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Book Review: Social and Cultural Aspects of Language Learning in Study Abroad

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In recent years, study abroad (SA) research has experienced a shift in focus, moving from predominantly studying the second language acquisition of groups of students studying abroad to understanding students' experiences while abroad and the changes they undergo as a result. The volume, *Social and Cultural Aspects of Language Learning in Study Abroad*, edited by Celeste Kinginger (2013), is aimed at showcasing this increasingly holistic approach taken in SA research.

This volume consists of twelve chapters divided into three parts. In Part I, *Orientation*, Celeste Kinginger's and James Coleman's introductory chapters describe the aforementioned shift as the motivation for a volume on contemporary SA research. Coleman attributes this shift to the individual differences between students consistently found within and across studies; while researchers previously "dismiss[ed] individual variation as a nuisance factor undermining the neat patterns" (p. 17) sought after in quantitative research, Coleman advocates for viewing SA participants not as members of ambiguously homogeneous groups of language learners, but as individual, "whole people" with equally independent and whole SA experiences. Coleman also argues for increased diversity in the populations studied, in terms of both participants' home countries and languages studied, citing an overrepresentation of American SA students learning popular European languages (e.g., Spanish, French, or German). In the current review, I will assess both the individual chapters and the entire book for the success with which this volume meets these goals.

The rest of the volume consists of ten studies in two parts. Part II, *Qualitative and case studies*, contains six chapters "devoted to qualitative and case studies in an array of different contexts" (p. 9). For example, Elizabeth Smolcic, using activity theory, analyzes the experiences of a fifty-six-year-old American teacher in a Teaching English as a Second Language certificate program during a three-and-a-half-week sojourn in Ecuador. Smolcic finds that the immersion experience gave her participant a new perspective of herself that was not possible in her home context, allowing her to enter Kramsch's *third space*. While Smolcic's findings may translate into increased intercultural awareness on the part of ESL teachers, the researcher warns against expecting long-term gains from short sojourns, stating that it is unknown how these gains will affect the teaching practices in ESL classrooms.

This part's other chapters similarly focus on participants' individual SA experiences, often combining them with quantitative data to study a range of topics. Fred Dervin compares questionnaire responses from Erasmus students studying in Finland to interview data with a Finnish student studying in France to understand how SA students identify themselves as speakers of a lingua franca, particularly in relation to other speakers of the language. Dali Tan and Celeste Kinginger analyze a corpus of interviews with high school students who had participated in a homestay program in China, discovering that a high school homestay experience is notably different from those of older participants. Finally, Jane Jackson combines a Hong Kong Chinese student's quantitative Intercultural Development Inventory completed pre- and post-sojourn with narratives from a re-entry course to investigate this student's "whole-person" development during

and after his sojourn in Canada. While the populations studied in these chapters are not particularly varied in terms of home and host countries, with four out of six chapters being about American students studying abroad and three about sojourns in France, these chapters were still diverse in other ways, for example in the participants' age and the topic of study.

Part III, *Pragmatics and identity*, contains four studies comparing students' second language pragmatics with their study abroad experiences and their identity as language learners, from their own and from other target-language speakers' perspectives. This part's strength indeed lies in the diversity of populations and languages studied (i.e., Russian, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish) and the kinds of data and methods used (e.g., discourse completion questionnaires, Oral Proficiency Interviews, corpus data). Furthermore, the authors' choice of topics—for example, Maria Shardakova's chapter on learners' humour in Russian, Noriko Iwasaki's study of learners' use of hedges in Japanese, and Julieta Fernandez's focus on learners' use of vague language in Spanish—highlights the diversity of possible research in pragmatics and identity in study abroad.

Of especial interest in this regard is Lucien Brown's comparison of the explicit knowledge of Korean honorifics (obtained from Discourse Completion Tasks) of four students of Korean (from different nationalities and linguistic backgrounds) with interactional data from their sojourns in Korea and their reported study abroad experiences. While the participants all displayed a high-level of explicit knowledge of Korean honorifics, they typically used more informal Korean than a native speaker would in everyday interaction. Upon analyzing the students' reported experiences, Brown found that locals typically expected and told the participants to use informal Korean, even in situations where native speakers would use the more formal form. Brown argues, as non-native speakers, "the identities of exchange students and foreigner position learners on the peripheries on Korean society" (p. 290), underscoring the influence of host cultures on study abroad experiences.

The volume reveals mixed success in accomplishing its self-stated goals. While the chapters represented the whole-person approach to contemporary study abroad well, and Part III's chapters are a great example of the diversity for which Coleman advocates, in Part II there is an overrepresentation of American study abroad participants and of students studying abroad in France. Including participants more representative of the array of populations that take part in study abroad programs would similarly provide a more representative depiction of how study abroad experiences vary. Still, this volume is a great example of contemporary study abroad research and makes an excellent addition to the discourse.