concentration on business administration (including industrial expertise) and advanced foreign-language competence as preparation for assuming managerial positions in foreign countries.

The central issue addressed by Chantelle Warner (Chapter 8) is a problem mentioned in several sections of the book—the conflict between the first two years of a student's foreign-language instruction and the third-and-fourth years. The conflict is what Warner refers to as "an unproductive bifurcation in many programs between (a) basic language courses and (b) content-based courses at the upper division which tend to focus on the analysis of literary and, in recent years, filmic works" (p. 157). Warner's contribution to debates over such matters consists of her identifying a variety of language-teaching proposals for coping with the problem.

In summary, I found *Postsecondary Foreign Language Teaching in the United States* to be a *mélange* of notions about foreign-language instruction which more or less concerned course content—that is, curricula.

Not only did the book's chapters differ markedly in the aspects of language teaching on which they focused, but the chapters also varied significantly in the amount and specificity of knowledge that readers must bring to the book in order to understand each author's meaning. For example, I suspect that most readers would find the first of this pair of examples more challenging than the second:

As I argue in this chapter, the reading experience and the particular positionings and affective stances that foreign language users take on should be integral to a pedagogy of multiliteracies and their curricular considerations. (p. 158)

By 1958, the Cold War political climate, with its focus on a Europe dealing with the Soviet threat, contributed to government passage of congressional funding through the National Defense Education Act. The resulting centers for teacher training led to funding for adapting programs in foreign languages along empiricist-behaviorist models. (p. 27)

Had the chapters included more specific examples cast in simpler phrasing, the contents could be understood by a much larger audience than those folks who will actually choose to study the book. However, the editors and authors may not have intended their proposals to be grasped by readers beyond the circle of linguistic experts.

Then there is the book's title. I imagine that the prospective reading public would have been better served if the editors of *Postsecondary Foreign Language Teaching in the United States* had added a subtitle—*A Western-European-Languages Perspective*.

## ALL INDEX

### (2006-2016)

#### ARTICLES

- Ağazade, Ali Sidki. (2014). *Frequency versus Importance: Language Learning Strategy Use in the EFL Classroom*. 23-24(1&2), p. 47.
- Aiello, Jacqueline. (2014). *Variation in Second Language Learners' Strategies among Non-native English Speakers from Three Language/Culture Backgrounds*. 23-24(1&2), p. 23.
- Ayan, Hatice Ç. (2015). *(De)Motivation in Preparatory EFL Classrooms*. 25(1&2), p. 16.
- Bae, Gyseon. (2008). *What Causes Reliance on English? Challenges and Instructional Suggestions in a Drive for Using a Target Language Only*. 18(1&2), p. 63.
- Baker, Wendy. (2010). *Exploring Diverse Settings for Language Acquisition and Use: Comparing Study Abroad, Service Learning Abroad, and Foreign Language Housing*. 20(1&2), p. 45.
- Bohn, Mariko T. (2015). *Pedagogical Perspectives on Gendered Speech Styles in the Teaching and Learning of Japanese as a Foreign Language*. 25(1&2), p. 41.
- Bown, Jennifer. (2010). *Exploring Diverse Settings for Language Acquisition and Use: Comparing Study Abroad, Service Learning Abroad, and Foreign Language Housing*. 20(1&2), p. 45.
- Burnham, Kevin R. (2014). *Phonetic Training in the Foreign Language Curriculum*. 23-24(1&2), p. 63.
- Byon, Andrew Sangpil. (2007). *Process-Driven Culture Learning in American KFL Classrooms*. 17(1&2), p. 73.
- Campbell, Christine. (2006). *Action Research as a Professional Development Tool for Teachers and Administrators*. 16(1), p.75.
- Cheng, An Chung. (2006) *The Effects of Formal Instruction and Study Abroad on Improving Proficiency: The Case of the Spanish Subjunctive*. 16(1), p.17.
- Choi, Yujeong. (2014). *Hypothesis Testing in Task-Based Interaction*. 23-24(1&2), p. 1.
- Cohen, Andrew D. (2007). *Being a Strategic Language Learner in CALL*. 17(1&2), p. 57.
- Daloglu, Aysegul. (2007). *Teacher-Student Partnership in Evaluating and Revising a Multidisciplinary Sustained-Content English Language Course*. 17(1&2), p. 15.

- David, Virginia. (2016). *A Comparison of Two Approaches for Assessing L2 Writing: Process-based and Impromptu Timed Writing Exams*. 26(1), p. 65.
- DeSantis, Paulina. (2008). *Text Enhancement and the Acquisition of English Verbal Inflection -s by L1 Haitian Creole Speakers*. 18(1&2), p. 27.
- Dewey, Dan. (2010). *Exploring Diverse Settings for Language Acquisition and Use: Comparing Study Abroad, Service Learning Abroad, and Foreign Language Housing*. 20(1&2), p. 45.
- Dow, Kathleen A. (2006). *Linguists: The Hidden Strength of U.S. Intelligence*. 16(1), p.1.
- Eisenstein Ebsworth, Miriam. (2014). *Variation in Second Language Learners' Strategies among Non-native English Speakers from Three Language/Culture Backgrounds*. 23-24(1&2), p. 23.
- Ewald, Jennifer. (2006). *Students' Evaluations of Dialogue Journals: Perspectives on Classroom Themes*. 16(1), p.37.
- Felix - Brasdefer, J. Cesar. (2009). *Dispreferred Responses in Interlanguage Pragmatic Refusal Sequences in Learner - NS Interactions*. 19(1&2), p. 1.
- Gan, Zhengdong. (2015). *What Happens to Students' English after One Year of English-medium Course Study at University?* 25(1&2), p. 71.
- González-Bueno, Manuela. (2011). *The Teaching of Second Language Pronunciation through Processing Instruction*. 21(1 & 2), p.57.
- Graham, John. (2008). *Quantifying the Efficiency of a Translator: The Effect of Syntactical and Literal Written Translations on Language Comprehension Using the Machine Translation System FALCon (Foreign Area Language Converter)*. 18(1&2), p. 17.
- Graham, C. Ray. (2011). *The Effect of Explicit Instruction versus Exposure Only on ESL Learners' Ability to Recognize, Use, and Recall Phrasal Verbs*. 21(1&2), p. 31.
- Han, Hyunjoo. (2007). *Issues of Validity of SAT Subject Test: Korean with Listening*. 17(1&2), p. 33.
- He, Lei. (2011). *Metacognition in English as a Foreign Language Pronunciation Learning among Chinese Tertiary Learners*. 21(1&2), p. 1.
- Hedgcock, John. (2006). *Sound Effects: Social Pressure and Identity Negotiation in the Spanish Language Classroom*. 16(2), p. 13.
- Hedgcock, John. (2016). *Differentiating Heritage and Foreign Language Learners of Spanish: Needs, Perceptions, and Expectations*. 26(1), p. 1.
- Hernández, Todd A. (2008). *Integrative Motivation as a Predictor of Achievement in the Foreign Language Classroom*. 18(1&2), p. 1.
- Hernández, Todd A. (2016). *Short-Term Study Abroad: Perspectives on Speaking Gains and Language Contact*. 26(1), p. 39.

- Houston, Tony. (2006). *Communication Strategies in the Foreign Language Classroom*. 16(2), p. 65.
- Jantzi, Jennifer K. (2008). *Quantifying the Efficiency of a Translator: The Effect of Syntactical and Literal Written Translations on Language Comprehension Using the Machine Translation System FALCon (Foreign Area Language Converter)*. 18(1&2), p. 17.
- Johnson, Cary. (2010). *Exploring Diverse Settings for Language Acquisition and Use: Comparing Study Abroad, Service Learning Abroad, and Foreign Language Housing*. 20(1&2), p. 45.
- Kennedy, Lauren. (2010). *The Reading Proficiency Interview (RPI): A Rapid Response Test Development Model for Assessing Reading Proficiency on the ILR Scale*. 20(1&2), p. 1.
- Kilpatrick, Cynthia. (2014). *Hypothesis Testing in Task-Based Interaction*. 23-24(1&2), p. 1.
- Kim, Eunju. (2008). *What Causes Reliance on English? Challenges and Instructional Suggestions in a Drive for Using a Target Language Only*. 18(1&2), p. 63.
- Lee, Saekyun H. (2007). *Issues of Validity of SAT Subject Test: Korean with Listening*. 17(1&2), p. 33.
- Lefkowitz, Natalie. (2006). *Sound Effects: Social Pressure and Identity Negotiation in the Spanish Language Classroom*. 16(2), p. 13.
- Lefkowitz, Natalie. (2016). *Differentiating Heritage and Foreign Language Learners of Spanish: Needs, Perceptions, and Expectations*. 26(1), p. 1.
- Li, Shaofeng. (2009). *The Differential Effects of Implicit and Explicit Feedback on Second Language (L2) Learners at Different Proficiency Levels*. 19 (1&2), p. 53.
- Lim, Hye-Yeon. (2009). *Culture, Attributions, and Language Anxiety*. 19 (1&2), p. 29.
- Lord, Gillian. (2007). *The Role of the Lexicon in Learning Second Language Stress Patterns*. 17(1&2), p. 1.
- Marsh, Fulya. (2007). *Teacher-Student Partnership in Evaluating and Revising a Multidisciplinary Sustained-Content English Language Course*. 17(1&2), p. 15.
- Martinez-Flor, Alicia. (2006). *A Comprehensive Pedagogical Framework to Develop Pragmatics in the Foreign Language Classroom: The 6R Approach*. 16(2), p. 39.
- Martinsen, Rob A. (2010). *Exploring Diverse Settings for Language Acquisition and Use: Comparing Study Abroad, Service Learning Abroad, and Foreign Language Housing*. 20(1 & 2), p. 45.
- McCulloh, Ian A. (2008). *Quantifying the Efficiency of a Translator: The Effect of Syntactical and Literal Written Translations on Language Comprehension Using the Machine Translation System FALCon (Foreign Area Language Converter)*. 18(1 & 2), p. 17.

- Mills, Susana V. (2006). *An Exploratory Study of Differing Perceptions of Error Correction between Teachers and Students: Bridging the Gap*. 16(1), p. 55.
- Mojica-Diaz, Clara C. (2006). *The Effects of Formal Instruction and Study Abroad on Improving Proficiency: The Case of the Spanish Subjunctive*. 16(1), p. 17.
- Morton, Jillian. (2008). *Quantifying the Efficiency of a Translator: The Effect of Syntactical and Literal Written Translations on Language Comprehension Using the Machine Translation System FALCon (Foreign Area Language Converter)*. 18(1&2), p. 17.
- Musayeva Vefali, Gülşen. (2014). *Frequency versus Importance: Language Learning Strategy Use in the EFL Classroom*. 23-24(1&2), p. 47.
- Musayeva Vefali, Gülşen. (2015). *(De)Motivation in Preparatory EFL Classrooms*. 25(1&2), p. 16.
- Oxford, Rebecca L. (2015). *How Language Learners Can Improve Their Emotional Functioning: Important Psychological and Psychospiritual Theories*. 25(1&2), p. 1.
- Plonsky, Luke. (2006). *An Exploratory Study of Differing Perceptions of Error Correction between Teachers and Students: Bridging the Gap*. 16(1), p. 55.
- Podoprigora, Serguei A. (2010). *Passage Rating: L4 versus L5 Characteristics in the Russian Text Typology*. 20(1&2), p. 17.
- Quintana-Lara, Marcela. (2011). *The Teaching of Second Language Pronunciation through Processing Instruction*. 21(1&2), p. 57.
- Raugh, Harold. (2006). *The Origins of the Transformation of the Defense Language Program*. 16(2), p. 1.
- Razavi, Nikta. (2014). *Variation in Second Language Learners' Strategies among Non-native English Speakers from Three Language/Culture Backgrounds*. 23-24(1&2), p. 23.
- Rodriguez, Amy M. (2008). *Quantifying the Efficiency of a Translator: The Effect of Syntactical and Literal Written Translations on Language Comprehension Using the Machine Translation System FALCon (Foreign Area Language Converter)*. 18(1&2), p. 17.
- Stansfield, Charles, W. (2010). *The Reading Proficiency Interview (RPI): A Rapid Response Test Development Model for Assessing Reading Proficiency on the ILR Scale*. 20(1&2), p. 1.
- Stapleton, Paul. (2015). *What Happens to Students' English after One Year of English-medium Course Study at University?* 25(1&2), p. 71.
- Tang, Frank Lixing. (2014). *Variation in Second Language Learners' Strategies among Non-native English Speakers from Three Language/Culture Backgrounds*. 23-24(1&2), p. 23.
- Tovar, Deanna. (2006). *Action Research as a Professional Development Tool for Teachers and Administrators*. 16(1), p. 75.

- Uso-Juan, Esther. (2006). *A Comprehensive Pedagogical Framework to Develop Pragmatics in the Foreign Language Classroom: The 6R Approach*. 16(2), p. 39.
- Yang, Chi Cheung. (2015). *What Happens to Students' English after One Year of English-medium Course Study at University?* 25(1&2), p. 71.
- Yeon, Sang-Hee. (2008). *Training English Word-Final Palatals to Korean Speakers of English*. 18(1&2), p. 51.
- Yeon, Sang-Hee. (2014). *It Works for Me: From the High Achievers' Perspective*. 23-24(1&2), p. 75.



## REVIEWS

- Antokhin, Natalia. (2006). Review: *Language Play*. 16(2), p. 86.
- Forsyth, Edo. (2010). Review: *Political Russian: An Intermediate Course in Russian Language for International Relations, National Security and Socio-Economics*. 20(1&2), p. 74.
- Hedgcock, John. (2008). Review: *Conversation Analysis and Language for Specific Purpose*. 18(1&2), p. 77.
- Henery, Ashlie. (2011). Review: *Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Reading of Research*. 21(1&2), p. 93.
- Hoffman, Mika. (2010). Review: *Text Complexity and Reading Comprehension Tests*. 20 (1&2), p. 67.
- Hur, HyunSoo. (2015). Review: *Language Teacher Education for a Global Society*. 25(1&2), p. 92.
- Jackson, Gordon L. (2011). Review: *Methodology and Materials Design in Language Teaching: Current Perceptions and Practices and their Implications*. 21(1&2), p. 83.
- Kelley, Jeremy. (2007). Review: *Leon and Bhatt: Structure du Francais Moderne: Introduction a l'analyse linguistique (3rd Ed. Rev.)*. 17(1&2), p. 91.
- Ko, Myong Hee. (2006). Review: *Andrew K. English & Laura K. English: North Star Reading and Writing: High Intermediate and Advanced*. 16(1), p. 81.
- Lee, Mina. (2014). Review: *Creativity and Innovation in Language Education*. 23-24(1&2), p. 91.
- Martel, Jason. (2014). Review: *Reflective Practice in ESL Teacher Development Groups: From Practices to Principles*. 23-24(1&2), p. 87.
- Nassif, Lama. (2010). Review: *Spoken Corpora in Applied Linguistics*. 20(1&2), p. 70.
- Thomas, Murray R. (2016). Review: *Postsecondary Foreign Language Teaching in the United States*. 26(1), p. 83.
- Vanniarajan, Swathi. (2006). Review: *Bar, David: ICT—Integrating Computers in Teaching*. 16(2), p. 83.

## UPCOMING EVENTS 2016

### JANUARY

- January 7-10* Linguistic Society of American (LSA) Annual Meeting, Washington, DC. Information: [www.linguisticsociety.org](http://www.linguisticsociety.org)
- January 7-10* Modern Language Association (MLA) Convention, Austin, TX. Information: [www.mla.org/convention](http://www.mla.org/convention)
- January 7-10* American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL), Austin, TX. Information: [www.aatseel.org](http://www.aatseel.org)
- January 21-24* 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Development and Assessment of Intercultural Competence, Tucson, AZ. Information: [cercll.arizona.edu/development/conferences/2016\\_icc](http://cercll.arizona.edu/development/conferences/2016_icc)

### FEBRUARY

- February 15-16* 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Linguistics, Language Teaching and Learning, Barcelona, Spain. Information: [www.waset.org/conference/2016/02/barcelona/ICLLTL](http://www.waset.org/conference/2016/02/barcelona/ICLLTL)
- February 18-20* Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT), Charlotte, NC. Information: [www.scolt.org](http://www.scolt.org)

### MARCH

- March 10-12* Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCTFL), Columbus, OH. Information: [www.csctfl.org](http://www.csctfl.org)
- Mar 31-Apr 3* 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics. Stony Brook, NY. Information: [linguistlist.org/callconf/call-action.cfm?ConfID=217956](http://linguistlist.org/callconf/call-action.cfm?ConfID=217956)

### APRIL

- April 5-8* Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) International Convention, Baltimore, MD. Information: [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)
- April 8-12* American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, Washington, DC. Information: [www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)
- April 9-12* American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL), Orlando, FL. Information: [www.aaal.org](http://www.aaal.org)

## MAY

- May 10-14* Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) annual conference. Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. Information: [calico.org](http://calico.org)
- May 29-June 3* NAFSA: Association of International Educators Annual Conference and Expo, Denver, CO. Information: [www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org)

## JUNE

- June 13-15* International Society for Language Studies (ISLS) Annual Conference, Illinois State University. Information: [www.isls.co/index.html](http://www.isls.co/index.html)

## JULY

- July 3-6* American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) 2016 conference, Austin, TX. Information: [www.frenchteachers.org](http://www.frenchteachers.org)

## NOVEMBER

- November 17-20* Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Boston, MA. Information: [mesana.org/annual-meeting/upcoming.html](http://mesana.org/annual-meeting/upcoming.html)
- November 18-20* American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Annual Convention (ACTFL), Boston, MA. Information: [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)
- November 18-20* Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA) Annual Conference, Boston, MA. Information: [clta-us.org](http://clta-us.org)
- November 18-20* American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) Annual Conference, Boston, MA. Information: [www.aatg.org](http://www.aatg.org)
- November 18-20* American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ) Fall Conference, Boston, MA. Information: [www.aatj.org](http://www.aatj.org)

# INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

## Submission Information for Authors

### AIMS AND SCOPE

*Applied Language Learning* (ALL) is to promote professional communication within the Defense Language Program and academic communities on adult language learning for functional purposes.

The Editor encourages the submission of research and review manuscripts from such disciplines as: (1) instructional methods and techniques; (2) curriculum and materials development; (3) testing and evaluation; (4) implications and applications of research from related fields in linguistics, education, communication, psychology, and social sciences; and (5) assessment of needs within the profession.

### SPECIFICATIONS FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Prepare the manuscripts in accordance with the following requirements:

- Follow the American Psychological Association (APA) style (the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition)
- Not exceeding 6,000 words (not including reference, appendix, etc.)
- Use double spacing, with margins of one inch on all four sides
- Use Times New Roman font size 12
- Number all pages consecutively
- In black and white only, including graphics and tables
- Create graphics and tables in a Microsoft Office application (such as Word, PowerPoint, Excel)
- Graphics and tables should not exceed 4.5" in width
- Do not use the footnotes and endnotes function in MS Word. Insert a number formatted in superscript following a punctuation mark. Type notes on a separate page
- Keep the layout of the text as simple as possible

## **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT**

*Applied Language Learning* publishes only original works that have not been previously published elsewhere and that are not under consideration by other publications.

Each submission must contain (1) a title page, including author information; (2) abstract of the article; (3) five keywords; and (4) manuscript, including references.

Send all submissions electronically to the Editor: [jiaying.howard@dliflc.edu](mailto:jiaying.howard@dliflc.edu).

## **REVIEW PROCESS**

Manuscripts will be acknowledged by the editor upon receipt and subsequently sent out for peer review. Authors will be informed about the status of the article once the peer reviews have been received and processed. Reviewer comments will be shared with the authors. Once an article has been accepted for publication, the author will receive further instructions regarding the submission of the final copy.

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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

Divide your manuscript into the following sections, in the order listed below:

1. Title and Author Information
2. Abstract
3. Keywords
4. Text body, including:
  - Acknowledgements (optional)
  - Notes (optional)
  - References
  - Tables and figures (optional)
  - Appendixes (optional)

### REVIEW ARTICLE

It should describe, discuss, and evaluate publications that fall into a topical category in foreign language education. The relative significance of the publications in the context of teaching realms should be pointed out. A review article should be 15 to 20 double-spaced pages.

### REVIEW

Submit reviews of textbooks, scholarly works on foreign language education, dictionaries, tests, computer software, audio-video materials, computer and mobile applications, and other non-print materials. Point out both positive and negative aspects of the work(s) being considered. In the three to five double-spaced pages of the manuscript, give a clear but brief statement of the work's content and a critical assessment of its contribution to the profession. Keep quotations short. Do not send reviews that are merely descriptive.

### COMMENTARY

*ALL* invites essays that exchange ideas and views on innovative foreign language education, and comments on matters of general academic or critical interest or on articles in previous issues. Essays should not exceed 2,000 words.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

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*Applied Language Learning*, a refereed journal published semiannually by the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center and Presidio of Monterey, is soliciting articles for publication.

The Journal (*US* ISSN 1041-679X and ISSN 2164-0912 for the online version) is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information on instructional methods and techniques, curriculum and materials development, assessment of needs within the profession, testing and evaluation, and implications and applications of research from related fields such as linguistics, education, communications, psychology, and the social sciences. The journal seeks to serve the professional interest of language teachers, administrators, and researchers concerned with the teaching of foreign languages to adult learners. We welcome articles that describe innovative and successful practice and methods and/or report educational research or experimentation.

**Deadline:** Submissions are welcome at any point. Manuscripts received by 31 March will be considered for the spring issue and by 31 September for the fall issue of the journal.

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