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Authentic Out-of-Class Communication in Study Abroad Programs: Success Defined by Continued Motivation and Cultural Appreciation

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AUTHENTIC OUT-OF-CLASS COMMUNICATION IN STUDY ABROAD

PROGRAMS: SUCCESS DEFINED BY CONTINUED MOTIVATION

AND CULTURAL APPRECIATION

by

Erin Fairlight Olsen

A master's thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Center for Language Studies

Brigham Young University

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a master's thesis submitted by

Erin Fairlight Olsen

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date	R. Kirk Belnap, Chair

Date	Mark W. Tanner

Date	Lynn E. Henrichsen

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Erin Fairlight Olsen in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

AUTHENTIC OUT-OF-CLASS COMMUNICATION IN STUDY ABROAD

PROGRAMS: SUCCESS DEFINED BY CONTINUED MOTIVATION

AND CULTURAL APPRECIATION

Erin F. Olsen

Center for Language Studies

Master of Arts

The benefits of study abroad experience in second language acquisition have evolved

from unchallenged assumption to the focus of rigorous study in the past several decades.

The benefits of out-of-class contact with natives have likewise been questioned. Despite

conflicting evidence of its benefit, students frequently cite out-of-class conversations

with natives as among the most beneficial aspects of their language acquisition

experience. Reviewing the extant literature, this study narrows in on authentic

communication—that is, meaningful out-of-class contact with natives, in which students

are able to genuinely express themselves and their personality—as a previously

unanalyzed element of study abroad research. It is suggested that such conversations

contribute to the success of study abroad students, particularly as it is measured by

student motivation leading to continued engagement with the language study post-study abroad and cultural understanding. Surveys and essays by 85 students in two separate Arabic study abroad programs to the Middle East were analyzed. The findings bear on the efforts of educators to design and prepare students for successful study abroad programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I give my express thanks to my committee (R. Kirk Belnap, Mark W. Tanner, and Lynn E. Henrichsen) for taking on a thesis that was long overdue and much more romantic and emotional than academia would ever tolerate—thank you. All of your long hours will never be forgotten—in fact you could have spent a few less hours on corrections for me to enter and still had my deep appreciation. This project would not have happened without the continual support and encouragement over the years of Abu Levi, alf shukran.

My husband's name should appear on the leather encrusted spine of this book in gilding. I guess it will since we share the last name—that is appropriate since he talked me out of the hundred times I swore I would never finish this. And to all of my family that watched over me and my children so I could be a collegiate mommy—thank you. The last acknowledgments I wish to make are to my children, acknowleding that this thesis has squashed many a kite flying day and most recently ended a camping trip—for that I am sorry and promise to take you skinny-dipping in the near future.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Foreword

What exactly is the linguistic steroid at play in study-abroad ventures? Is it something in the jet fuel filtering through those personalized air vents above your head in seat 24B? Is it the love that you develop for the people of yonder foreign land that radically alters your productions? Is it the money invested for that seat in 24B that motivates you to make this brief stint more meaningful (as though college tuition should not already inspire such action)?

I have been on 5 studies abroad. The first was a few weeks to France in high school. Then to Jerusalem to study Hebrew on two separate occasions for a total of one year. I was in China and later Alexandria, Egypt for almost four months. I can keenly remember a few conversations from each of these experiences. In France I discussed (well, listened intently) to my waitress explain why unchilled water is superior to chilled. Then she let us in on some family secrets and confided that all she wanted to do was run off and be an actress and leave this tourist village. That was 15 years ago and I still remember. In China one of our program leaders was extra kind to me. We went to a public square where everyone was dancing country western line-dance Asian style. He bought me a flower and we practiced pronunciation of tones. Basically, he made fun of me. I laughed and learned instead of feeling embarrassed at my poor language skill. My favorite memory in Arabic was my neighbor Lulu answering a long list of personal questions. Fellow girlfriends in the program had compiled a list of questions that they were too embarrassed to ask and knew that I had a dear friend as a neighbor. Lulu and I sat whispering on her coach giggling about personal women issues and blushing about how similar women are around the globe. That conversation lasted 5-6 hours. By the end

I felt that I had made a new best friend. I realized that I had been thinking in Arabic—not translating—for most of the conversation. More importantly, I realized that she must really consider me part of her closed circle of friends and family with the sensitive nature of our conversations. In Hebrew on a "speaking date" (our program employed paid friends to chat with us) our native, an aged woman named Peninah suffering from many health concerns, started teaching us random names of diverse cutlery items and dishes in a china cabinet—items that I do not know the equivalent of in English. We distracted her by asking her to teach us a song. She taught us the lullabies her mother sang to her and then we sat and listened to a tearful story of her mother's passing and sang with her these precious songs as a review before we left.

These were the experiences that cemented me to the path of academic study in the field of linguistics with an emphasis in cultural understanding. These are the moments cherished in a study abroad experience. I hope these sorts of close relationships with natives and ensuing authentic communications will be had by many students in the future after preparing for topics meaningful to them. I also hope that we will seek to be more culturally sensitive when engaging in conversations with strangers on the streets whatever the topic of conversation is. These bearers of fluent target language must be considered people with passions, skills, concerns, and fears just as we have focused on our students as such. They are not merely our free resources of native grammar and cultural mores. A moment taken at the end of these conversations expressing sincere thanks might do all of our study abroad programs a great deal of service. And then maybe these programs will fulfill a much deeper aim—uniting of people from separate nations in deep respect and gratitude as they come together through language study. The

Arabic study abroad programs highlighted in this research were successful, above all else, in this. Students developed respectful relationships of trust that allowed native speakers to disclose their true opinions in all areas. Many of these relationships were reported three years removed as relationships that still receive close communication through modern technology. The path to this kind of relationship is not only language proficiency, but cultural sensitivity. Their continued love and respect for the culture and people of the country paired with the many who still continue in their studies and use of Arabic stand as a testament of the benefits of authentic communication.

> *Egypt was not an easy, comfortable experience. My second day in the country found me retching that morning's breakfast of fuul [beans] and left me bed ridden for a couple of days. Every windless morning filled the streets with a foul reek. The locals tried to run me over more than once— they did run over my friend. Almost every shopkeeper, taxi driver, and boab [doorman] conspired to extort my last dollar. Plenty of social experiences were awkward, occasionally threatening. But I loved Egypt— intensely. Leaving, I tried to take Egypt with me, filling my suitcase with loads of tourist trinkets, Egyptian films, local artwork and clothing, Arabic newspapers and board games, ancient potshards and Egyptian sand. More poignantly, I brought home a prayer rug to remind me to pray with the full-bodied sincerity of my Muslim friends. I downloaded the adhaan [call to prayer] to sound out five times a day on my computer. And I brought a treasure of emails, phone numbers and addresses. I'll never forget doing my laundry on Nabil's German made washing machine, chatting together in between the ballads he would play on his Ud, or my hours spent speaking with the shopkeepers in my neighborhood; I'll never forget Moustafa taking me through the Delta, or Halla's amazing meals and the generosity and love of her whole family. Every time I hear or read Arabic, or even catch a blip of Egyptian news, I think of my close friends, and I long to visit them again. Joshua*

Chapter 1: Introduction

As reported by the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the number of students participating in study abroad programs in America increased in record numbers reaching 205,983 students in 2006—an increase of 8% over the prior year's report.[1]

> With 20 years of sustained and marked growth in U.S. international education, the study abroad experience has moved well beyond the typical "junior year abroad," with students seeking educational experiences of various durations, at different points—and sometimes more than once—in their academic careers. Students are increasingly going to study in non-traditional destinations, and increasingly to non English-speaking countries. U.S. study abroad has been rising steadily in recent years, with an increase of 144% in the last decade, up from only 84,403 in 1994/95 (Institute for International Education, 2006).

Study abroad is seen as necessary in order to cope with a global market in many fields of study and even fields that do not require it as a prerequisite to graduation encourage students to take advantage of programs offered based on the life-altering effects that global perspective gives to students.

Many years of research have indicated the efficacious nature of study abroad, especially in regard to speaking proficiency (Cox & Freed, 1989; Foltz, 1991; Gardner & Lambert 1975; Gordon, 1987; Gramen, 1987; Liskin-Gasparro, 1984; Liskin-Gasparro & Urdaneta, 1995; Magnan, 1986; Opper et al., 1990; Veguez, 1984). Preparation for the study abroad within the walls of a classroom is necessary, however, the leaps and bounds made when that preparatory knowledge is put to use in the school of real-life discourse is vital to achieve the jump in language ability. Although various studies of different

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[1]See www.opendoors.iienetwork.org for additional statistics

languages and learners have shown that the speaking ability of language learners who go abroad significantly improves—this improvement does not necessarily coincide with out-of-class contact (this study refers solely to *interactive* out-of-class contact, informal student contact with natives in the target language). When out-of-class contact opportunities are the most non-reproducible aspect of study abroad (meaning that opportunities back in the home institution for speaking to natives are often limited) why would it not be pinpointed as one of the main bolstering forces of speech improvement along with the aspect of time-on-task that intensive language programs provide? Beyond mere speech improvement, which activities during study abroad instill in students an understanding of cultural nuance or a continuing motivation to pursue further studies in the target language post sojourn more than out-of-class contact?

In the review of literature that follows it can be seen that research involving out-of-class contact has produced a varied response in the academic world. First lauded without research to back validity, out-of-class contact has experienced a great deal of scrutiny in more recent years. When these studies questioning out-of-class contact are analyzed, a major oversight in the research can be found. Namely, the type of out-of-class contact that has been evaluated up to the present has been a mixture of meaningful communication and random interaction. Early studies erred in including non-interactive contact (such as television viewing or radio listening) in their comparison when quantifying hours of student involvement in out-of-class contact. As will be seen, researchers realized that some activities were more beneficial to students than others; specifically, speaking with a human can produce more comprehensible input than experiencing language out of a machine. Other studies have identified serious areas of

concern in speaking with natives (Freed, 1990; Mendelson, 2004; Wilkinson, 1995). For example, speaking with host-families and tutors can resemble in-class speech more than out-of-class speech and should therefore not be tabulated as time on task for out-of-class contact. Researchers have analyzed the interlocutors, the students' preparation and testing scores, and the reasons for avoiding out-of-class contact (Ehrman & Dornyei, 1998; Grosjean, 1982; Lambauscher, 1994; Mendelson, 2004; Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005). Researchers have *not* analyzed the quality of or the student interest in the topic during out-of-class contact. This study seeks to bridge this gap in the literature and borrow appropriate a term for meaningful discourse from Valerie Pellegrino-Aveni (2005): "authentic communication." As used in this study[2], authentic communication refers to meaningful, interactive out-of-class contact in which students are able to genuinely reveal their true persona.

Pellegrino-Aveni (2005) is a pioneer in examining the effects of language learning paired with student anxiety. She posits that the reservoir of student anxiety collects from students fearing that they are unable to represent themselves accurately in the language they are studying and that this image anxiety is the main cause of students avoiding out-of-class contact. Thus, the review of literature closes with a discussion of language and identity to highlight the need for authentic communication during study abroad.

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[2] It should be noted that Valerie Pellegrino-Aveni does not explicitly define authentic communication as language that reveals the true persona of the language learner. She does explore the topic of identity destruction and construction during language acquisition and equates student anxiety in speaking to natives with the fear of losing their identity or misrepresenting themselves. The wording "authentic communication" and background concepts are all borrowed from Pellegrino-Aveni, however, she never defines her coinage with a copula. The author of the current study may have more narrowly defined her sense of meaning.

Through the analysis of three surveys administered to 85 students participating in Arabic study abroad programs, this study investigates authentic communication during out-of-class contact as one of the most effective variables for language improvement and one of the most critical elements of a successful study abroad experience. This improvement and success, however, is not analyzed through standardized testing alone, but also in the demonstration of students' understanding of the target culture and their continued passion to learn beyond the walls and time constraints of their study abroad program[3].

The review of literature in chapter two will briefly outline the early findings of study abroad leading to speech improvement and then more thoroughly investigate specific studies on out-of-class contact. Particular attention is paid to studies that suggest out-of-class contact does *not* significantly lead to more advanced speech in order to highlight the need for authentic communication research. Studies that have discussed major obstacles to the learner in achieving meaningful out-of-class contact will then be presented. The major obstacles to speaking with natives can be attributed to identity loss or identity misrepresentation. The solution to this problem of minimal student interaction with natives is authentic communication. Having explored the literature to date, this study then presents and analyzes the findings of three surveys of study abroad students in order to examine the assumption that communication with natives in which students are able to reveal their true persona increases cultural understanding and motivation for

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[3] This is not meant to set up a dichotomy between success as defined by OPI scores and success as defined by cultural learning and continued study. It seems clear that the two go together, meaning those with success in language testing will probably be more motivated to continue in their pursuit of the language and have meaningful, cultural interactions with natives since they are able to communicate effectively. However, the present study, is designed to focus on the importance of success as revealed by cultural learning and continued motivation leading to future work beyond the study abroad language program.

continued language study. Finally, further implications drawn from the research and areas requiring further study are then discussed.

The plethora of student quotes throughout this study reveals the mind of language learners, so as to give educators a valuable resource when preparing their own students pre-departure and during the study abroad experience. This daunting task of preparation necessarily focuses on the individual; nevertheless, this study will reveal patterns through quantitative and qualitative analysis that will aid educators in modifying their current pre-departure approach, on-site advisement, and curriculum to focus on meaningful conversations and relationships while in-country. Non-shallow conversations[4] and close relationships developed with interlocutors found in authentic communication can sustain and increase motivation beyond the study abroad program and satisfy the anticipation of intense cultural learning had by so many students when embarking on study abroad sojourns.

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[4] This study investigates the experience of students who have completed at least four semester of Arabic before embarking on their study abroad. Although there is definitely a continuum of authentic communication which would allow for even beginner students to experience such, this study only relies on the responses and recordings of intermediate students and what their authentic communication experiences consisted of.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Study Abroad Linked to Achievement in Speaking Proficiency

Since 1967 with the release of John Carroll's study that involved 2,782 college seniors studying French, Italian, Russian, and German, study abroad has been considered necessary for the serious language student. Carroll found that coupled with the age at which the language learner began studies, the longer the stay in-country, the higher the proficiency. This began the long line of researchers proving through standardized tests alone that study abroad was the path for greatest achievement, especially with regard to speaking proficiency. (Cox & Freed, 1989; Foltz, 1991; Gardner & Lambert 1975; Gordon, 1987; Gramen, 1987; Liskin-Gasparro, 1984; Liskin-Gasparro & Urdaneta, 1995; Magnan, 1986; Opper et al., 1990; Veguez, 1984). [5] Charles Stansfield (1975) gave one of many astonishing figures reporting that zero-proficiency students of Spanish reached the same level abroad after only 100 days as that achieved by similar students who studied four semesters at a university in the U.S.

Moehle and Raupach (1983) found an increase in "global fluency" in students who studied abroad. German students working in French were able to sound more like a native in the give-and-take of conversation. Their rapidity of speech and use of appropriate fillers and formulaic expressions increased as well, although their grammar and complexity of sentences did not improve relative to the students studying back home. Similarly, Lafford (1995) found that students studying in Spain and Mexico expanded their strategies for beginning , broadening, and ending conversations. These skills

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[5] To view a more complete listing of research on the efficacy of study abroad see Freed (1998).

surpassed the skills of the control group that did not go abroad. Again, the students

abroad spoke at a faster rate and were better at correcting errors and maintaining

composure during conversation. Freed (1995b) added to the collection of speech

improvements of the "immersed," smoothness of speech, longer chains of language

devoid of errors, and more attempts at language, even when the student was uncertain of

forms.

While it is received wisdom that study abroad is valuable, potentially leading to

dramatic improvement, pinpointing exactly which facets of study abroad are responsible

for this improvement has been the focus of a large corpus of research yielding conflicting

results, which will be reviewed below. One of the most significant candidates that may

be the cause of the great success in study abroad that has arisen from this research is out-

of-class contact.

2.2 Out-of-Class Contact

Out-of-class contact with native speakers of the target language is obviously out

of the view of program practitioners (such as teachers, program directors, and

researchers). As a result, creating effective modes to evaluate the impact of such contact

has been problematic and results of these studies can be misleading due to misreporting

of contact reported by the students being evaluated. However, attaching small recording

devices to eager students exploring personal relationships with the highest and lowest

members of society is the last thing needed to secure future programs in many of these

countries. It is simply a conspicuous fact that similar interactive contact is one of the

variables that is extremely difficult to duplicate on-campus.[6] Teachers can bring in

videos, newspapers, menus, and radio programs in the target language on-campus, but

rarely are there either the funds or the resources of hundreds of native speakers willing to

sit and speak with fledgling language learners.

Many students, parents, and facilitators believe that out-of-class contact is

primarily responsible for much of the great gain acquired abroad. This can be interactive

(with native speakers) or non-interactive (watching movies, listening to the radio, reading

schedules, attending cultural events without speaking). The present study focuses on the

former. When Miller and Ginsberg (1995) examined 80 language journals from students

of Russian to disclose the students' minds and reveal what ideas students have on

language learning, they found that most students do not believe they have mastered a new

form or expression in a language until they have successfully produced that form or

expression with a native. Students perceived classroom work as practice for the real

experience of speaking with someone on the street. "I wish I could have much more

outside contact—I feel my reading and writing skills may improve in a classroom but my

spoken language will only improve outside of it (Agatha)" (Miller &Ginsberg, 311).

2.2.1 Conflicting Evidence for the Benefits of Out-of-Class Contact

A number of studies shed some light on out-of-class contact. Early studies all

supported the common belief that more contact would promote more fluency (Bialystok,

1978; Rubin, 1975; Seliger, 1977; Stern, 1983). Freed's (1990) review of literature on

this topic states, "There has been, however, conflicting evidence which suggests that

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[6] Some students are able to make marked changes in their language ability through foreign language houses on campus or active student groups that involve the students with natives on a regular basis. There are paths to achieving similar language accessibility as that of study-abroad, and the fact that language educators seek to replicate this native contact component even on-campus gives more support to the idea of native contact being supremely beneficial.

informal, out-of-class contact, which presumably provides more linguistic input and obligates use of communicative strategies, does not necessarily enhance (Day, 1985; DeKeyser, 1986; Krashen & Seliger, 1976) and may even impede foreign language proficiency (Higgs & Clifford 1982). Of the formal studies on the effects of out-of-class contact, only one (Martin, 1980) reported that informal contact leads to proficiency" (461).

In Freed's own 1990 study, 38 students were monitored by TA's, asked to complete bi-weekly journals, completed a Language Contact Profile (LCP) which assigned points to different out-of-class activities, and participated in a battery of interviews, surveys, and proficiency tests pre- and post-study abroad. Freed's aim was to end the long run of "conflicting evidence" regarding out-of-class contact and proficiency gain. She found instead that the OPI (oral proficiency interview) did not show a difference for students exposed to the study abroad component for only six weeks. Her findings are often reported as evidence against out-of-class contact, but Freed's real discovery was not concerning out-of-class contact. Instead, she found that the tests that had been used in evaluating said contact were not sensitive enough to gauge student improvement. Her findings proved a longer stay or a different examination was needed in future research. Freed notes in her final discussion that out-of-class contact *did* aid students on traditional tests of grammar and reading comprehension particularly at the beginning and intermediate level. She also noted that students who defined out-of-class contact as sitting in front of a TV or reading books demonstrated much less growth than those involved in interactive contact.

Like Freed, Day(1985) found that out-of-class contact did not help proficiency. The study investigated ESL students in Hawaii. His hypothesis was that usage of the target language outside of the class would produce marked improvement in proficiency. However, the six-week study did not allow enough time for changes in proficiency to be observed. Freed and Day were also parallel in their observation of the LCP as a hindrance to the study. The LCP was not sensitive enough to note change because it included only a quantitative examination of language use (Day, 265).[7]

Along with faulty evaluation devices, another oversight of these studies is the type of contact language being evaluated. In emphasizing the need of quality over quantity when investigating contact language experiences, Spada (1984) created a 28 item list assigning a different number of points to each activity. For example, speaking to a native in the target language was three times more effective than watching television in the target language. She explained her hierarchy as dependent upon the comprehensible input for the learner. However, even after the creation of this hierarchy there was a gap in data reporting. The majority of experiences students deemed as "speaking to a native" were actually centered around speaking with their host-families, their fellow classmates, or not speaking at all. Instead, movie going or radio listening (in the target language) or reading menus or bus schedules while asking native speakers a question or two about the

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[7] The LCP evaluated quantity, not quality. The LCP that Freed utilized was first created by Seliger (1977). This looked at time-on-task in speaking without a variation for different activities in the target language. Thus, speaking with a native for an hour and listening to the radio for an hour were of equal value. The "language contact profile" that many researchers, including Spada (1984), later revised attempted to give a qualitative assessment to the act of speaking outside of class. Each researcher maintained a unique way of making a quantitative measure more qualitative. Seliger's study focused on grouping students as initiators of interaction or HIG (high-input generators) or students that were more passive and waited for the input to come to them or LIG (low-input generators). The HIGs, of course, were more active in their learning and progressed more quickly.

menu or schedule took up much more time than actually engaging in communication—

hardly tasks to be placed under the umbrella of "native contact."

Wilkinson (2002) found an additional problem in student reports of out-of-class

contact: most students and host families practice classroom-speak, the host families

seeing it as part of their job to correct the students rather than engage in true

communication. The host families that did truly engage in conversation were hijacked by

students that were only comfortable with classroom-talk. The students would sway the

conversation back to the easy give and take of a language classroom. "In other words,

seemingly diverse learner behaviors and perceptions can all be understood in terms of

classroom roles and discourse norms" (86). Miller & Ginsberg (1995) found similar

results in the journals that they collected from students about language. Overall, students

recorded negative attitudes toward the instruction in their language classrooms while

abroad, yet they would try to recreate the same scenarios and conversations in their out-

of-class interactions. This finding again demonstrated authentic communication being

substituted to memorized dialogue repetition or mimicked teacher-student interchanges.

Thus, recording the majority of out-of-class-contact as that which happens under

the roof of a host family's home is misleading—in point of fact this resembles ongoing

class periods. Even recording conversations with natives is misleading when authentic

communication is displaced by classroom roles and discourse norms. Likewise, the

reporting of out-of-class contact as what transpires between fellow classmates throws off

the recording of true hours logged in contact. Any alumnus of study abroad knows that

when fellow classmates are together, they rarely stick completely to the target language.

Although practicing language with fellow non-natives can be useful, it should not be considered on a par with meaningful interaction with native speakers.

In addition to these studies finding that their assessment tools were faulty and that inappropriate activities were considered out-of-class contact, these studies also acknowledged that students' exaggerations in reporting time-on-task were an important consideration (see Mendelson's [2004] pupil that reported 480 hours per week of time outside of class with the target language). Spada (1984) suggested that studies implement language-contact diaries in which the learners record all of their input out-of-class. Many studies have used such diaries as a means to gauge the number of hours of out-of-class contact while noting misreporting and the rejection of diaries by some students who see it as busywork or an invasion of privacy and therefore do not allow for a group sample of development (Freed, 1990).

A central message from these studies is the inability of test scores alone to represent student achievement or linguistic development. The LCP's used were exclusively quantitative or too qualitative. The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) was not sensitive enough for programs of only a few weeks or summer stint evaluation,[8] other tests had a false ceiling that indicated advanced students were rarely making improvements. As Pelligrino (1998) states,

> While the quantifiable language proficiency scales may be used as a
> metric for evaluating programs' efficiency, including arguments in favor
> of [study abroad] as a means of cost effective language proficiency gain,
> such scales do not and can not provide a full picture of the [study abroad]
> context as it is truly experienced. Furthermore, such scales provide little,
> if any, diagnostic information concerning learners' success or failure
> during [study abroad]. Introspective studies have allowed researchers,

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[8] Freed (1999) identified the OPI's main error to be the single holistic score for "many components of language use and, because of its non-linear construction, [the OPI] is often unable to discriminate progress made by students at the upper levels of the proficiency scale" (35).

> pedagogues, administrators, and the students themselves to better
> understand the social, psychological, and academic phenomena that
> students undergo when they go abroad.

In short, a new approach to research in the field of out-of-class contact was needed when given the difficulty of appropriately evaluating out-of-class contact.

2.2.2 Incorporating Qualitative Data in Evaluating Out-of-Class Contact

The American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) and the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC) teamed for a major study of students of Russian from the Spring of 1984 to 1990. Their findings were reported in various publications (Brecht & Robinson , 1993; Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; Miller & Ginsberg 1995; Polyani 1995). The findings of Brecht & Robinson (1993) focused primarily on ethnographies, self-report diaries, observations, interviews, and recordings. This move toward examining the individual language learner as opposed to the group as demarked by standardized tests alone was a great leap forward for study abroad research, a window into the learners' world.

2.2.2.1 Personal relationships with natives and language proficiency

The ACTR/NFLC studies included 658 students of Russian from all proficiency levels, various ethnicities, institutions, majors, and a host of other factors. Brecht & Robinson's reporting (1993) found that students who made the jump from 1 to 1+ on the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) scale spoke "Russian only" 25% more than their fellow students, and students that went from 1 to 2 spent 45% more time speaking "Russian only." Much of this speaking time in "Russian only" was with fellow classmates or doing menial tasks such as ordering food or asking for direction. The most interesting fact of the ACTR/NFLC study in relation to the present study is that the students who

improved the most—a 1 to 2+—"spent 40% more time with a single Russian friend than did the non-gainers—again suggesting a type of behavior that is beneficial to language learning." The authors of this study continue by saying, "Students with initial higher-level skills spoke more 'Russian only' than students with lower-level language skills. Second, students at the same level of speaking competency who spoke more 'Russian only' gained more in language competence than students who used more English. While more data [are] required to validate these conclusions statistically, these are among the first empirical data that confirm the widely held opinion that more native use creates more competence" (1993, 10). Not only is speaking the language important, but developing a close personal relationship with a native and spending extended amounts of time with that person was highlighted as beneficial.[9] Another large study reported similar findings.

2.2.2.2 Conversations with host nationals identified as "most important medium"

The Study Abroad Evaluation Project (SAEP) published results of their study of 400 study abroad students in 1990. The overarching purpose of the study was to see if

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[9] Milroy (1987) writing on social networks lead Isabelli-Garcia (2006) to posit that multiplex, extended, closed, social networks allowed deeper conversations and therefore greater levels of acculturation. This means that a student would have multiple (multiplex) speaking partners. Most important was that at least one of these multiple speaking partners would have introduced the student to another, separate group of friends (making the zone of networks "extended"). This new group of friends (speaking partners) should form a community (i.e. they would not be separate shopkeepers that did not know one another; these multiple partners should have a relationship and therefore be considered "closed" in a community. This allowed deeper conversations to come forth and introductions to be surpassed). In these relationships, information was not just exchanged, rather "transactions" were accomplished. Isabelli-Garcia found in her four case studies that the students with these relationships were more prone to reaching out in their community for volunteer work, attending local churches, traveling at great length to visit these contacts, and overcoming cultural differences due to their self-portrayal in the host culture. When they achieved multiplex, extended, closed social networks, they had created a community for themselves similar to the community in their home country just as when they acquired their L1 (first language). They saw themselves as truly integrated. While the connection of L1 and L2 acquisition in social networks is provocative and potentially contributes to my belief of authentic language stimulating acculturation and a propensity to further language study, Isabelli-Garcia's four case studies are far too limited and the contributing factors (such as romantic relationships that formed the core of the extended networks) leave far too many questions unanswered. Consequently, I do not cite this research in the body of my text, but hope future research will reveal greater connections between social networks and authentic communication.

any difference occurred in the lives of students that undertook an abroad experience, including an exploration of students' proficiency. Along with finding that students' speaking ability improved, the team of researchers reported, based on open-ended questions to written surveys, "the most important medium for personal experience in the host country was conversation with the host nationals" (Carlson et al. 1991, 15). The SAEP study is part of the introduction of Laubscher's (1990) research in which he devotes an entire chapter to describing intimate relationships that students developed with host nationals from around the world. Laubscher candidly addresses the many problems students encounter in creating these close relationships, yet he focuses on these relationships due to the emphasis his subjects placed on them as centers of their study abroad learning experience. Through these relationships, much more was gleaned than appropriate entrances and exits in the target language. These relationships were the focus of the study abroad experience and enabled true cultural understanding.

2.3 Obstacles to Out-of-Class Contact

From the research presented thus far, it is clear that out-of-class contact is beneficial (although there are significant differences in opinions as to how beneficial). Beyond mere language improvement, most students rate speaking to "natives" or "host nationals" as the most meaningful and most rewarding act of speaking in another country. Yet, most do not take full advantage of the opportunity. What follows is an exploration of research on the reasons students fear, avoid, and even shun out-of-class opportunities. As we understand this element of the students' decision making process, we should be able to better understand past studies that found out-of-class contact lacking significant

increases in proficiency. More importantly, educators will be able to create better programs to prepare students for the vast experience of study abroad, including speaking with natives.

2.3.1 False Student Assumptions

Wilkinson (1995) highlighted student assumptions and consequent downfalls of the study abroad experience, saying that the failure of students to blossom rapidly in language ability stagnates their success. The assumptions include (pp. 196-199):

- Study abroad ensures miraculous linguistic gain

- Increased non-classroom interaction in the target language is inevitable during a stay abroad

- A host family is preferable to other living arrangements

- Deep cultural understanding will result from residence in a foreign country

- Participants whose experiences contradict the above expectations are themselves deficient

Wilkinson's second assumption, namely "Increased non-classroom interaction in the target language is inevitable during a study abroad" is of greatest interest for the present research. Many students do not realize that they must supplement location with efforts to make contacts outside of the classroom—native friends will supply themselves. Part of the draw to study abroad is that it removes pressure from the learner to find creative means for learning the language. The assumption is that natives will be knocking on their doors and eager to sit patiently for hours on end. This, of course, is not the reality in many study abroad programs, and when students are not anticipating the search that lies in front of them they often resent the unexpected task. Mendelson's dissertation (2004)

investigated the relationship between an observer's statistical findings and student

perceptions of out-of-class contact as a stimulator of oral proficiency. Journals, diaries of

contact, surveys, and OPI protocol were all utilized with these 31 students of Spanish in

summer Salamanca program lasting four weeks and 14 students in the fall Granada

program lasting 14 weeks. Mendelson paired the Wilkinson's assumptions with quotes

from the learners that she was investigating. Some of the corresponding quotes for the

second assumption are: "I avoided the necessity of speaking the language too many

times by staying within the company of English speakers or those who could speak on

my behalf." {Tim} "I didn't pursue as much out-of-class contact because Spanish people

seemed like they didn't want to talk with anyone." {Sandra} "In general people aren't so

interesting. I expected people to want to chat more and be more friendly"

{Gina}(Mendelson, 2004, 365).

2.3.2 Student Beliefs and Actions in Conflict

In Mendelson's pre-departure survey, students favored out-of-class contact over

classwork/homework. "Nearly three-quarters of the students believed it would have a

greater (if not the greatest) effect on their language learning, while the remaining

believed the formal and informal environments would contribute equally" (265). When

the students were asked to reflect on their experience, 75% of the Salamanca students and

100% of the Granada students reported interactions with native people to be their most

positive language learning experience. Mendelson points out that the enthusiasm

students felt as a result of this activity should have inspired them to seek out more of this

kind of out-of-class contact. Questions from the follow-up survey about the frequency of

speaking with natives showed most students reporting "a little" or "normal" amount of contact. Only 3 of the 26 students in the Salamanca program reported speaking with Spanish friends. For all of the other students, their major speaking contacts were their classmates and host family (2004, 351). As mentioned earlier, Wilkinson's work in 2002 revealed that such speaking contacts should not be considered out-of-class contact since classroom protocols and speech patterns are observed in such settings. Nineteen of the 26 Salamanca students and all of the Granada students expressed regret in regards to lack of contact. With these results, it should not be surprising that Mendelson found no correlation between out-of-class contact and oral proficiency.

Time and time again, students claim that their number one goal for entering study-abroad programs is to create meaningful relationships with natives so they can learn the language and culture in a pure form; that the language will become automatic and removed from the grammar drills (Freed, 1995; Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005; Mendelson, 2004). Yet, they are champions of deception. Even when given assignments to interview natives as obligatory homework, they find excuses for not doing so (Mendelson, 2004 pg. 352 only one-third completed the task). Why do students have such strong avoidance behaviors regarding something they believe will take them to their goals?

2.3.3 Student Avoidance of Out-of-Class Contact Connected to Self-Image Concerns

Lambauscher (1994) suggests, "Students abroad often find it difficult to establish close relationships with their counterparts at the host institution, especially given the brevity of their stay and the web of relationships that already exists among the native students" (p.47). Pellegrino-Aveni offers many insights in her book *Study Abroad and*

Second Language Use: Constructing the Self. She suggests that the language we use is one of the most fundamental elements of our self-image.

> It is through the use of language that we create and develop our own self-image and convey our personality to others. With imperfect command of a new language, learners' ability to reveal their true thoughts and identity becomes severely impaired. A paradoxical conflict results in that the language learner wished to create and maintain an ideal sense of self in the second language, yet the very act of language use threatens that image (4).

When students are unable to reveal their inner workings, feelings, personality, and style in a new language, refusal to continue often occurs. The student decides it is less threatening to focus on homework in the privacy of a room than misrepresent their true identity with unskilled language in the streets with strangers. Madeline Ehrman and Zoltan Dörnyei (1998) write, "language learning frequently entails new thought processes, identity, and values that can present a threat to learners" (184). For many language learners, this "new identity" is akin to the self that they were in preschool. The range of native reactions towards learners varies across different cultures. Some students will face natives pretending to be their teachers, beginning with the alphabet because they conjugate a verb wrong. Perhaps the student is not skilled at verbal-noun constructions and so the native feels a need to expound on the infinite beauty of said grammatical construction. The problem is exacerbated when the native makes comments such as "students, in this country, learn this bit of grammar in second grade, but it is OK, because we understand that American schools are very bad." Pride in their country, native grammar, desperate feelings of not wanting to misrepresent the grand cognitive powers handed down from the ancestors are all focuses of the language learner's thoughts—the importance of communication goals or proficiency improvement are often usurped by

such concerns. The following citations from Pellegrino-Aveni's collection of language

journals are illustrative:

> *The second day we did a whirlwind tour of the city but I soon got tired of her
> pointing things out to me and repeating everything 3 or 4 times like I was blind
> and stupid. I couldn't enjoy anything because she kept rattling on and treating
> me like I was five years old. Why do people always assume that if you are
> speaking with an accent that means that you don't understand and are slow and
> stupid too? (Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005, 9)*
>
> *I am enraged at the false persona I'm being stuffed into, as into some
> clumsy and overblown astronaut suit. I'm enraged at my adolescent
> friends because they can't see through the guise, can't recognize the light-
> footed dancer that I really am. They only see this elephantine creature
> who too often sounds as if she's making pronouncements. (Recorded in
> Pellegrinio, 2005, 13)*
>
> *I'm so much cooler in English...but my silence, my immobilization, just
> must've given just a totally different impression...It's not the same "Beth-
> ism," you know? They won't understand how , like...or like, I couldn't
> joke, like I'm a stranger...I think I'm a really cool person when it comes
> down to it, I think I do have a good personality, and it's so frustrating
> being, like, so vacuous. I can't be sassy in the language! A little sassy,
> but not, like, as sassy as I want to be...Like I think if you knew how sassy I
> was, um, how maybe intelligent I was, or maybe, mmm, how confident I
> am normally, I wouldn't be treated this way. Because, it just wouldn't
> happen because of the respect, and I just don't have it. Respect is so
> important to me. But there's no way. I can never get it unless I
> communicate. (Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005, 17)*

In Pellegrino-Aveni's review of literature on how language constructs the self-

image, she cites François Grosjean (1982) who stated "some bilinguals feel that when

they change languages they are changing attitude and behaviors" (279). She also cites

Oliver Sacks, the author of the greatest compilation of history and culture of the

American Deaf experience. Sacks discusses pre-lingual deaf adults and adolescents that

have definite struggles in cognitive and social skills even though we know from the work

of Piaget that thought is not fully dependent on language. They seem to consider

themselves as without thought. Sacks also discusses the bands of Deaf society in which

knowing ASL is prerequisite to being a part of certain circles, not because the Deaf that

communicate with ASL do not know English or how to read lips or use writing, but they

see the choice of communicating in ASL as an identifying factor for their pride and

comfort in being Deaf. Deaf individuals that do not use ASL are seen and treated as

outcasts—they have identified themselves as handicapped, or at least as not embracing

their god-given culture. He also writes of Deaf members that are able to read lips and

communicate in ASL flawlessly but often they feel as though they are not fully a part of

either world, Deaf or hearing (Sacks, 2000).

2.3.4 Anxiety

Perhaps more often discussed than self-image construction, fear has been cited as

a chief obstacle to out-of-class contact. Anxiety as a factor in language learning is no

new topic. Ely (1986) supported Gardner & Smythe's (1974) findings that anxiety and

discomfort in classrooms hinder L2 production, risk-taking, and ultimately proficiency.[10]

"The ultimate effect of mental, physical, and emotional responses to feelings of anxiety,

therefore, is manifested as severely reduced L2 use in terms of quality of performance,

extent of risk-taking in using new and/or complicated constructions, and spontaneous L2

productions for socializing" (23). In fact, all of the benefits manifest in the studies done

in the 1980s and 1990s (beginning with Moehle and Raupach) in study abroad contexts

are the exact elements lost when anxiety enters the equation.

Most researchers have only tested the presence or absence of anxiety during

second language acquisition; they have not sought for the root of the fear. Pellegrino-

Aveni (2005), however, suggests that anxiety in language learning is a symptom of a

much deeper issue—the problems involved with construction of self-image. Therefore,

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[10] For a fuller listing of studies involving language learning and anxiety see Pellegrino, 2005 pgs. 21-25.

Pellegrino-Aveni sees these two obstacles as related. Ehrman (1996), like Pellegrino-Aveni, stated that "anxiety relates to a response a student has to a perceived threat to his or her sense of security or self-esteem" (137). She also extended this theory of anxiety to include a means for learners to defend their self-esteem. In recording a woman's response to anxiety, Ehrman wrote, "Celia's issue was related to her fear of failure. As it turned out, she was indeed sabotaging herself so that she would have an excuse for not meeting her goal. If she did badly, she could say, 'If I'd really tried, I would have succeeded.' The result was that her anxiety was a protection of her self-image" (1996, 150).

2.3.5 Other Reasons for Avoiding Out-of-Class Contact

Language learners on study abroad have a myriad of reasons for avoiding social interaction. The researcher, having been a teaching assistant on several study abroad programs, recalls the following excuses from the students: It requires intense thinking and they convince themselves that a break is needed (and then the break never ends). They get paired with another student or a host family that they typically would not interact with and feel that this is an excuse to not participate in extended conversation, citing personality differences. They get bombarded with assignments and feel confident that they can achieve high scores if they focus on these instead of seeking natives for conversations. Learners also feel rejected when trying to initiate conversations or they find that the native speaker wants to practice English just as much as they want to practice the target language and decide it is not worth all of the extra time needed for both. Sometimes the native speakers think that the students can influence their obtaining a visa or helping a relative living in the States and the relationship becomes

uncomfortable. Learners compare themselves to the other students in the group and decide they will make a fool of themselves if they speak in front of their linguistically superior comrades. This often leads to enhanced listening skills with no speaking component. How long does a student of language stay focused on someone else's conversation? They fear that they will miss vital information such as specifics on a ticket or a phone number, convinced they will make mistakes if they are responsible for the language negotiating, and so they pawn the task off on another. In the end we find, "when language students choose to use the language for *authentic communication*, they need to have goals that are of sufficient value that the benefit outweighs the cost of performance. They need to feel personally responsible for achieving the communication goal, and they need to recognize that the goal is best if only performed in the target language" (Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005, 33 italics added).

As seen in this review of literature, out-of-class contact can be among the most important aspects of language learning during a study abroad experience. Previous studies have vacillated in their support of out-of-class contact due to the wrong activities and interlocutors being recorded as part of out-of-class contact. Not all out-of-class activities are equal, there is certainly a quality continuum just as there are certainly different ways of achieving authentic communication for different students. Students repeatedly claim that speaking with natives is the most stimulating and memorable aspect of their study abroad programs, as well as the major conduit of cultural exposure and acceptance. Therefore, significant out-of-class contact should be a major aim for study abroad administrators not only for the language proficiency gains, but for the gains in cultural competence. Nevertheless, there are many obstacles that students experience

when engaging in out-of-class contact. One of the most detrimental aspects is the fear manifested as the students' self-image is threatened. This fear results in numerous excuses generated by students in an effort to avoid awkward out-of class contact.

2.4 Introduction of Research Questions

With all of the above excuses and more in the minds of students, why do they report conversations with strangers as the most edifying and enjoyable part of a study-abroad? The Pellegrino-Aveni (2005) quote uses an all-important coupling of words to answer the question as to what "authentic communication" is. Authentic communication in this study is defined as communication with natives in which a student is able to reveal their inner persona while speaking in the target language.[11]

The current study seeks to identify a critical element in out-of-class conversations—an element that elevates conversations with some natives from enjoyable to language altering and meaningful long-term. Of course, a few memorable conversations with natives in which a student is able to convey true opinions and personality are not a magic solution for radical cultural understanding or motivational stimulation, the day-to-day interactions can and must involve authentic moments as well. Authentic communication is analyzed for its impact as a catalyst for linguistic, cultural, and motivational benefits through proficiency tests, surveys, interviews, and essays of students studying Arabic. These students attended study abroad programs for Arabic in Alexandria, Egypt (comprising 53 students) and Amman, Jordan (comprising 32 students).

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[11] See footnote 1 for a discussion of the definition of authentic communication.

Since this study centers around research questions involving authentic communication—namely, communication with natives that allows the students to reveal their true persona—increases cultural understanding and motivation for continued language study, it is critical to identify which topics and situations students identified as most memorable and authentic. Also, identifying the impact of these conversations on their study abroad experience is explored. More specifically, this study analyzes whether students report that their cultural understanding and desire to continue in the study of the language is influenced by conversations that they had out-of-class. The following research questions were designed to address these issues: (1) Is there a direct connection between students that reported a passion for speaking with natives out-of-class and their improvement in final scores on exit exams? (2) What was the most memorable conversation that participants identified having with natives? (3) Did participants converse with natives in a way that allowed them to reveal their own personality and maintain a positive self-image? (4) What conversations changed students' outlook on the host culture and was that change positive or negative? (5) Did speaking with natives encourage participants to incorporate Arabic into their future lives?

Chapter 3: Method

The goals of this study are unlike those in other studies analyzing of out-of-class contact in two main ways. First, this study does not rely solely on proficiency scores as evidence of study abroad success. Instead, the goal of students' understanding and respecting their host culture and desiring to continue their studies is paramount. OPI scores, however, were recorded and will be used as an added descriptor for participants in the study. Secondly, the aim of this study was not to see which students are best at out-of-class contact. Instead, a goal of this study was to find which conversations meaningfully influenced students in their determination to study the language both during and after the study abroad program. Identifying which student is more skilled in achieving these out-of-class conversations is not as important as the need to identify the topics and settings for successful conversation so that future study abroad programs can prepare students to participate in this type of communication.

3.1 Background

The events of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq precipitated a surge of interest in Middle East languages, notably raising their importance among national priorities. The National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMELRC) was established at Brigham Young University (BYU) in August, 2002 under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education in order to efficiently and effectively strengthen and build national capacity in Middle East (ME) languages. NMELRC's first task was to undertake a systematic nationwide evaluation of the learning and teaching of ME languages. This was accomplished through surveys of students, teachers, and

program administrators. Survey results have been used to inform teachers through training workshops and to enrich NMELRC board and focus group discussions. In order to better serve students of ME languages in the United States, NMELRC seeks input from students, instructors and administrators regarding students' motivation for learning ME languages, their feelings on what works for them in acquiring ME languages, and their assessment of instructional methods used in language classes. As Miller & Ginsberg (1995) noted in their presentation of students' "folklinguistic" beliefs about study abroad, "What students believe about language learning is important not for their validity, but for their consequences."

In discussions with the researcher while on study abroad, some of the students reported that September 11th was a major thrust for their undertaking the study of the Arabic language. A student undertaking a language in which the target culture is frightening or at least depicted as such on mass media is of added difficulty to language teachers. However, the mystery and misrepresentation of the Middle East through media has spurred mass numbers of students to study a language that was once struggling in attendance numbers. The dire need for speakers of Arabic necessitated the inception of the NMELRC. Large numbers of students searching for language instruction without the staff to provide university level instruction has created a gap in many universities and therefore highlights the need of the NMELRC in its teacher training purposes. The NMELRC's allegiance to student needs is emphasized no less, and it has therefore created a battery of surveys with the intention of understanding the perspectives of students more fully.

These NMELRC student surveys at times confirm the above statements on post-September 11th motivation for Arabic studies. One of the students reported that she started taking Arabic after seeing the horrors of the movie *Not Without My Daughter*, a motion picture depicting actual events of a Western woman fighting to kidnap her daughter back from the grasp of Middle Eastern in-laws. This student cited her initial motivation for studying Arabic as a means for aiding other women caught in similar violent relationships with frightening and domineering men. Two of the male students stated they were propelled to take Arabic to jump start careers in military intelligence. These students could all have been characterized as studying Arabic for Machiavellian motivations, yet through study abroad programs came to value the target cultures and see a greater depth to problems and plausible solutions in the area than anticipated. These three examples are not to be representative of the study abroad groups as a whole—they are the more radical examples of early perspectives from the students. The reasons for studying Arabic are as varied as the students themselves, some being heritage learners and some never having contact with an Arab before their study abroad experience. With such a varied background in student motivations and goals existing at the inception of language instruction, the study abroad portion of language experience is more critical than ever in fostering cultural understanding and has therefore become a major goal for the NMELRC. The student surveys and collections of essays used in this study were all done under the auspices of the NMELRC.

3.2 Participants

Participants in this study came from two study abroad groups. The first group included 53 students (36 male, 17 female) studying Alexandria, Egypt. The second group

included 32 students (22 male, 10 female) studying in Amman, Jordan. The participants

were all American college students with the exception of one Turkish graduate student on

the Amman program. The majority of the students were undergraduates in their junior or

senior years. The programs were each a semester in length (approximately 4 months).

The students in this investigation had each completed at least 4 semesters (101, 102, 201,

& 202) of five-hours-per-week university Arabic instruction prior to their departure.

Some of the students took advantage of an intensive summer program that allowed them

to complete all 4 semesters 10 months prior to their study abroad experience. Seven of

the students had completed more formal instruction before the study abroad[12]. Some of

the students also had additional pre-study-abroad experiences that would have developed

their Arabic skills, such as living in foreign language housing and visiting Arabic

speaking countries before traveling with their respective group.

3.3 Setting

In the Alexandria program, students lived together in groups of four to six

separated by gender (or as families, in the case of students accompanied by spouse and

possibly children). Finding their accommodations was one of their first native contact

opportunities. Some of the female students in Amman lived with host families that had

been pre-arranged. None of the men in Amman or Alexandria were able to be placed in a

homestay situation and experienced similar living situations as those in Alexandria. Both

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[12] As cited in Brecht, et al (1993a), the ACTR study found "approximately 13 percent of students with four years of college Russian score advanced level on the preprogram OPI, a figure that, curiously enough, does not vary greatly among students with two to five years of language." Therefore, additional pre-study abroad classroom experience beyond the four semester minimum does not appear to put students in radically different levels of preparation, at least as far as oral proficiency is concerned. This was true of the students on the Alexandria and Amman programs, for all skills (personal communication with Kirk Belnap).

study abroad programs included similar formal classroom instruction time in Arabic. The students spent 5 days each week in class for approximately 5 hours per day. The classes were divided into various levels in which students were placed based on Center for Applied Linguistics Arabic Proficiency Test scores completed prior to departure and initial OPI interviews and essays written in Arabic which were completed immediately upon arrival in country before classes began. The classes were taught by native instructors with the exception of the current events class which was taught by the accompanying professor in Alexandria. The students were required to keep a language journal to document out-of-class contact for their colloquial Arabic course as well as undertake interviews with the accompanying professor and/or teaching assistants throughout the program to aid them in accomplishing and reassessing their language learning goals. The students were required to log at least 10 hours per week of contact in Amman and 12 hours per week in Alexandria to fulfill their colloquial Arabic course requirements. The researcher received permission to use all student quotes by following proper IRB protocol. IRB approval was received by the NMELRC before any of the three surveys were administered. All student quotes are included with express permission of the students; their names are represented with pseudonyms.

3.4 Instruments and Procedures

The centerpiece of the current research is the Out-of-Class Contact survey (see appendix A), which was created by the researcher. The students that took part in this survey had taken two additional surveys administered earlier by the NMELRC. These earlier surveys were used as a model for the development of the final Out-of-Class

Contact Survey and as a source for student background information and early student

perceptions related to authentic communication, motivation, and cultural appreciation. A

more in-depth discussion of each survey, together with the rationale for using them will

follow. Also used for the current research were exit OPI scores and essays which will

also be discussed in more detail.

 The NMELRC *Online Survey of Students of Arabic* was the largest of the three

surveys administered. It included a significant exploration of background information on

each of the students, including all institutions attended and languages taken previously.

Students were asked to rate their ability in reading, writing, listening, and speaking (in

Arabic and each language previously studied), as well as to include plans for future study

and ultimate language goals. Ethnographic information was also included. After the

background information students were asked through open-ended questions, closed

questions, and Likert scales to rate their various motivations for language study, cultural

perceptions, and comfort and passion in speaking with natives of the target language. A

final section explored students attitudes towards language learning and an assessment of

learning styles, including preferences on instructors and instructional materials.

 This first survey was most beneficial in providing the current study a longitudinal

form, in that the students took part in this survey years before the final out-of-class

contact survey was administered. Students described what their language goals were as

well as motivations for studying Arabic. This survey allowed the researcher to compare

and contrast the most recent data (found in the Out-of-Class Contact Survey) to gauge

student benefits of study abroad over time. Since one of the major themes of the research

questions is whether authentic communication will sustain a motivation to continue

studying the language, this baseline data was needed. Specifically, this early survey kept

the findings from being distorted by identifying those students who never intended to

pursue further Arabic studies. The background information included throughout the

findings—such as majors and fields of interest that could influence topic preferences in

speaking with natives—was also taken from this survey.

The *Alexandria Study Abroad Survey* was only administered to the Alexandria

students. Some of the questions in the final survey were modeled after portions of this

survey so experiences from the Amman group (which did not take part in the Alexandria

survey) could be recorded.   For example, many questions on this survey focused on the

impact of cultural experiences and how those experiences affected the overall language

learning of the program. Since the Amman students had never addressed such issues in

survey form, similar questions were added to the Out-of-Class Contact Survey. This

survey was divided into 3 sub-headings: Background Information, Strategies Inventory

for Learning Culture, and Language Strategy Survey. The background information

varied from the initial survey in that it asked for students to respond to their motivational

and language ability changes based on their study abroad experience. This survey also

questioned any structured activities that the students may have been involved in (i.e.

volunteering, internships, or consistent language partners/tutors). The background

information also allocated space for students to discuss gender issues. The Strategies

Inventory for Studying Culture included items with Likert scales in which students

gauged their level of agreement with statements about perceptions, stereotypes, and

cultural negotiating. Students' strategies for coping with culture shock, interpreting of

the target culture, interacting with peoples of other cultures, and re-entry at the end of the

program were also included. The Language Strategy Survey included questions involving strategies for listening, speaking, circumlocution, reading, writing, translating, and gaining exposure in the target language all in the form of Likert scales.

The rationale for utilizing this survey stemmed from its excellent model of cultural issues found in the second section. Unfortunately, most of the data collected from this survey are not presented since Amman students did not participate in this survey. Only the open-ended essays from this survey are found in this work, interspersed throughout where appropriate to give educators additional perspectives of student learning strategies. Also, the section on gender from this survey is incorporated in the implications for future research in the final chapter, though not included in initial findings; again, this is because the majority of the students did not participate in this survey. The results from the gender portion of this survey have been identified by program administrators as unique to the Alexandria program and quite different from the experiences of the students in Amman.

The *Out-of-Class Contact Survey* was the last survey administered to the students and is the centerpiece of this study. The two surveys discussed above contained large portions of inapplicable data in regard to authentic communication and out-of-class contact. Therefore, while the above surveys were used to extract the specific information noted above, this final survey, written by the researcher, was the focus of the current research. Portions of the above surveys were explored and incorporated in the current work in order to illuminate and supplement the findings of this final survey. This final survey began by asking students to identify times in which they speak passionately in their native language and then to identify topics of greatest passion—again in their L1.

The relationships, settings, and topics that enabled memorable conversations in the target language were then included. Questions of cultural appreciation based on interaction with natives and motivation considerations that were affected by out-of-class contact were addressed. Likert scales and open-ended questions made up the majority of the survey, including scales for topics of passion and topics spoken on frequently in the target language. Findings reported are based on this final Out-of-Class Contact Survey, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

Before departing for study abroad, most of the students participated in the NMELRC general survey entitled "Online Survey of Students of Arabic-National Middle East Language Resource Center."[13] Pre-study abroad OPI's were conducted by the staff of the program for the purpose of class placement; however, these tests were not done with exact rubrics or with official OPI training (and are therefore not being used in this study).   Post-study abroad OPI interviews were administered by ACTFL-certified testers and double rated. Only the Alexandria students were surveyed immediately post study abroad with the "Alexandria Study Abroad Survey."[14] The Alexandria students were also asked to submit essays for future students on Arabic study abroad programs. These essays were one to five pages in length and addressed issues such as regrets, how they would prepare differently, brilliant elements of their language learning, and how their study abroad experience changed their future life plans. In addition, the final survey was administered in an effort to gauge students' perceptions of what was truly memorable, culturally enlightening, or motivating in their out-of-class conversations while studying abroad. The Out-of-Class Contact Survey was taken 3 years (for Alexandria students) or

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[13] To view the complete survey see http://nmelrc.org/survey/student/print.php

[14] To view the complete post-Alexandria survey go to http://nmelrc.org/survey/alexandria/print.php

1 year (for Amman students) after returning home and was entitled "Out-of-Class Contact

Survey." The respondents from both programs to the final survey included 29 students

(17 male and 12 female).

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The surveys discussed above captured an enormous amount of information from this group of study abroad participants. This is neither the first nor is it likely to be the last study to utilize and present findings from the NMELRC surveys. The data gleaned from the above surveys for this study are focused on interaction with natives, motivation for and goals in speaking the target language, and cultural implications of speaking with natives while on study abroad programs. There were reoccurring themes of connected topics (such as gender issues) that are not directly relevant to out-of-class communication. The researcher has included these observations in implications for future research in the final chapter. It is hoped that this data on study abroad students of less-commonly-taught languages will be a boon to many researchers. In order to further the purposes of this study, however, the researcher has limited the findings to data and inferences that are directly relevant to the research questions; that is, data that bears on authentic communication and the benefits of such communication on cultural understanding and the continued motivation to learn the target language.

4.1 Initial Findings

4.1.1 Is There a Direct Connection Between Students That Reported a Passion for Speaking with Natives Out-of-Class and Their Improvement in Final Scores on Exit Exams?

When students were asked if they felt out-of-class contact improved their conversational ability, 100% responded in the affirmative (25 of 29 or 86.2% "very

strongly agree" and 4 of 29 or 13.8% "agree"). Exit OPI's suggested that these two study

abroad programs were "successful" in that 84% of the total number of students tested in

the Advanced range. As mentioned earlier, however, this study defined success in terms

of student plans for further language study and in terms of reported cultural appreciation.

A connection between advanced high proficiency and reported passion in speaking with

natives (as reported in the pre-departure survey, see appendix I) was investigated with

none found. A passion for speaking the language did not translate into a higher

frequency of meaningful conversations or a greater likelihood of plans to complete more

years of Arabic study. Some students who reported high passion for learning Arabic and

speaking with natives pre-study abroad seem to have experienced culture shock to a

greater degree and reported hiding in their flat instead of engaging in out-of-class contact.

Perhaps this is the reason that the reported passion did not translate into the highest OPI

scores. Two of the students who reported the highest passion pre-departure did not

continue with Arabic studies after their study abroad experience, although they reported

before their program that they anticipated continuing with Arabic. Some of the students

with the highest passion pre-departure struggled in finding friends in country or with

factors such as illness or homesickness. Two of the students with the highest OPI scores

responded unfavorably to questions regarding speaking with natives (to be discussed in

detail below). The following are reports from the Alexandria post-study abroad essays.[15]

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[15] A large number of quotes were included so as to represent the broad spectrum of opinions and to eliminate bias as much as possible. Some quotes were chosen due to their eloquent depiction of a feeling that many other students suggested in less articulate terms. Also, quotes that represented a unique point-of-view were included so as to not ignore or reject minority ideas. In no way were the quotes chosen to stack the deck or over exaggerate a pet point of the researcher. The greatest aim of this researcher was to reveal the minds of the students in regard to study abroad experiences. The overall positive response to questions on the influence of speaking with natives should be seen as a result of the students being aware that the topic of interest for the researcher was speaking with natives and not seen as a hand-picking of quotes.

Everyone has different techniques that are useful for their personal language learning, but the technique I found most helpful is probably the best one in general—speaking. In our program, we had to speak for a certain amount of hours each week, and those hours were definitely the best I spent. It didn't matter with whom, or where, or how, but any time spent interacting in the target language was positive time. Of course, some times are better than others, and students should make an effort to find helpful speaking partners: people who listen when you speak, are willing to repeat themselves, and, perhaps most important to me, are willing to discuss a wide variety of topics, so that the student doesn't get bored talking about the same things—which, in my experience, were usually the American presidential election and Islam. In a program like this, speaking needed to be a habit. There were days when I absolutely couldn't speak, and that's all right, but there were also days when I just didn't feel like it, and those were the days when it was most important to invest time speaking. Even an hour or two can help with language learning.

Another important technique for me was to reflect on the speaking I did by writing down new words and structures and by writing down goals for ways to improve my speaking. This emphasis on speaking is really the aspect in which my attitudes changed the most. Being in Egypt forced me to change my focus in language learning from academic to social. This was perhaps the most difficult thing for me because I am not naturally focused on social interaction; but if a student like me can undergo this transformation in attitude near the beginning of the program, he or she will benefit from the program much more. Language learning in situ [in its native place], in many ways, is about being a "people person," or at the very least being prepared to fake it. This is cliché of course, and thus I hesitate to say it, but my interest in Arabic also changed from a more linguistic approach to a more communicative approach, and I have developed a greater interest in issues of culture, religion, and politics in the Arabic-speaking world. Sarah

You will feel like you're not improving and that you look like an idiot. You do look like an idiot. No matter how much you improve, you will always make big mistakes. But push through it and don't avoid talking to people because one day you're going to understand an entire conversation and you'll feel like you're on top of the world. But this won't happen if you hide from Egyptians. Reading your newspaper will help, but it will do nothing for your speaking ability, so get out there and speak. When else will you have thousands of native speakers at your disposal? At one point during the program, I hated Arabic passionately. I hated learning it and I hated speaking it. Then I started to haggle at the markets and people would make jokes with me and I made friends. All of a sudden, it was cool

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Insights drawn from essays that support the data were included as well as insights that were contrary to the data.

to communicate with these people and it offered so many insights into their culture. By the end of the program, I was spending my free time with Egyptians just so I could practice speaking, getting used to the sounds rolling off my tongue, and deciphering what came into my ears.

The best thing I did for my language skills was to speak. Honestly, I spent serious hours talking to natives and it increased my fluency phenomenally. One strategy I used was to have the same conversations with different friends. I would ask them about their day and then tell them about mine, and as I had the same conversations over and over, I became more proficient with the vocabulary, and I picked up on the way they described their day and was able to incorporate that the next time I had this conversation. Eventually, I had enough vocabulary I could comfortably use that we had conversations about whatever we wanted, and I didn't have to think about the things I would talk about beforehand. Leeza

Once again, no direct connection between OPI exit exams and reported passion were found, although students *all* report that out-of-class contact improves conversation ability. This is in line with Miller & Ginsberg's (1995) analysis of student diaries in which students rank conversations with natives to be the greatest influence on their language learning even without formal test evidence.

Table 1

Exit OPI Analysis for Study Abroad Programs

	Advanced Range	Intermediate Range	
Jordan	23	4	85.2%
Egypt	44	9	83.0%
Totals	67	13	83.8%

4.1.2 What Was the Most Memorable Conversation That Participants Identified Having

With Natives?

As should be expected, based on the work of Wilkinson (2002) and Miller &
Ginsberg (1995) who found that discussions inside of class often involved students
duplicating similar conversations with natives outside of class, the majority of the most
memorable conversations involved politics. As previously mentioned, students took part
in a current events class. The Alexandria students' course was taught by the
accompanying professor and most reported this class as their favorite, primarily because
the teaching style was one that they were familiar with, unlike the teaching styles of the
natives who taught their other classes. In Amman, the current events class was taught by
natives. Beyond the intuitive correlation emphasized by Wilkinson, Miller, and
Ginsberg, the data shows clearly that most of the students had a passionate interest in
politics[16] and that local Arabs were happy to accommodate this interest in conversation.
The second most frequent topic of students' "most memorable" conversation was
religion. Within the environment of the Middle East it is hard to imagine that any student
would escape those topics with natives. Hence it is not surprising that they were likewise
counted as the "most memorable."

As Table 2 shows, 14 of 29 (48.3%) students reported political conversations as
the "most memorable"; 10 of 29 (34.5%) reported religious; four of 29 (13.8%) reported
cultural; and one of the 29 (3.4%) reported a family related conversation.

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[16] Politics ranked as the number two topic of passionate interest even though 20 of the 29 students were
pursuing politically-oriented degrees. These majors included political science, international relations, and
Middle East Studies. Of the other nine students five were majoring in Linguistics, and one in each of
Literature, Electrical Engineering, Spanish, and Humanities-History Teaching. These facts were collected
from the NMELRC's pre-departure survey (see appendix 1).

Table 2

Reporting of "Most Memorable" Conversation

Broad Topic of Conversation	More Specific Topic	Amount of Time on Program	Did student ever speak with this native again?
Politics	**Israel/Palestine**	**1.5 months**	No
Politics	**Saddam Hussein and Iraq war**	**1 month**	Yes
Politics	**Suicide bombing**	**3 months**	Yes
Politics	**American support of war in Lebanon**	**4 months**	No
Politics	**Palestine**	**2 months**	No
Politics	**US foreign policy goals**	**1 month**	No
Politics	**Israel/Palestine**	**2 months**	Yes
Politics	**War in Lebanon**	**2 months**	Yes
Politics	**Middle East oil**	**1 month**	No
Politics	**Voting for Bush in coming and past election**	**2 months**	Yes
Politics	**Death in war**	**3 months**	No
Politics	**Gaza kidnapping**	**2 months**	No
Politics	**Coming elections and morality of candidates**	**4 months**	No
Politics	**American imperialism and**	**3 months**	No

	stereotypes		
Religion	**The divinity of Jesus**	**Not reported**	Yes
Religion	**Conversion to Islam**	**2 months**	Yes
Religion	**Need for religious leaders**	**2 months**	Yes
Religion	**Smoking and Muslim values**	**1 week**	Yes
Religion	**No more specifics given**	**2 months**	No
Religion	**Belief in Muhammad**	**2 months**	No
Religion	**Differences in religions**	**2.5 months**	Yes
Religion	**Modesty and dress**	**3 months**	Yes
Religion	**Differences in religions**	**2 months**	Yes
Religion	**Morality and lack of in Western society**	**1.5 months**	No
Culture	**Bridging the East and the West**	**3 months**	Yes
Culture	**Role of women in Arab society**	**4 months**	Yes
Culture	**Us vs. Middle East concerning family values**	**2 months**	No
Culture	**No more specifics given**	**2.5 months**	Yes
Family	**Death of a relative**	**1.5 months**	No

Strikingly, 9 of the 13 (69.2%) conversations on politics were with natives never to be seen again and three of the ten (30.0%) conversations on religion were with natives never to be seen again. Part of the topic bias in responding to this question is to blame on the instrument. Many students interpreted "most memorable" as a conversation involving an emotional argument, a heated debate.[17] Many of the responses involve descriptions of angry natives and frustrated students not able to negotiate the meeting of two cultures. This fact could account for why many of the students reported that they never spoke with this native again[18]. Two of the students described very bizarre situations (such as speaking with a person partially insane or being proposed to at the end of the conversation) as the main factor in making it memorable.

As evidenced by the variable amount of time in-country, proficiency in the language was not a major factor in creating memorable conversations. This information is significant in that students should expect memorable conversations throughout their study abroad experience and not only when they have reached a magical benchmark in their minds of proficiency. Intuitively, the more proficient a student is, the less fear that student will experience and the easier it will be able to get past shallow topics of conversation and represent their own selves. As charted above, however, proficiency is not a prerequisite to memorable conversations. In fact, a lack of proficiency and an

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[17] As is anticipated with new instruments, the students' interpretations of the questions on the Out-of-Class Contact Survey often varied from that of what the researcher intended. To circumvent this weakness the researcher used similarly worded questions in the survey with the phrases, "most memorable," "meaningful," "deep, not shallow," "real," and "passionate" to ask the students about authentic language conversations. This was not an inconsistency in wording; rather it was an attempt to encourage a broad span of student responses to the concept of authentic communication. In this example it can be seen that instead of reporting on "authentic" topics, the majority of the students seem to have reported on emotionally charged topics.

[18] One student reported that a sickness in the family prohibited further contact after this interchange, and two students reported that this was one of their final conversations and they soon left the country.

inability to communicate on a heated topic is what may have added to the "memorable"

nature of the conversation.

4.1.3 Did Participants Converse With Natives in a Way That Allowed Them to Reveal
Their Own Personality and Maintain a Positive Self-Image?

When asked "How often did you feel like you were able to get past shallow topics

and introductions?" a majority of the students completing the final survey (18 of 29 or

62.1%) responded, "I remember multiple times that I had meaningful discussions." Six

students (20.7%) responded, "Daily I had meaningful discussions" and 3 students

(10.3%) responded "Most of the time I was speaking with natives I felt we had

meaningful discussions." Two (6.9%) responded "Only once or twice during my study

abroad program I had meaningful discussions."[19]

Pellegrino-Aveni (1995) posited (as cited in the review of literature) that the main

obstacle to students seeking out-of-class contact was fear brought about by identity crises

and inability to share their inner thoughts and feeling in more than a juvenile manner

when they did not have command of the language. The need to represent your own style

and personality accurately was pinpointed as a major factor in achieving authentic

communication. Therefore, the following question was phrased: "Did you consider

conversations with natives to be 'real conversations?' Meaning, did you feel like you

were able to represent yourself accurately?" All students responded "yes" with two

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[19] These findings should be considered with reservations since the variation of what students describe as
shallow conversations is no doubt great. Some students may have considered a topic on the weather as
"meaningful" if they were able to extrapolate meaning from it while others would not consider a discourse
on the appropriateness of gender roles in the classroom to be of consequence if they were not able to recall
an irregular verb structure during the conversation.

adding, "not all of the time/sometimes" and other students adding, "at the beginning, no, but as I had more experience in the language, yes."

> *At the beginning the conversations were not so real but more forced and limited to topics I had already discussed in classes and for which I had the vocabulary. As my vocabulary increased, my familiarity with the person grew, and my confidence in the language overall increased, I was able to express more detailed concepts such as my religious beliefs or political views. For example, while at the beginning of the program the conversation may have been limited to opinions about certain events or people, later I was able to discuss the complexities of my views and really say what I thought about a topic more fully. Gideon*

When asked in the Out-of-class Contact Survey to describe one of these "real conversations" students again referred to many conversations on the topics of religion, in particular, morality. This seems to be a topic that they were able to speak passionately on and unite with native speakers.[20]

> *Yes. I felt that I was able to represent myself accurately. I often had to explain my religious beliefs. I was able to voice my own political and moral opinions with most of those that I came in contact with—I felt I could go beyond the 'Ahlan...Keyfik?...Kuaiys...' rote conversations that I had originally learned...My last taxi ride in Jordan lasted 45 minutes because of distance and traffic...After talking about politics briefly, he asked me about American morality, asking if I did drugs and had rampant sex with dozens of blonds. I told him I didn't—that I personally didn't believe that those things were right, and that my religion teaches me not to. He was shocked. We discussed the failing morals of the world, both in the Arab world and in America...We then exchanged compliments of one another... Kyle*

> *I generally had real conversations. I remember one guy in particular who joked about how he and his friends watched porn together, and I said that I didn't. He was surprised. He didn't believe me, but I felt like I*

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[20] This may seem like a shocking fact since the divide between the East and West in regard to morals is often highlighted by politicians, religious leaders, and media powers. The fact that young American students could go to the Middle East and find that religion was a conversation that they could repeatedly have and build friendships around is a bragging point. The research would be amiss without adding the information that all of the students on these study abroad programs (with the exception of 3 other decidedly religious students, that did not choose to respond to the final survey) were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and strongly believe in a moral code that most Arabs find impressive.

explained my reasons well enough that I felt I had been understood. One of my friend's brothers tried to proselytize me to Islam. We spent a lot of time talking about how many things we had in common in our faiths, and in the end I had to say that I'd probably keep believing what I believe, but that I appreciated him telling me about Islam. Richard

Participants recorded instances when they were able to sway the opinion of the native as a sign of "real conversations" taking place. Times when they were able to express a new idea to a native were reported as particularly memorable.

We were discussing the Palestinian situation and my friend made a comment about Jews being evil and so I tried to explain that Jews were just people they were not any better or worse than other people. And in the end he agreed with me and thanked me for helping him to see that they were doing what they thought they needed to be safe just like the Palestinians were doing what they thought they needed to do to be better off/free from occupation. Winston

Some of the friends that I had made the comment that Arabs were just copycats, and they were just taking everything from other cultures, and letting their culture fall by the wayside. I explained that that was not the impression of Arabs that I had at all. I explained the way that I saw Arabs in a more positive light, and that I saw some of the things that they were adopting in a more positive light. That I saw some of the things that they were adopting as modern things that the whole world was adopting at once because the world in general was changing, as opposed to just the Arabs adopting these things from others. For example, they brought up clothing, and the way that Arabs were adopting western clothing. I explained that modern clothing isn't the traditional clothing of the west either, and it was something that the west had adopted as the world modernized. Rachel

We were talking about Darfur and how he wanted the US to intervene and I told him he was inconsistent because the other day he had gone on a rant about US interventionism and how he hated it. I felt really proud of that conversation. Herm

Students spoke of deeply personal conversations in which they discussed their families and cultural constraints as "real conversations." This can be seen as evidence of the students feeling that they were able to reveal a portion of their true persona.

Sometimes-I had a few conversations with friends that could have been in any language—I didn't notice because I was so involved…[One of my roommates and I] talked a lot about struggles of learning a language and living in a foreign country (she was originally from Israel/Palestine). [We] talked about our families and what each of us missed about them. She described the beautiful things about living in Israel/Palestine and some of the difficulties in being an Arab Israeli citizen living in Jordan. Juliet

One night I got into a conversation with the three teenage girls I mentioned earlier about their role as women in a Middle Eastern and Muslim society. I was able to share my thoughts and feelings as a western woman observing their culture and they in turn were able to open up about how they feel they are treated as teenage girls. Valerie

I went to get ice cream with a bunch of people, both male and female (from the university and from our program) and had a 'real' conversation about the demographics of Amman and how that it was permissible where we were (to have both genders together), but not in other places and why. Kyle

A number of students described "real conversations" as times when they were able to incorporate prior knowledge, unrelated to their language program, into conversations. This follows Pellegrino-Aveni's theory (2002) of students needing to reveal their identity. The students are able to show to their native friends that there are other facets to their interests beyond that of studying the language that they are faltering with. They are able to preserve a self-image that shows their intelligence and skills in a separate world than their language studies.

Only the conversations about Arabic literature, which I knew more about than most Arabs, were 'real' conversations to me. The casual chit chat about families, etc., so often repeated that it ceased to be rewarding. I remember discussing the Muqadamah of Ibn Khaldun with my speaking partner's father. We discussed literature and Islam. He was impressed that I had even heard of Ibn Khaldun, let alone read the Muqadamah in the original Arabic. Mary

As I was teaching math skills at the Community Development Center, the children were having trouble understanding negative numbers. I drew an elevator on the white board, and we talked about floors above and below

the ground floor…By moving the "elevator" we were able to arrive at the correct answers. Marcus

Many people were impressed with my knowledge of Islam or Arab History. Taylor

[We] discussed favorite books, especially romance novels. Josephine

I remember the first conversation with Ahmed about religion and he of course didn't know anything about mine, and I had absolutely no way of talking about it. What's more, I knew a great deal about Islam [but] didn't know how to talk about it or relate it to mine [in Arabic]. I certainly didn't feel like I represented myself well. By the end, however, I did. Those I spoke with were very concerned about religion and religiosity and I got relatively good at speaking about it. Another frustrating conversation was with my neighbor's sister who had studied philosophy just as I had. It was impossible to even say what sort of philosophy I liked. Joshua

I also had several fun conversations with Marwa about linguistics, our shared field. With Marwa I also know a lot about her familu, and she knew about mine, so we spent time discussing problems within our families. Eva-Marie

Some students elaborated on "real" conversations they had, but did not hesitate to make mention of when their language could not represent their full identity.

I considered some of those conversations to be real, By the end of the program I was more or less able to represent my serious opinions accurately, though I still couldn't represent my jokes or sense of humor. Eva-Marie

Sometimes they were 'real,' When they were not real would be when I was trying not to say anything offensive because I totally disagreed with what was being said. This was mostly around men. Around women I felt more genuine I think. Rachel

When asked in the post-Alexandria battery of questions and essays to describe regrets, one of the students discussed the wasted time on "dead-end" conversations. The importance of expressing accurate opinions was a defining factor of a useful interaction with a native as defined by this student:

Many times I would use precious speaking time to stay in a dead-end conversation. There are more and less useful conversations for Arabic learners. Useful ones are those in which you are learning phrases and vocabulary and having a real conversation with someone while you both are expressing your opinions. Lucas

As mentioned earlier in the review of literature, even when given assignments to interview natives as obligatory homework, students find excuses for not doing so Mendelson noted that only 30% completed such a task(2004, 352). The programs that were part of this study also had obligatory assignments to promote native interaction. One participant's comments on this may shed some light on what students define as "real conversations" and why they fail to complete such assignments when they want to interact with natives.

When I had to just ask questions for class they really didn't go anywhere it was no fun. However, sometimes when I would talk with Joman and my family members they were real. Mostly the conversations were about things we were passionate about—family, country, past experiences, etc. Olivia

Some students may feel that assignments from class allow authentic communication. They may feel that the conversation is established on a fraudulent terms that are contrived by a third party. One student expressed a struggle with the false appearance of friendship that he portrayed when his true intentions were not toward relationships, but rather toward language study. His solution, namely to hire a paid tutor, is disquieting due to the studies in the review of literature regarding the loss of authentic communication when classroom roles displace natural conversational patterns:

In Egypt, I made friends quickly, but sometimes not whole-heartedly because I mainly wanted to learn Arabic. I should have hired a paid tutor early on because then my visits would have been language focused. It was difficult to befriend someone and try to learn the language from them. I did learn some new words that way, but I needed a structured setting. Having a paid tutor establishes a teacher-student relationship instead of a

friendly relationship that can waste time without worry. Pressure to teach and learn is there when payment is involved. As much as I loved to mingle with my friends, I wanted to learn Arabic in the short four-month stay. On the other hand, being involved with Arabs that did not speak English was very helpful. I was forced to learn new words often, and I was more exposed to Arabic. Lamar

Obligatory assignments should be prepared carefully with these student insights in mind. Topics assigned must be applicable to all students, as much as possible, in order to avoid false personas or feelings of feigned relationships.

Significant to the search for authentic communication is discovering if students represent themselves in the same ways that they do in their native language. This includes sharing their personality and interests. Of course, representing their sense of humor and enthusiasm for topics is a factor in authentic communication, as is representing their thoughts accurately. Table 3 shows the overlap between topics in native language that students were passionate about and the frequency with which they spoke on these topics in Arabic while on the study abroad. This aspect of out-of-class contact was investigated on the survey to try and uncover if the students were sharing their personality and interests while speaking in the target language. The fourteen topics were given to the students who subsequently ranked them for the L1 topics of passion. For the L2 frequency of discussion students ranked on a Likert scale how often they spoke on each topic and the frequency of discussion was tabulated.

Table 3

Average Rating of Topics of Student Passion Compared With Average Frequency of
Discussion

L1 Topics of Passion	L2 Frequency of Discussion
1. Religion	1. Politics/Political Debate/ Government
2. Politics/Political Debate/ Government	2. Family/Children
3. Family/Children	3. Religion
4. Field of Study in School/ Occupational Issues	4. Field of Study in School/ Occupational Issues
5. Love/Romance/Relationships	5. Daily Living/Daily Stresses
6. Service/Humanitarian Outreach/Making a Difference	6. Dreams/Ambitions
7. Sports/Hobbies	7. Music/Movies/Pop Culture
8. Morality/Lifestyles/Sex	*7. (tie) Morality/Lifestyles/Sex
9. Dreams/Ambitions	8. Love/Romance/Relationships
10. Books/Music/Art	9. Sports/Hobbies
11. Daily Living/Daily Stresses	10. Books/Music/Art
12. Music/Movies/Pop Culture	11. Service/Humanitarian Outreach/Making a Difference
13. Health Concerns/Exercise/ Dieting	12. Health Concerns/Exercise/ Dieting
14. Environment/Nature	13. Environment/Nature

Students found success in their top 4 topic areas which only changed in ranking and frequency minimally. The major gaps in topic crossover were in "Service/Humanitarian Outreach/Making a Difference," which they reported speaking on with passion in their native language very highly, but rarely recorded as a topic of high frequency; "Daily Living/Daily Stresses" and "Music/Movies/Pop Culture" were two of the lowest topics when rated on passion in the native language, but the students reported speaking on these topics rather often. Other changes to be noted between amount of passion in the L1 and frequency of discussion in the L2 include "Love/Romance/Relationships" and "Sports/Hobbies" which were spoken with less frequency; while "Dreams/Ambitions" were spoken with more frequency than would be expected.

More important than the overall averages of passionate topics and frequency overlapping is the overlap for the individual. If one set of students are reporting interest in politics while another set of students are actually talking about politics while their passion is pop culture, the numbers have not proved individual student success. Twenty-four of the 29 student (82.8%) explanations of memorable and "real conversations" matched with one of the top 4 topics they reported that they were passionate about. Impressively, one student reported his top interest was "Sports/Hobbies" and the amount that he spoke of this in Arabic was "all of the time" even though most other students recorded it as only "once or twice." He definitely imported his interests into his L2 experience. There were five students (17.2%), however, that reported their interests and what they were actually speaking on in Arabic did not match. One student that rated "Politics/Political Debate/Government" as the subject of least passion still recorded it as a

topic that she spoke on often. Another participant recorded

"Love/Romance/Relationships" and "Music/Movies/Pop Culture" as the topic she spoke

of "all of the time" although this was not one of her top interests. Her closest

relationships with natives were the three teenage daughters of her landlord. Three

students listed "Service/Humanitarian Outreach/ Making a Difference in the World" as

one of their top 4 topics of passion in their native language, but spoke of it "never" or

only "once or twice." One student offered a suggestion to why this might be the case:

> *I did overhear a native['']s comment when a group of American students passed by and this person remarked that we think we are so cool learning Arabic so we can change the world and fix the whole Middle East political mess. This did not affect me too much but it did give me some food for thought! Druscilla*

Another possibility is that the vocabulary preparation for this topic was

lacking (as is reported in a later section). The same explanation for

"Sports/Hobbies" being spoken of less than interest would anticipate can be

posited. The decrease of speaking on "Romance/Relationships" could be a

cultural difference or also a vocabulary struggle. The increase in "Daily

Life/Daily Stresses" is probably due to the many passing conversations in which

students engaged in where they were asked where they lived. Also, since many

students were living on their own (not with a host family or in a dorm) the needs

of caring for a home such as paying utilities and establishing computer lines

required more conversations than they were accustomed to back home.

4.1.4 What Conversations Changed Student Outlook on the Host Culture and Was That

Change Positive or Negative?

When asked to rate on a Likert scale for agreement to the question "Speaking Arabic outside of class with natives helped me understand the culture of the country I was in better." Twenty-eight out of 29 (96.6%) responders to the Out-of-Class Survey responded "agree" or "strongly agree." One student was "neutral[21]." The next question on the survey, "Speaking Arabic outside-of-class helped me to *like* the culture of the country I was in" received strong agreement from all but two female students who reported "neutral[22]." The following quotes are illustrative of the cultural insight students gleaned from out-of-class contact.

> *In one conversation with a male student, I came to understand the deeply rooted animosity of the Arabs toward Israel. I had learned about that before, but speaking with a native helped to make it real. I also learned about the deep feelings associated with funerals by attending a funeral and witnessing the effect it had on my native family. Marcus*
>
> *I really came to see how difficult the depressed economy affected their lives and culture. I remember a long passionate conversation with my waiter atop the roof of a fancy restaurant...He spoke on and on about how hard it was because he couldn't make enough money. He didn't feel he could get married because of it, and didn't feel like there were any options. Joshua*
>
> *I also learned to confront and deal with stereotypes and discriminations I harbored. I think the one that comes to mind most readily is the image of an Arab man wearing a gallabia [robe] and kafaia [head wrap]. My first confrontation with this was when I arrived at the Cairo airport and was standing in line at passport control. Two men were dressed in such attire. They were furious and screaming at the man in the booth. I was terrified! I realized that this is what I pictured a terrorist to look like. This was a stereotype that I didn't even know I had, as I have always thought of*

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[21] This student explained that there were no surprises about Arab culture because he had spent a great deal of time studying it pre-study abroad

[22] Both of these students mentioned times of inappropriate actions on the part of Arab men towards women that they witnessed or were a victim of.

myself as open-minded and accepting. Initially, I was disappointed with myself for feeling that way towards these people for no other reason than their appearance. The best remedy I found to address these discriminating thoughts was first to realize and accept that I harbored them, and second to observe and interact with these types of individuals in everyday situations. As I did this, I truly realized they were just like me. Jill

I really had the structure of family hammered home when I ate dinner with a guy's family. His dad talked with me while we ate and his wife watched. I talked with his sister after the dad left, she became much more open, and then clammed up again when he was around. The sons seemed to frequently defer unhappily to their dad in conversation, but wouldn't confront him about anything. Richard

I learned about courting in a VERY real, too real way. Valerie

I talked with someone about a health issue of someone at home, and mentioned that they might have cancer, and they went, "shhh" and told me not to say that word. Jed

Chatting with women in the beauty parlor taught me about how women perceive themselves and their role in society in relation to men, and how religion fits into the picture. Mary

I met a Palestinian family with actual experience of losing home, family, etc…This was a side of the conflict I had never experienced before. Peter

I think talking about what males did for fun taught me the most. Hyrum

I was able to see that they were completely normal people with hopes and dreams and fears. One time I had a conversation with a 15 year old falafel worker about his future plans, about how he wanted a career that would allow him to spend lots of time with his family, because he valued family a lot. We talked about the importance of family in both of our cultures. Because of that conversation, I better understood that views of the importance of family are generally universal and cross-cultural. Ivan

Obviously, an important aspect of cultural learning would depend on the native(s) that the students developed the closest relationship with. Ten of the students reported that shopkeepers/restaurant workers that lived in their neighborhood were their closest relationship. Most of these mentioned that they would visit daily and were invited home at some point. Seven other students reported that friends from neighboring universities

were their closest relationship. This appears to have been very productive in speaking on topics that were meaningful (probably due to the similarities in life and social level) however, most of these students reported not speaking Arabic with this person all of the time because the native either wanted to practice English, or they were so skilled at English it was easy to slip into when conversations become tenuous. Other close relationships were: family next door, internship coworker, a tour guide for the group that became a close friend after trips had ceased, host family father, host family son, friend from intramural sports team, friend met at the sports club, and friend from church. Three of the students reported that they did not have a close relationship with a native. One of these students reported meaningful conversations on a daily basis. It can be assumed that she held a high definition of a "close relationship." Another student never achieved the 12 hours of speaking with a native that was required. He simply struggled with making contacts. His OPI scores reflected this in that he was guessed to be one of the top achievers in the program by his advanced preparation and high motivation entering the program, yet his exit exam showed that his speaking floundered. The final student that reported not having a close relationship scored one of the highest scores on the exit OPI but recorded speaking with natives as neutral to his motivation or appreciation of culture citing previous experience with the culture and natives to be the reason for his neutrality.

The topics remembered with the closest native should hold particular interest for the study abroad administrator and instructors in preparing students for meaningful interchanges. Many of the students wrote "everything," or "we spoke every day, there was no topic uncovered" in regard to topics with this close interaction. Certainly, authentic communication was had in this setting of comfortable personal disclosure. The

list of topics that students mentioned when asked what they spoke of with their closest native relationship is recorded at the end of this chapter under 4.5 Suggestions for Instructors in Preparing Students for Authentic Communication During Study Abroad. The list is rather long and is of most use for students and educators seeking for a listing of topics to prepare students for when planning to undertake study abroad programs.

Of course, creating classes pre-study abroad in which lists of technological jargon are rote memorized is not an aim of this study. However, the need for personalized language can span a broad range of topics. Students were also asked if there were topics that they recalled that they were ill-prepared to speak on. The topics the students recalled were:

- Sports/soccer specifically

- Relationships/teenage topics, puppy love, twitterpation

- Technology/hooking up internet and troubleshooting phone and computer problems

- Apartment hunting/realtor dialogue practice to avoid getting swindled on rent prices

- Military terms/learn military history of host country

- Environment/Poverty/Pollution/World Issues

- Cooking/Measurements/some with recipes to share

- Courtship/Marriage traditions

4.1.5   Did Speaking With Natives Encourage Participants to Incorporate Arabic into

Their FutureLives?

When asked to rate their agreement with "Speaking with natives outside of class made me want to continue the pursuit of Arabic *while* on my study abroad," 22 out of 29 respondents (75.9%) responded "strongly agree." Three out of 29 (10.3%) responded "agree" and "neutral," and one (3.4%) responded "disagree." The following question asked if speaking with natives encouraged the student to continue studying Arabic *after* the study abroad. Eighteen of 29 (62.1%) students responded "strongly agree," 8 of 29 (27.6%) responded "agree," one (3.4%) was "neutral," and 2 (6.9%) answered "disagree."

All of the students included in the study participated in a background survey sponsored by the NMELRC pre-departure[23]. On the pre-departure survey they reported the amount of Arabic that they planned to take in the future in units of years. What they planned to take and what they actually accomplished is charted in Table 4.

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[23] See Appendix I for the full survey

Table 4

Plans for Future Study Compared With Actual Subsequent Study

Student Number	Amount of Arabic planned to take in the future (as reported pre-study abroad)	Amount accomplished or still in process (reported in final survey)	Outcome (same as reported/ more/less)	Explanation (if given)
1	3 years	2 and in process	Same	Arabic classes and graduate program in Arabic
2	<1 year	1 semester	Same	
3	2 years	1 year, in process	Same	In military intensive now
4	2 years	0	Less	
5	>3 years	2 and in process	Same	Arabic in job
6	2 years	1 year	Less	
7	>3 years	1 year and teaching	Same	Arabic in Job
8	1 year	1 year	Same	
9	< 1year	1 semester	Less	

10	1 year	1 year and in process	More	
11	>3 years	Classes and job in process	Same	Arabic in Job
12	1 year	6 classes	More	
13	0	0	Same	Finished with degree
14	1 year	1 year	Same	
15	<1 year	Classes and teaching	More	Arabic in Job
16	1 year	1 year	Same	
17	2 years	1 semester and in process	Same	
18	1 year	0	Less	
19	2 years	2 years	Same	Arabic in Job
20	1 year	4 classes and in process	More	Seeking Job
21	<1 year	Internship and in process	More	Arabic in Job
22	1 year	0	Less	No interest in translation work
23	<1 year	1 class	Same	
24	2 years	0	Less	Wants more in future
25	<1 year	1 class	Same	

26	2 year	In process	Same	On flagship program
27	3 year	2 years in process	Same	Arabic in job
28	< 1 year	0	Less	
29	1 year	0	Less	Hopes for future study

Of the 29 students, 16 (55.2%) reported that they had met the ambitions set

year(s) before or that they are still on a path to completing. Eight of 29 (27.3%) reported

that they had completed less. One of these students reported that since she was not

interested in the field of translation she did not feel that there was justification to continue

classes—her passion was within the realm of speaking with people of the Middle East

and she felt confident in doing so without additional instruction. Two other students

reporting taking fewer classes in Arabic than their original goals stated that life's

direction (job or family) had required them to focus elsewhere, but they hoped to return

to the study in the future. Of the 8 reporting less Arabic, 6 were (75.0%) female. Five

out of 29 (17.2%) students reported more Arabic than originally planned. Only one out

of the five (20.0%) reporting more Arabic exposure was female. Nine of the 29 (31.0%)

students reported that their future appears to be connected with Arabic (whether with a

job, future education with plans to ultimately teach, or within the military).

4.2 Analysis of Findings

The study was based on the idea that authentic communication improves language

study by increasing motivation and the propensity to continue target language studies and

by enhancing cultural understanding. The acceptance of this position will now be

discussed in greater depth based on the findings of the surveys

4.2.1 Continued Perseverance in the Study of the Target Language

Authentic communication was found to be highly motivating in encouraging students in their learning of the target language as evidenced by three major findings: (1) All students reported having meaningful out-of-class conversations with natives. Twenty-four out of 29 (82.8%) students reported having repeated conversations on their highest topics of passion. (2) Twenty-five out of 29 (86.2%) students agreed that speaking with natives out-of-class increased their motivation for learning during their study abroad. Twenty-six out of 29 (89.7%) students agreed that speaking with natives increased their desire to continue learning the language after study-abroad. (3) The majority of students (21 out of 29 [72.4%]), following their study abroad program, went on to fulfill their previous study goals. Five of these went on to fulfill more than they had planned before their study abroad experience, and 9 reported presently holding or the anticipation of a position in the near future of a job involving the use of Arabic. Thus, not only did students experience authentic communication as motivating a desire for continued study and use of the target language, the students by-and-large actually fulfilled this desire or are in the process of doing so.

4.2.2 Enhancement of Cultural Understanding

The survey produced many insightful comments suggesting that students had many memorable cultural interactions during their study abroad programs. These short quotes, however, does not validate the claim that cultural learning was enhanced through out-of-class conversations. Many of the cultural anecdotes pointed at situations that could have happened whether the target language was being spoken with natives or not. If the students had spent 4 months in a study abroad program and not been able to

produce a single culturally related tidbit, that would have been evidence of abysmal program (and student) failure. On the other hand, being able to relate small cultural vignettes does not declare a successful increase of cultural understanding brought about through out-of-class contact. The results of the survey are simply inadequate, meaning other measures need to be created.

Nevertheless, there are indicators that the students' authentic communication was successful in this regard: (1) The fact that the final survey was administered 1 to 3 years after the study abroad program establishes the fact that the cultural benefits of their conversations made deep impressions. The gleaning of memories is often looked down upon due to the inevitable editor of time and nostalgia on real life experiences. However, time helps to reveal what the students truly took with them and what conversations they are still able to have with friends and family that allow them to share cultural understanding about a part of the world that Americans often misunderstand. Most students who study languages, including those who go on study abroad programs, will never use the languages that they studied for professional advancement. Most will never receive advanced degrees in the field of Linguistics or in disciplines closely connected with the target language. The majority of language students forget the conjugations, declinations, and patterns that they spent so many hours practicing, but they take with them the memories of the learning experience. In this way, the cultural memories created in authentic communication experiences are a testament to true cultural learning taking place. (2) Twenty-eight of 29 (96.6%) students reported that speaking with natives influenced their cultural understanding and 27 of 29 (93.1%) students reported that this helped them to *like* the culture of the country that they were in. (3) There is an ever-

growing body of studies that link language learning with cultural learning, making more plausible the claim that authentic communication enhances cultural learning. The section that follows will elaborate on this point.

Thus, the evidence from this study shows that out-of-class contact with natives when coupled with authentic communication strengthened motivation to continue perseverance in the target language during and beyond the study abroad program as well as aided in cultural appreciation. These factors, not often equated with language proficiency gains, are major factors in inspiring students to continue their studies in the language—and thus, are factors of success. Bicknese (1974) and Laubscher (1994) had similar findings reporting that the students came to understand their own culture better as they became intimate with a new world of thought and language. More independence, tolerance, and confidence were also reported. Through continuous efforts with out-of-class contact many students made significant connections and long-term friendships that radically altered their study abroad experience.

> *I spent a great deal of time in a barbershop and became great friends with the barbers there, as well as many of the local shop workers. It was a place that allowed me to branch out and meet other people, and establish a good network of friends throughout the city. I cannot emphasize enough how important I found this to be in my progress with the language as well as for my whole experience in Egypt. Emmanuel*

> *Relationships between people in Egypt are intense; Egyptians are some of the most loving, charitable, and hospitable people on the earth…I made Egyptians friends whom I treasure. Willem*

> *You should try to find local friends whom you can "hang out" with everyday. By doing so you can be exposed to the maximum amount of variety in your conversations…If you do you will make your daily life the primary source of language learning. Michael*

4.3 The Interconnectedness of Language and Culture

   With improved language proficiency being one of the goals of study abroad programs, facilitators and students alike often forget the other achievements of such programs as they spend hours pouring over numbers from OPI exit exams. Although, not easily quantified or evaluated on an exit exam, intercultural competence has come to replace fluency as the primary goal of language instruction for many educators (Roberts et al. 2001). The ability not only to discuss with appropriate grammatical forms, but with sensitivity to cultural nuances is embodied in intercultural competence. Implicit in this ultimate language ability is the need to understand culture. In this study, speaking with natives was highlighted by many students as the primary avenue to cultural understanding. Ninety-seven percent of students responded in the affirmative when asked if speaking to natives helped them to understand the culture of the country that they were in. Again, this is not to state that language proficiency is unimportant. Proficiency gains provide both the context and opportunity for cultural learning, and are perhaps a quantifiable evidence of this learning. Language proficiency and cultural understanding should be seen as at least potentially mutually reinforcing.

   The interconnectedness of language and culture has therefore long been cited— language appears to be the quickest route to understanding culture. Beginning with the writings of Sapir at the turn of the 20th century and continuing with his student Whorf in the 1930's, many linguists have discussed the interconnectedness of language and

culture. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis states that language is the way humans understand

reality.

> We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The
> categories and types that we isolate from the world phenomena we do not
> find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary,
> the world is represented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has
> been organized in our minds—and this means largely the linguistic
> systems in our minds (1956, 213).

In other words, language is the way in which we see and experience the world around us.

Language is the representational mode used to understand the world and to form opinions

about the world. Therefore, our behavior, values, belief systems, emotions, social

perceptions, and definitions of appropriate roles in society (also known as culture) all

have connections to our language (Fisher, 1972). In turn, when we understand another

person's language we have a window into their behavior, values, belief systems,

emotions *et cetera*—their culture. As Byram stated, "When learners understand, even if

only partially, the perspective of other people, and simultaneously acquire a reflective

perspective on themselves, their means of communication and interaction with others are

profoundly affected" (Byram, 1997, 8).

> *I have felt an intense pull towards the culture of the people who spoke the
> language, the culture that is embodied in the language itself. There is
> something magical about cultures, and it is easy to feel a strong pull
> towards foreign cultures….With Arabic it has been the phenomenal
> historical and cultural legacy of the Islamic Empire(s), a general passion
> for Middle East studies, and the connection to what I perceive as one of
> the few remaining religious societies. My desire to understand and grow
> through this foreign culture has always been a motivating factor; and that
> has been the most helpful thing in learning the language. Joshua*
>
> *Learning Arabic was just one part of my larger goal of learning about
> Arabic culture and growing as a person, in conjunction with living
> abroad, and I got the experience I was looking for. I went with an open
> mind and wanted to learn more about myself, and I did. Jacob*

Language affects thought and forms a filter for the speaker's interpretation of reality. "The language that you speak helps to form your world-view. It defines your experience for you; you do not use it simply to report that experience. It is not neutral but gets in the way, imposing habits of both looking and thinking" (Wardhaugh, 1985, p.221).

Much has been written on the language classroom and whether or not teachers should actively teach culture as part of their curriculum. Educators must ask themselves what their goal is in actively teaching culture. Byram argues that the goals for teaching culture are the same as those for teaching language. The first of these goals is to develop a learner's understanding for other people and to add to the learner's level of tolerance for other ways of thinking (Byram, 1990). Without the ability to communicate and think in another language we lack multiple perceptions of the world. We only have one vantage point on the cultures of the world (Fishman, 1976)[24]. To gain the ability to think in another language is to gain the ability to understand the world from a different perspective. This is one, if not the main goal of encouraging students to seek out native speakers and engage in authentic communication during study abroad.

> *After having lived in the Middle East, I now feel like I understand to some extent and can speak knowledgeably on the issues regarding it. When friends make less than complimentary comments about Islam, I can help them to see the good sides of it, and they trust me because I have lived in the Middle East I have a healthy respect for Arabs wile still being able to see the 'faults in the system.' Before going to Egypt I wanted to work solely in the United States helping Muslims and the U.S. government improve their relationship. However, now I am equally as interested in helping Middle Easterners in the Middle East lead better, higher-quality lives. I have now seen both sides of the issue, and although I doubt the*

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[24] Obvious objections arise to Fishman's extreme formulation. The important point is that foreign language study is an excellent way of gaining multiple perspectives on the world. Clearly, the acquiring of multiple perspectives is optimized when foreign language study is achieved through study abroad.

*Middle East and the United States will ever meet each other in the dead
center, at least I can help them navigate towards peace and agreement.
Rebeccah*

*I wouldn't trade my experience in Egypt for anything. I find myself even
more interested in Arabic, with a greater desire for fluency. I have also
developed an affinity for the Arab culture... I had more fun just sitting in
the café with my Arab friends than I did visiting the pyramids. I felt as
though the pyramids and the trip to Luxor were so awesome, but when you
have such a deep interest in the language and want to make your money
work for you, the time you spend alone is what will kill you. I never once
wanted to hang out with the BYU kids. I didn't want to say anything in
English. I just wanted to focus and watch Arabic movies, listen to Arabic
music, and engulf myself in all that an average person in Egypt would see
and hear. I think if anyone goes there with the intent of really learning
they need to leave their American music at home. They have to avoid the
movie theater, and they must make sacrifices during Ramadan. Jed*

To summarize, the acquisition of cultural understanding is often forgotten as one

of the great achievements of study abroad programs. It is a natural outgrowth resulting of

the interconnectedness of language and culture.

4.3.1 Pitfalls of Teaching Culture Explicitly in the Classroom and Solutions

Culture is a shared group of ideas that unites a people, but it is also a set of ideas

that often excludes others that do not belong to that culture. Language can be used to

convey feelings of pride, oneness, and common values, or it can be used to tear apart the

pride and values of others (Fantini, 1997). This is a concern of many researchers today

who are questioning the teaching of culture in a language classroom. Why, they ask,

should language teachers assume themselves as qualified sociologists or anthropologists?

To what degree is the culture that is interjected into the classroom helpful and to what

degree does it hurt a learner's self-worth and understanding of their own culture (Guest,

2002; Zaid, 2002)? Creating language programs that culminate in or incorporate study

abroad programs allow students to explore elements of culture on their own while

speaking with natives. The students dictate their boundaries of cultural assimilation and

reap the benefits of language acquisition contemporaneously.

> *The point of a study abroad is not to take classes. You can do that here at BYU. Rather, the purpose of a study abroad is to give you total immersion in the language. My language skills increased ten-fold, my views of Muslims and the Arab world changed a lot for the better, and I made some great friends, with whom I still keep in contact. Willem*

> *I started learning Arabic because I wanted to work for the government, and I felt that knowing Arabic would make me more marketable. Today, I continue to study Arabic because I love the people and I love the language. I learned to love the culture and people of the Middle East while I lived in Egypt. I experienced their generosity and love everyday that I spent there. The people I interacted with had so little and yet, they were willing to give so much. Egypt changed the reasons that I am studying Arabic. Or rather, Egypt added a passion to my language learning. I still hope that Arabic will make me more marketable, because ultimately I hope to use my Arabic skills in a career environment. But I now have a passion that enables me to continue to study a language that is harder than I ever thought it would be. Leeza*

In Europe adult education classes in foreign languages are intentionally created as

political projects aiming at uniting the economy and political identity of Europeans

(Starkey, 1999). This is done with the belief in culture being captured in language study.

"Language is the most important medium of human communication. War, on the other

hand, is probably the most important medium of non-communication (Clyne, 1997,

p.387)." Education and tolerance open pathways to peace whereas ignorance and fear of

other cultures lead to violence. In learning about a people, and especially in being able to

identify with the way that they think through using their language, one tends to develop

an appreciation that results in increased respect for and understanding of that new culture.

Goodwin and Nacht (1988) support this idea in saying, "Mastery of a foreign language

has traditionally been perceived as the most direct educational benefit of study abroad. A

foreign language, say its advocates, is not merely a tool and a key for both scholarly

inquiry and commercial success; it is also the main route to cultural understanding" (15).

4.3.2 Cultural Understanding Affecting Motivation

Often, cultural exposure is not all positive. Students inevitably experience culture

shock and isolation being away from familiar environments. For some students negative

experiences with natives decrease their motivation. Svanes (1987) found that not all

students experienced positive psychological effects during study abroad, and the students

that felt negative towards the host culture would ultimately reduce their language

proficiency success.

> *The first distinguishing characteristic of this trip had to do with Egyptian society. As a single woman, I found myself in more stressful circumstances than I had experienced in Syria and Palestine. Namely, the men were exceptionally creepy....This contributed to an attitude of "not wanting to leave the apartment" and made me less enthusiastic about coming to love the Egyptian people. Mary*

> *One of the things that bothered me the most was feeling immodest in clothes that I had always known to be otherwise. I often felt like an object and I was unsure if my actions were appropriate for the culture. There was a weight that lifted from me once we left the Middle East, a weight that I had been carrying unwittingly. It was not until I left that I felt an inner sigh of relief as I stared to feel myself unwind. Jill*

> *After my Egypt experience, I feel much more frustration. Most of this results from the fact that nothing is black and white; everything is gray. It is difficult to hold to ideals when humans so naturally fail to live up to those ideals. I am confused as to what I really feel about the Middle East, Arabs, and Islam in general. It is hard to defend them when I have had certain experiences, yet it is difficult to defend America and America's motives when I've had certain experiences with Americans. Every time I hear something in the news about the Middle East, I want to throw something at the TV and tell my brain to shut off because I hold so many feelings for these people, and I understand them on a level that 97% of*

*Americans do not. Yet where much is given much is required, so I feel that
I have an obligation to share what I know, no matter how much frustration
and inner turmoil it creates within myself. Colleen*

One of the major ways that culture can hurt motivation involves foreign gender

roles. Again citing the landmark study of the ACTR/NFLC with 658 students of Russian,

the most controversial of their findings included the lack of improvement by women in

study abroad. Women gained less in both listening and speaking. "Men were also more

likely to cross the crucial divide between intermediate-plus and advanced.… Assuming

that there are no real differences between men and women in language-learning ability—

an assumption that everyone shares—three prevailing interpretations of these results have

been offered: gender bias in the testing instruments, a selection bias in the samples of

men and women, a difference in learning opportunities in-country" (1993, 18). The

researchers go on to say, "There is no reason to believe that Russia is the only society

where our students study and where women receive differential treatment that might have

an effect on language acquisitions" (1993, 20). Polyani (1995) extended the research of

the ACTR/NFLRC through narrative analysis of the journals of 40 of the students

studying Russian. She found sexism and harassment stunted linguistic growth. Polyani

also suggested that part of the blame in females achieving lower study abroad

improvement should be placed on the testing instruments that use "un-gendered person

(i.e. male)," after females spend their entire experience speaking with females in Russian

society[25]. To extend this finding, out-of-class contact can become a hindrance to female

[25] This is an interesting observation, but surely females must be just as skilled at default masculine forms of language as men. They are working from the same text books and other resources that use these forms constantly. If anything, women becoming fluent in the use of the female forms may be an additional strength that they have over men who may never have experience using these forms.

students in nations where gender separation is culturally necessary. The following are quotes from students on the Alexandria, Egypt program[26] regarding the topic of gender struggles during study abroad programs.

> *The girls on the trip seemed to have a hard time finding people to talk to and even though I am shy I found friends before many of them. Tyler*

> *As a female, it was harder to find appropriate speaking partners as many girls on the street do not wish to speak to strangers. Elsabet*

> *We (girls on the program) were hassled frequently, which made me, for one, less excited to leave my apartment. Lydia*

> *No one would ever talk to me because I was a girl. All the guys had all these cool experiences with the local furniture makers, but they wouldn't pay much attention to me just because it was inappropriate for them to address me as a single woman. Brittney*

> *The opportunities to speak were much greater, and in general I feel it was easier for me to cope with social situations as a man; that is, there were definite social pressures, prejudices, and awkward or uncomfortable situations that the women I knew had to deal with that I did not. Taylor*

To repeat findings from this study, of the 8 reporting less Arabic taken than they had planned, 6 were (0.75) female. Five out of 29 (0.172) students reported more Arabic than originally planned. Only one out of the five (0.2) reporting more Arabic exposure was female. The motivation of female students during study abroad appears to be very volatile during their sojourns[27]. Indeed, many countries offer a difficult culture for educated, unmarried, women to break through. The results of this study highlight the particular need for educators to address these challenges. Women particularly need to be prepared for and supported in experiencing authentic communication. When they must

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[26] See Appendix 2

[27] Another explanation for this is the fact that most of the female students on this program were from backgrounds in which they were seeking the opportunity to raise a family as opposed to facing the work force immediately. A number of the females were married and began families within a year of returning from their study abroad programs.

confront severe assaults on their self-confidence and personal safety, we must at least prepare them for success in conversations that they are able to initiate.

Women seem to have the *most* success in language acquisition when the environment is right. On the Jordan program, some of the most linguistically challenged and/or shy female students were matched with homestay families and made large leaps in OPI scores. In Jordan none of the men were able to be placed in families. Gender-divided Jordan and Egypt actually give women the advantage in experiencing a large variety of interactions that men are forbidden from entering. While the language-contact benefits of living in a homestay situation are not all positive as seen in the review of literature, this may be one solution to female students becoming accepted into social circles in gender-divided countries. Whether homestays are an option or no, female students need to know that they have options, that they have much to gain from spending much of their time in country even if that centers in the most traditional places for women, the home. Authentic communication can occur and female students should not consider their gender as an excuse to completing communication requirements.

Even without the opportunity to stay in the home of natives, a number of women from the Alexandria program reported a positive way of interpreting the gender separation as a benefit to their language and cultural learning. The following quotes come from the Alexandria post-survey.

> *I know that in other study abroad programs focusing on language learning, students are assigned to live with a local family. They live, communicate, and share daily life with them. If future students learning Arabic could have that opportunity, they would learn the language even faster. Not only that, but since language and culture go together, this would also facilitate cultural immersion and appreciation. I feel strongly that allowing each student to live with a local family would really help them taste the wonders of the Middle East. I am fully aware that the*

preparation for such a project would be a big undertaking, but the final results would be greater.

Fortunately, I had the privilege of tasting a little of what I just mentioned. Not only did I make really good Egyptian friends, I was unofficially adopted by a family. I visited them almost every day, and with them, I got to practice the words and patterns I learned in class. I asked them about vocabulary, grammar, and culture. That was probably one of the most enriching parts of my experience in Egypt—being part of an Egyptian family. Talking to people was not only a matter of practicing the language or increasing my vocabulary anymore. Instead, I got involved in an Egyptian family setting. It became a part of my life. Indirectly, I became Egyptian. I had Egyptian friends, but I also was part of an Egyptian family. I became their daughter and sister. Because of that, my Arabic experience became more human, more real. This is one of the most cherished and enriching experiences I took with me when I left Egypt. I feel so grateful that I had that experience. Many people visit countries and learn languages, but don't experience that bond with the local people. Sure, they make friends but that does not guarantee human bonding. In those cases, many people miss the point of living in a different country. Esperance

I saw a different side of the culture, the family, in the home, the issues facing girls my age, and I learned a new set of vocab focusing on what these girls thought was important. I didn't learn how to play backgammon, smoke shisha or hang out with guys at cafes. It was harder to MAKE friends, I had to actively seek them out and its hard to find girls, but once I found them, it was a doorway to a hidden culture that I was able to participate in and view first hand. I was able to have invaluable experiences. Lorallen

In a certain sense it facilitated learning because as a girl I could meet anyone, men and women. Juliet

A cautionary note here is perhaps appropriate. One point made apparent in studies on gender issue is the fact that each student can use their gender as an excuse. As Pellegrino-Aveni and Ehrman warned in articles relayed in the review of literature, fear itself can be used as an excuse not to engage in out-of-class contact. Certainly, gender can be used as an excuse if students are searching for one.

For men it was easier to make friends but harder to get inside a home. This was harder to do long activities with males. Marcus

I only got the male perspective because I couldn't really talk with girls. It wasn't socially acceptable. The men in Egypt sit in cafes all day and night and smoke and I really didn't like doing that, so I didn't. I saw the girls do all kinds of other things with their friends that would have helped me to learn and use Arabic in real situations. Martin

Although cultural investigation can yield uncomfortable and even detrimental results for language learning, it is important to recognize that study abroad will include cultural exposure as an inevitable facet—this includes gender issues especially. Allowing language students to guide their own cultural learning by choosing the natives and environments with which they become a part of removes sociopolitical pressures off of the heads of program administrators and places the responsibility for the level of cultural exploration largely in the hands of the students. Especially in the case of women in gender-sensitive areas of the world, however, facilitators must take a lead role in informing and aiding creating alternatives.

4.4 Student Motivation Beyond the Walls of the Classroom

As seen in the student surveys, contact with natives outside-of-class propelled the students' desires for learning the language both during study abroad and after.

[Speaking with natives] was probably responsible for almost all of my positive experiences with speaking Arabic. I did not really enjoy the university Ammiya class in Jordan and before I went to Jordan speaking 10 minutes of Arabic a day was really difficult for me. When I think of returning to study Arabic, what motivates me is the memories I have of being able to connect as one human to another to a speaker of a different language. Druscilla

The best part of the trip was the friends we made: the people who lived around our apartment building were wonderful, generous, kind Egyptians who did everything they could to make us feel welcome, and then some. (Sometimes they can even be overbearing in their hospitality and

friendship!) The conversation classes forced us to spend eight to twelve hours per week speaking to people in the streets or at other meeting places. While somewhat difficult—especially for someone like me, who's a little shy, and in a strange country where you don't understand very much—the payoff is wonderful. You gain confidence speaking with and listening to natives and you make some great friendships. I doubt I'll ever forget the dinner get-togethers and times hanging out with Egyptian friends, or trying to understand just what those guys in the garage were trying to tell me about Allah and the Quran. Keith

Students must desire to learn in order to actually accomplish the task. Especially when they are in study abroad experiences in which the responsibility for learning lies squarely on their shoulders.

I hired a (native) tutor, and we met three hours a week, at first going over basic grammar and having simple conversations. As time passed...we got into deeper topics, and she constantly chided me when I became lazy in my speech or writing, which made me accountable and gave me a real desire to do better. Rebeccah

Instructors cannot force them to make contacts or even monitor honest reporting of out-of-class activities. Educators and researchers alike recognize that the key to quality education is "harnessing student motivation through participation" (Wilson, 2002, p.79; see also Boomer, Lester, Onore, & Cook, 1992; Broadfoot, 1991; Glasser, 1990; Nixon, 1996). Student motivation is important, even vital, beyond the classroom. Yes, students should be motivated within the walls of the school; equally important, motivation should be an outcome of their studies so that they will have within them a desire to learn and share their learning in the future (Bergin & LaFave, 1998). The ability of students to overcome their reservations in order to have out-of-class contact is a manifestation of their ultimate motivation.

Before I arrived in Egypt I did not realize that a study abroad is most effective when you take responsibility for your own learning. In my classes at BYU, I often have the tendency to learn only the required material and nothing more. Hence, when I arrived in Egypt, I expected

that I only needed to learn everything in my classes and I would come out an exceptional speaker. After the first two days of class, I realized that by doing so I would only come out a mediocre speaker... Of course all this depends on your willingness to discipline yourself. A study abroad is mentally and emotionally draining since you are adapting to a new language and new culture, at first not really understanding either of them all that well! With this in mind, remember that it is easy to fall back on learning just the material in your classes. Don't give in to this temptation which will come up several times on the study abroad, especially when you are experiencing culture shock or burnout. Willem

If you take advantage of the opportunity to live in the Middle East, then it will be the best language experience that you will have. There is no substitute for learning a language while you are surrounded by native speakers every day. If your experience is anything like mine, you will be in charge of learning the language. You will get out of the program exactly what you put into it. And very little will be asked of you. If you don't go the extra mile and take the initiative in your language studies, then you won't come home with the language skills that you should have. I suggest you study the newspaper every day that you are there because it will be a great learning tool. And, of course, take advantage of the opportunity to speak Arabic with natives.

However, I also recommend that you remember that language learning is not the only reason that you are participating in a study abroad. You are also going there to learn about the culture—to learn firsthand about the beliefs and practices of the people you will be living with. Find balance with your time. One great thing about these kinds of programs is that language learning can be a social experience. A large portion of your homework will be to go and sit in a café and talk to your native friends. You can use that time to practice Arabic, to learn about the culture, and to develop friendships with people you will truly come to care about. I did not find it difficult to make friends while in Egypt. Leeza

They are willing to take their learning beyond the walls of their home institution and beyond the borders of their abroad experience. Senator J. William Fulbright made the following statement in 1989 on this concept as the raison d'être of education when he said, "The vital mortar to seal the bricks of the world order is education across international boundaries, not with the expectation that knowledge would make us love each other, but in hope that it would encourage empathy between nations, and foster the

emergence of leaders whose sense of other nations and cultures would enable them to shape specific policies based on tolerance and rational restraint" (199-200).

4.4.1 Student Motivation: A "Continued Impulse to Learn"

Oldfather and Dahl (1994) keyed the phrase "continuing impulse to learn" to describe students' motivation that propels them past the knowledge gleaned in the classroom. Students who achieve this "continuing impulse to learn" have deep curiosity that sends them into a search for personal understanding rather than understanding that merely achieves high test scores or teacher approval. This continuing impulse is the ultimate of intrinsic motivation. According to Edward Deci (1975), intrinsic motivation is motivation in which the learner needs no apparent reward other than learning itself. Motivated students strive for feelings of competence and self-determination. Although students can be motivated by external factors and rewards as simple as candy or money, it has been found that students inspired by intrinsic motivation will typically outperform those that are learning only out of extrinsic motivation. For example, when students were given a challenging puzzle to solve they worked with great speed and enthusiasm until researchers informed them that they would receive a prize for solving the puzzle. With the announcement of the award, the students slowed their pace and worked together as a group (Brown, 1994). Maslow asserts that this is due to a fulfillment of human needs. Our greatest need as humans is that of "self-actualization." No grade or prize supersedes the underlying need for our own self-approval (1970).

This primal need of "self-actualization" combines well with the assertions of Pellegrino-Aveni that students must present their selves accurately and present an actual self-image in the target language mentioned earlier in the review of literature. Drawing

on these two theories we can see that students studying abroad need to experience

communication with natives free of outside incentive from teaching staff or grade

benefits; and these communications with natives must allow students to convey their

inner persona.

4.4.2 Aiding Students in Maintaining Motivation Post Study Abroad: Integrative
Motivation

Raffaldini (1987) and Coleman (1996) revealed that immediately after students

return from their sojourns abroad they are at their pinnacle of language ability. Freed

(1999) in commenting on their studies states; "On the numerous applied implications for

study abroad learning, few are as compelling as the recognition of efforts that must be

made to help students maintain their hard-won skills, primarily by encouraging them to

seek opportunities for continued language use" (52).

Robert Gardner (1972), a foundational figure in studies of second language

motivation, divided motivation into two orientations: integrative and instrumental. The

former orientation ignites a desire to learn a second language due to the favorable opinion

the learner has of the target language community and desire they have to become part of

the second language culture, whereas the latter orientation is based on the desire to learn

a second language in order to attain a job or meet educational goals. Integrative

motivation proved to be more successful. Gardner's view of language learning

motivation definitely incorporates a learner's attitude toward the culture being studied.

> Social psychologists would expect that success in mastering a foreign
> language would depend not only on intellectual capacity and language
> aptitude but also on the learner's perceptions of the other ethnolinguistic
> group involved, his attitudes toward representatives of that group, and his

willingness to identify enough to adopt distinctive aspects of behavior, linguistic and nonlinguistic, that characterize that other group. The learner's motivation for language study, it follows, would be determined by his attitudes and readiness to identify and by his orientation to the whole process of learning a foreign language (132).

Gardner and fellow researchers explored this theory over the course of 12 years of testing and recording their research on Canadian learners of French (1960), Jewish learners of Hebrew (1961), American learners of minority languages in the United States (1962), minorities in the United States learning English (1968), and Philippinos of various language groups (1969). In all of these cases the students' attitude toward the speakers of the target language and their desire to become part of that culture was proven to directly affect language test scores. Students that desired to learn a language for integrative benefits outperformed those desirous of instrumental benefits. Gardner went on to say that integrative orientation also encouraged persistence in target language study and participation in the classroom. Therefore, in order for educators to inspire intrinsic and integrative motivation (at least in language learning), educators must guide the students in understanding and valuing the culture of the target language[28]. Again, this shows evidence of the interconnectedness of language and culture. The understanding of one leads to the motivation of study in the other.

4.4.3 Solutions for Encouraging Integrative Motivation

More recently researchers have again highlighted the need for integrative motivation and appreciation of target culture when embarking on language studies. One group of researchers who are leaders in the field of cultural sensitivity proposed that

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[28] In the years following Gardner and Lambert's research many have continued the discussion of motivation. It is now understood that motivation in language learners is fluid, constantly changing, as their attitudes (towards language and host culture) and experiences with the target language present new opportunities and frustrations. For a more in depth discussion of motivation see Dornyei, 2001.

language learners become ethnographers (Roberts et al., 2001). They advocate new goals in language learning which displace final evaluation proficiency testing with students producing ethnographic projects based on observation, analysis, and detailed writings of the target culture that they are experiencing while studying abroad. In this way, the students are compelled to become an integrated part of their host culture. In addition Roberts and colleagues seek a new training for students pre-study abroad that focuses on anthropology and sociolinguistics so the students may have meaningful conversations that will reveal the self-image of the students as defined by their home culture and the identity of the natives with whom they will be speaking. In other words, students-as-ethnographers is one possible way of motivating authentic communication during the study abroad program. The central tenant of their suggestion draws from the belief that "cultural learning *is* language learning, and vice versa" (5). Students' ethnographic pre-departure preparation could easily combine with a course in which student-directed learning of vocabulary and topics are discussed and practiced.

4.5 Suggestions for Instructors in Preparing Students for Authentic Communication

During Study Abroad

The final question of the Out-of-Class Survey is, "Based on the review you have just made of your out-of-class conversations. [sic] Do you have any suggestions that could aid educators in preparing students to better participate in out-of-class conversations while they are on study abroad programs?" In addition, the Alexandria students completed essays post-study abroad in which they were asked to share with

future students their insights in preparing for study abroad. Suggestions from the

participants included:

> *Perhaps having personalized topics of study would be helpful in the semester before going abroad. I wish I had known words for topics that I personally care about before hand. It would have been nice to have a personal colloquial "dictionary" to bring with us to give us a better head start. Valerie*

> *Help students find places to live where they can be surrounded by native speakers. Help students to avoid living around a high concentration of fellow English speakers. If I would have been able to live with a native speaker of the language, I have no doubt that I would have learned two or three times as much Arabic. Michael*

> *Find people to talk to right away, make friends, get into their homes and let them show you their life, you will learn so much more because they will respect you for wanting to get to know them. Madeline*

> *Require more of it (speaking with natives), no matter how helpless you feel. I learned more by speaking with natives than I ever did in a classroom. Melissa*

> *Make them volunteer! Make them teach. Make them speak the language in front of natives, one-on-one if possible. Matthew*

> *A good briefing on the emotional requirements of immersing oneself in a foreign culture should be, in my opinion, a necessary prerequisite to any study abroad program, so that students entering the program have realistic expectations for themselves and their performance. If a student doesn't have access to such a briefing, he or she should simply try to realize that three months on a study abroad cannot perfect language skills, and that if, some days, it is impossible to study, that's normal and not a cause for crippling guilt. Anya*

It is well-accepted now that students progress in language acquisition when

involved in "meaningful activities" which are at least similar to "real-life" situations

(Edelsky et al., 1991; Freeman & Freeman, 1992; Goodman, 1993; Rigg, 1991). As the

above student suggestions show, it follows that student progress in uncovering their true

self-image would be facilitated if the out-of-class conversations they were involved in

were more "meaningful" and if they could express their "real-life." To a large degree, the surveys show that this took place for the Alexandria and Amman students.

Housed in the University of Minnesota, The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) is one of the U.S. Department of Education's Title VI National Language Resource Centers. Like NMELRC, its mission is to improve the nation's capacity to teach and learn foreign languages effectively. CARLA released a series of guidebooks entitled *Maximizing Study Abroad* to help students, program professionals, and language instructors make the most of study abroad opportunities through strategies for language and culture learning and use. Within these guidebooks students are instructed to prepare for study abroad with some basic knowledge at their fingertips. The following topics are highlighted (CARLA pg. 53). There are many overlaps with the topics participants in this study reported as meaningful.

- Major religions, spiritual beliefs, and their effect on host country
- Hot topics of the day (scandals, strange weather patterns, changes at the local university, new laws, movie stars that are in the spotlight)
- Year of country's independence and the circumstances
- Economic conditions
- Cultural diversity (immigration and refugee populations)
- Class structure (what will your status as a student be, what is the percentage of students that attend college)
- US role in local economics, politics, conflicts, pop culture
- Types of gift, if any, that are appropriate to give to children, host families, conversation partners, new friends, and teachers

- type of government, names of political parties and leaders

The participants in the current study wrote all of the above topics as topics that they spoke on with the native that they spoke with the most. A few topics missing from this list that students in this study repeatedly reported are:

- Educational concerns (what are you studying, what is school really like in the US, did you get to choose your educational path, do your parents approve of your education, how do you fund education)

- What Americans consider "normal" and "popular"

- Favorite books, music, and TV shows

- Goals, dreams, plans for the future related to education and family obligation

- Dating/sex/morality

- Sports

- Clothes

- Wedding & marriage traditions (natives enjoyed taking students to weddings and special family events)

- Annoying roommates/daily frustrations

- Celebrations/Traditions (that will occur while in host country)

- Income/economic concerns (have stories of economic constraints on your own life if going to a country in economic depression)

- Words for playing popular games (soccer and chess)

In Pellegrino-Aveni's suggestions for future steps to aid students, she states that "learners must be trained in personalized language use with a special focus on developing their own personality in the second language…. Moreover, it must go beyond the

traditional practice of communicating individually important information to include the expression of identity in the L2" (2005, 149). The present study supports this claim. Although almost all students reported their "most memorable" conversation as being a political debate or similarly intense religious discussion, only 7 of 29 (24.1%) students reported political topics to be a common topic when conversing with the native with whom they had the closest relationships—and most of these students (67%) were in the midst of majors that were political. More commonly, religion, family matters, and cultural discussions were reported. Topics involving other subjects that participants were interested in (e.g., philosophy, linguistics, literature, math and history) were described with much more detail. Again, we must prepare students for "personalized language use." Simple preparation may not be enough, however. In-country journals and recurring interviews with program practitioners should remind students of their goals and abilities in achieving authentic communication. Students can prepare for years for a study abroad program and then succumb to their fears and avoidance behaviors once they have entered the county. Even the best preparation on student-centered vocabulary and communication will need reinforcement once the program has begun.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Following in the footsteps of Miller and Ginsberg's (1995) evaluations of student journals, this study found that students in two Arabic study abroad programs reported positively on the influence that speaking with natives in out-of-class contact situations has on learning a target language, even though direct connections to speaking with natives and language proficiency test scores were not established. The most memorable conversations reported were often on the topic of politics and often with natives that the students never interacted with again. A deeper discussion on these two findings will follow.

This study also supported the writings of Pellegrino-Aveni (2005) who suggests that students have a deep need to reveal their skills, personality, and inner selves when communicating in the target language. This concept was supported through many student accounts of "real conversations" being times when they were able to share a new point of view with a native or when they were able to have extensive conversations on topics of personal interest outside the realm of Arabic learning.

In addition to adding to the literature on pivotal study abroad issues of today, this study presented a starting block for further investigation on authentic communication's benefits to both cultural and motivational factors in language learning. Although not without limitations, this study establishes a strong connection between meaningful discourse with natives during study abroad and ultimate success of students and programs. As revealed in the findings, in two study programs centered on speaking out-of-class with natives, students overwhelmingly reported cultural and motivational benefits from these conversations. The topics of these conversations were frequently

topics of personal interest to the students. In addition to reporting benefits, students were able to share intimate cultural exchanges that occurred one to three years earlier in respective programs. In addition to reporting that contact with natives added to their desire to continue to study the language, the majority of students surveyed fulfilled or exceeded their language goals. While it is impossible to conclusively state authentic communication as the key factor in the achievement of these language goals, it is significant that students in these surveys and other studies cited herein almost unanimously report authentic communication as a major influence in the pursuit and achievement of these goals.

More importantly, this study provides tools for educators to prepare the study abroad students of the future. Topics of conversation that proved to be meaningful are presented as well as which interlocutors became the closest relationships. Educators can be encouraged by knowing that the monolithic task of preparing each student for personally significant conversations will result in valuable rewards such as memorable conversations with natives throughout the study abroad experience, not only while nearing the end of time in-country. Educators and students alike can glean information from the large body of student quotes that reveal varied cultural knowledge gains as well as cultural pitfalls.

5.1 Limitations

The greatest limitation to this study is the fact that it embarked upon an area that does not have a long history—at present there is no body of empirical research built up around topics of conversation with natives during study abroad programs. Although the extant research on study abroad and out-of-class contact

has been thorough, only recently have researchers started discussing topics that will reveal the inner persona of the student. With no previous studies to build on, there are many questions yet to be asked. This study successfully showed the importance of revealing the inner persona during out-of-class contact, but it did not account for students who do not engage in those conversations. There was obviously no pilot group that was encouraged not to speak with natives. Likewise, there was no pilot group at the home university that did not take a study abroad path, but still engaged in authentic conversations with natives. Although this study suggests that authentic communication aids in realizing a successful study abroad program, it does not prove that programs devoid of authentic communication are failures. Nor can it say that an increased frequency of authentic communication produces more language, motivation, and cultural success.

Next, the lack of quantifiable data of language scores is a weakness. Instead of seeking for a connection with exit-OPI scores, the study should have analyzed the improvement from entrance to exit OPI scores and compared this change in proficiency to out-of-class contact. As mentioned in the instruments, this was impossible given the fact that untrained professors and student teaching assistants administered the entrance OPI's for the Alexandria program. With reliable measures of improvement, as opposed to the single exit score, a direct connection might have been made which would form a backbone for proposing the need of authentic communication from a language proficiency perspective.

Also, as with any survey in which the entire body of program participants do not take the time to complete surveys, the lack of student respondents is a significant weakness. With only 29 of 85 students participating in the final survey it is easy to speculate that with a more complete group findings might have been different. This is particularly true in regard to the findings on authentic communication lending strength to student propensity to learn post-program. It is easy to speculate that the students who were willing to take the final survey overlapped with those that still wish to maintain a connection with the NMELRC in order to further their occupational aspirations or for other reasons. Also, much of the contact information that the NMELRC had on the students was out of date, not allowing all students the opportunity to take the final survey. It is possible that the students who have the closest relationship with the NMELRC were the ones that contributed their opinions on the survey.

The final limitation to be discussed is also one of the greatest strengths of the study—namely, that of the amount of time that has passed since the study abroad experience. Time is an editor to memories and perceptions. As noted earlier, the distance from the program allows us to gauge what was truly memorable and life altering in the program. However, most students would probably not remember a major adventure from years before in a negative way even if it were so in the midst of the experience. As one of the students counseled future students to study abroad, she said, "I swore I would never return to the Middle East after my stay in Egypt and now I am making plans with my husband to return for years. It's amazing how time can change your plans. Never

underestimate how your experiences can change you even when you think it was all bad." Certainly, the reported role of native interaction may have no affect in five more years. It is possible that if the students had taken the final survey within weeks of returning they would have reported more negatively, suggesting native contact did not improve cultural understanding. In the future, the same survey administered at different points post-program could reveal a more accurate picture.

5.2 Implications for Future Research

A seen in the research presented, many students experienced great success in speaking on topics meaningful to them. With the importance of cultural understanding being highlighted again in the research and quotes of students above, educators must look closely at the programs involved in this study and see where new questions can be asked to enhance future study abroad experiences. Two areas in which the researcher of the present study sees a need for additional exploration are: (1) Topic of conversations: is focusing on political vocabulary and media a way to encourage meaningful conversations and close relationships with natives? (2) The question of gender: in what ways can women, who may confront particularly difficult cultural situations, be better prepared for engaging in authentic communication?

5.2.1 Emphasis on Politics and Its Impact on Students and Native Contacts

> *In some of my conversations about religion, I felt inadequate in trying to represent myself clearly. [They] felt all Americans were immoral, and I had trouble describing clearly my beliefs while trying to explain that America does have morality problems. I did have other conversations, though, mostly about politics or the wars in the region, which I felt were 'real' conversations. Patrick*

Many participants reported that politics became the easiest topic for them on which to have conversations. In reporting on conversations in which they would stop translating in their head, politics was cited most often. Families and religion, the second and third ranking topics of frequency, were never cited as a topic that students could stop translating in their head[29]. One possibility is the current events class that the students participated in while in country. Upon entering the country, coupled with other courses and the emphasis on speaking time out-of-class there is a current events class that all of the students take (unless they already completed it back at home). Newspapers open a wonderful view of culture up to students and it is a very motivating task in that it is real-world information and the student is deciphering it. Very authentic, pertinent, with shock value—these are all descriptions of newspaper language and stories. Do they help in appreciating the culture? Do they provide opportunities for authentic communication in which personality is revealed? And are they a timely addition to a study abroad program?

> *Many people[natives] really did not want to talk about politics even though that was 80% of what we were taught. It was a touchy subject for many and speaking of politics to practice the vocab[ulary] I had learned in class often created awkward conversations. Jayson*

After particles, conjunctions, pronouns, and numbers, the first 500 words in Arabic newspapers are almost solely political (Mouritsen, 2007). Should these papers be shipped back home and taught pre- or post-study abroad so in country discussion could center around people, passion, personalities, and a little less on politics? Politics easily ranks number one as for topics most commonly talked about, many students who study

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[29] Many of the students stated that they never stopped translating in their head or that they could not remember what the topic was when this happened. Less than half of the participants reported a topic in this portion of the survey.

Arabic are preparing for government jobs that would utilize a political vocabulary repertoire and even those that aren't cannot avoid this ubiquitous topic of conversation in the Middle East. Even the one student that reported politics as her topic of least passion reported that she spoke of it often, the topic can not be excluded in study abroad programs—nor should it be. But the focus on student driven topics and communication must be highlighted pre- and post-study abroad.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle in questioning the use of political discussions as the primary focus of instruction is the lack of a replacement. The other top areas of passion reported by the students were religion, families, and studies/occupational issues. To train students in religious conversations could look like a biased education at best (particularly since the institution that sponsored these programs is a private religious university) and like rampant proselytizing and blatant missionary work at worst. The topic of families was often spoken on and more focus on vocabulary beyond family structure terms should be practiced, but to use family as a substitution topic for politics would not work in the Middle East since a stranger would never disclose personal information with a foreigner about their family as an initial interchange.

"Studies/occupational issues" was obviously an area of great success, especially noted in detail as a topic of "real conversation" in which the students enjoyed sharing other interests and specialties that they had which disclosed their true personality and also helped in preserving their self-image in that they could share skills and experience in something other than language learning which at times inevitably makes you feel like a fledgling and a juvenile. Perhaps this is the topic that could be focused on primarily in place of politics; In fact, given the backgrounds of many students studying in the Middle

East, politics and educational/occupational issues could dovetail nicely. Creating a curriculum around individual specialties, talents, jobs, and educational backgrounds would be a great challenge and would not involve as much real media as a newspaper class; and there are complications with this topic as well. Sending affluent American students into a depressed economy and suggesting that they talk with everyone about occupations and educational opportunities that natives may never have could be problematic.

There is time in class pre- and during study abroad programs for student directed vocabulary instruction. This is evidenced by the fact that half of the students were able to remember topics in class that they were taught that they never used in speaking with natives[30]. These topics included inheritance rites, burial practices, desserts, extensive collections of fruits and vegetables (that they did not know in English), pieces of furniture and household appliances, names of political leaders from all of the countries in the region, names of deserts and rivers in the region, and diverse words for bombs. Surely the time spent on such items could be transformed into learner directed vocabulary building. Student-directed vocabulary building must be seen as one of the primary means to authentic communication.

In the Middle East politics is spoken on constantly. Yes, students initiated political discourse at times, but more often natives confronted them on their political opinions[31]. Political conversations were an easy way to start talking. If students had a

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[30] The other half of the students reported that they did not remember because they never used those word out of class or that they enjoyed the interaction in their classes and the topics were not of primary importance.

[31] This fact is heightened by the fact that the times of these study abroad programs coincided with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the re-election of President Bush, and the onset of bombings exchanged between Lebanon and Israel.

ready repertoire of meaningful personal topics they would be able to change the direction
of the conversation while still reaping the benefits of the new speaking partner.

More questions concerning politics and study abroad remain. If our goal as
educators is to aid students in cultural understanding, then intrinsic motivation research
reveals that a positive view of the target culture is vital. Is this desire for a positive
cultural image in clash with a focus in political happenings and political debate in out-of-
class exchanges? Is there a way for students to focus on politics and war and still
embrace the host culture? Is there a way to better prepare students speaking on topics so
that their interchanges will not be overly emotional and argumentative, even when they
are speaking with natives that could rightfully be accused of the same? More research on
the overlap of politics and study abroad affecting culture shock and understanding should
be undertaken. Regardless of how educators answer these questions for their particular
study abroad programs, it must be remembered that authentic communication
opportunities with natives is the irreproducible element of study abroad The preparation
for study abroad and the classes and requirements during study abroad should be geared
to authentic communication as the primary goal.

5.2.2 Additional Issues for Preparing Women on Study Abroad

Gender can be a real obstacle to authentic communication as well as an over-used
excuse. Preparing all of the students, especially women in some situations, for
appropriate topics for interchanges is vital for achieving authentic communication. In
Alexandria many of the closest relationships that females had were with lower class
women. This was true for many of the friends that were dubbed "university" friends

because the students met the janitors and workers of the university and did not know

what else to classify them as. Conversations and cultural divides were very large in some

of these instances. The Alexandria students, seen as wealthy and educated, were trying to

find people that would take the time to speak with them for extended periods of time.

Quite often that included shopkeepers, housemaids, and people out of work that would be

on the streets near their language center. The students were encouraged to use public

transportation so they could have additional interaction with native speakers, but one of

the forms of public transportation was the tram, which was used more readily by

members of a lower class than our students were labeled. This lead to many occurrences

of shunning as the members of separate classes rarely mingle in Egypt. Female students

knew that they should focus their interactions with speakers of the same gender, yet

females their own age refused to speak with them time and time again. Class distinctions

are taboo and despicable in our own culture, and were mentioned as one of the obstacles

to both cultural appreciation and language engagement for the Alexandria students. The

following story is illustrative of this obstacle to authentic communication.

> *I recall one instance of cornering my neighbor's maid, Shay-ma' to ask*
> *her what a newspaper article meant. I had wrestled with a dictionary all*
> *afternoon and still did not understand the central thrust of the piece.*
> *When I approached her she simply laughed and said, "Don't you know I*
> *can't read Arabic?" She was shocked and hurt that I, a non-native*
> *stranger that received many more niceties from her "lady" than she ever*
> *would could also read her mother-tongue. I offered to teach her. I*
> *begged my neighbor to allow me the time explaining it would be good*
> *preparation for me when I would teach Arabic in the future. I was denied.*
> *Everyone involved said it was of no use. If she could read she would*
> *never be able to find a husband because at her level of society men could*
> *never read and they would never take a wife that was more educated than*
> *they were. After this interaction I never had a conversation with Shay-ma'*
> *again. We would talk, but only in passing. She would ask me questions*
> *about her language feeling that I was superior to her—even in her own*
> *fluency which she claimed was only street talk and bad language. Had I*

been culturally aware and had I been prepared to discuss topics with her that were applicable in her life rather than intense political debate that my coursework geared me to, a great imparting of knowledge and worthwhile speaking experience could have transpired. Instead, we remained strangers. Madeline

More research on how to help female students needs to be done. Specifically, in preparing students for study abroad, educators need to be aware of topics of discussion relevant to and appropriate for the women of the target culture and anticipating class distinctions that could affect the nature of the experience of the females in the group. Also, educators should think seriously about incorporating homestays for female students in gender-divided countries or at least arranging for them to be adopted into appropriate families.[32]

5.3 Closing Remarks

The emphasis of this study, that authentic communication with natives increases cultural understanding and motivation for continued language study, enabled many student to express themsleves. Although with limitations, this study has formed a foundation on which future research on authentic communication and study abroad programs can build. In the end, students have to hold themselves accountable in engaging in relationships and focusing on topics that work for them. As seen in Chapter 4, 83% of the students reported that their memorable/"real" conversations were on one of their top four most passionate topics. That means that 5 of the 29 (17%) students *did not*

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[32] This is not to suggest that homestay situations are without drawbacks. Many of native speakers willing to have a student in their home are fluent in English and that often leads to students sticking to the language of comfort and dodging hard topics or refusing fumbling to express themselves when the topic is one that they are passionate on. Many of our female students found creative ways to promote long-term relationships while in a gender sensitive countries. Speaking with the family of the landlord, neighbors, and co-workers in internships can be valuable solutions to females seeking speaking partners.

speak on one of their passionate topics enough that they recalled the memory as a vivid

language altering example of conversation. Among these five students were two of the

students with the highest OPI scores in both programs. Perhaps these students recognized

that their favorite topics back home were not of interest or culturally appropriate to their

speaking companions, but they did not give up and language progress and friendships

were still made.

The occurrence of authentic communication was not dependent on language

proficiency or time in country in this study. When students enter with similar levels of

experience as those in these study abroad programs, the same variety of experience with

natives may be anticipated. Certainly, students with no previous exposure to the target

language entering a study abroad program can not anticipate comparable communication

in which they are able to reveal their personality and opinions (this is not to say that they

are not able to experience some form of authentic communication, but that is not the form

of authentic communication that has been narrowly defined in this study).

In this study students with the highest and the lowest scores reported authentic

communication throughout their stay in country. Students that struggled with culture

shock as well as students that never reported a bad cultural moment reported authentic

communication. Students that are currently employed using their Arabic ability did not

report more frequent occurrences of "real conversations" than students that stopped

Arabic study upon returning home. Language learning is a complex phenomena and

authentic communication is but one of many variables in that process. Each student has

their own strengths and weaknesses, but this study suggests that any student should

expect and prepare for authentic communication. Educators can facilitate by preparing

with meaningful topics and briefing students on cultural issues to be aware of, but the ultimate deciding factor is within the students themselves who must choose to forge through fear of misrepresentation of their self-image and speak with natives. This is not to say that all interaction (or even most of it) should be defined as authentic communication, but when students anticipate having the ability to reveal their opinions, styles, and personalities in the target language, they have a greater purpose for attempting that communication. When programs are framed around speaking with natives often, authentic communication will almost certainly occur. And as this communication occurs, cultural and motivational benefits will be reaped.

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Appendix A

Out-of-Class Contact Survey

Name:

Semester and Location of Study Abroad Program:

Answer the Following Based on Conversations that you have had in <u>English</u>

Imagine a conversation that you are passionately involved in. (For example, you gesticulate wildly or skip an appointment to finish the conversation)—What are some topics that you could be talking about?

Think of a time you argued an idea with your best friend/love interest/relative—What were you talking about?

Think of a time you cried or yelled (or displayed other emotional evidence that would suggest being sad or angry) when talking to your best friend/love interest/relative—What were you talking about?

When did you have a conversation that made you think for hours after the conversation was over? What were you talking about?

What do you speak passionately about? (Rank 1-14, 1 being the topic you speak ***most*** passionately)

__Religion
__Family/Children
__Field of Study in School/Occupational Issues
__Politics/Political Debate/Government
__Service/Humanitarian Outreach/Making a Difference in the World
__Love/Romance/Relationships
__Sports/Hobbies
__Health Concerns/Exercise/Dieting
__Books/Music/ Art
__Environment/Nature
__Morality/Lifestyles/Sex
__Dreams/Ambitions
__Daily Living/Daily Stresses
__Music/Movies/Pop Culture
Other passionate discussion topics not included:

Answer the following Questions Based on Conversations in <u>Arabic</u> that you had During Study Abroad

During your study abroad program please describe IN DETAIL the most memorable conversation that you had with a native out-of-class.

If not included above, what was the topic and duration of the conversation. How long had you been on the program when you had this conversation? Did you speak with this person again?

Describe the closest relationship you had with a native while on your study abroad?

Did you normally speak Arabic when you were with this person? If yes, describe some conversations that you recall? Please include the topics of the conversations.

Do you recall conversations outside of class in which you stopped translating in your head because you were so lost in conversation? If yes, what were the topics and who were you speaking with?

Did you consider conversations with natives to be "real conversations?" Meaning, did you feel like you were able to represent yourself accurately? PLEASE INCLUDE EXAMPLES!!!

How often did you feel like you were able to get past shallow topics or introductions?
Check one
__Never did I experience a meaningful discussion in Arabic
__Once or twice during my study abroad experience I had meaningful discussions
__I remember multiple times I had meaningful discussions
__I daily had meaningful discussions
__Most of the time I was speaking with natives I felt we had meaningful discussions

With what types of people and in what contexts were you able to get past shallow conversations? (Please note social class, gender, and age)

Describe one of these "real conversations" on a topic other than your "most memorable conversation" you described earlier.

Please rate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements based on your Arabic study abroad experience
 Speaking with natives outside-of-class improved my conversation ability
      Strongly Disagree
      Disagree
      Neutral
      Agree
      Strongly Agree

My classes during my study abroad improved my conversation ability
>   Strongly Disagree
>   Disagree
>   Neutral
>   Agree
>   Strongly Agree

Speaking with natives outside of class made me want to continue the pursuit of Arabic while on my study abroad.
>   Strongly Disagree
>   Disagree
>   Neutral
>   Agree
>   Strongly Agree

Speaking with natives made me want to continue studying Arabic after my study-abroad
>   Strongly Disagree
>   Disagree
>   Neutral
>   Agree
>   Strongly Agree

When speaking to natives that I spent a lot of time with outside-of-class I would withhold my opposing opinions in order to make conversations easier.
>   Strongly Disagree
>   Disagree
>   Neutral
>   Agree
>   Strongly Agree

Speaking Arabic outside-of-class with natives helped me understand the culture of the country I was in better.
>   Strongly Disagree
>   Disagree
>   Neutral
>   Agree
>   Strongly Agree

Speaking Arabic outside-of-class helped me to like the culture of the country I was in.
>   Strongly Disagree
>   Disagree
>   Neutral
>   Agree
>   Strongly Agree

If I could do my study abroad over again, I would speak to natives outside of class more than I did.

> Strongly Disagree
> Disagree
> Neutral
> Agree
> Strongly Agree

Answer the following Questions Based on Conversations that you had in <u>Arabic</u> During Study Abroad

Did you have a conversation in Arabic with a native that made you reconsider studying Arabic or make you want to stop the program? If yes, what was the topic and/or situation? How did you get beyond this experience (or did you)?

Do you remember topics of conversation out of class that you were completely ill-prepared to speak on because of vocabulary?

If yes, what were the topics?

Did you find a way to learn those topics in Arabic? How did you learn this vocabulary (friends, teachers, other natives, dictionary…)?

Do you wish you had studied those topics pre-study abroad as part of your course work? A quality curriculum cannot cover everything, but are there important topics that you feel were neglected in your pre-study abroad?

Did you have classes during your study abroad that spent a great deal of time on topics you found to be useless? What were some vocabulary topics that you were taught that you never used in speaking with natives outside-of-class?

What were some topics you discussed with natives that are not among those topics that you are passionate about, but you pushed on in a conversation with them in order to have the language experience?

Rate with 1= never, 5= all of the time

During your study abroad, which topics did you speak on in Arabic outside of class?
Religion

> 1 Never
> 2 Once or Twice
> 3 Sometimes
> 4 Often
> 5 All of the time

Family/Children

> 1 Never
> 2 Once or Twice

3 Sometimes
4 Often
5 All of the time
Field of Study in School/Occupational Issues
     1 Never
     2 Once or Twice
     3 Sometimes
     4 Often
     5 All of the time
Politics/Political Debate/Government
     1 Never
     2 Once or Twice
     3 Sometimes
     4 Often
     5 All of the time
Service/Humanitarian Outreach/Making a Difference in the World
     1 Never
     2 Once or Twice
     3 Sometimes
     4 Often
     5 All of the time
Love/Romance/Relationships
     1 Never
     2 Once or Twice
     3 Sometimes
     4 Often
     5 All of the time
Sports/Hobbies
     1 Never
     2 Once or Twice
     3 Sometimes
     4 Often
     5 All of the time
Health Concerns/Exercise/Diet
     1 Never
     2 Once or Twice
     3 Sometimes
     4 Often
     5 All of the time

Books/Music/ Art
     1 Never
     2 Once or Twice
     3 Sometimes
     4 Often
     5 All of the time

Morality/Lifestyles/Sex
    1 Never
    2 Once or Twice
    3 Sometimes
    4 Often
    5 All of the time
Movies/Music/Pop Culture
    1 Never
    2 Once or Twice
    3 Sometimes
    4 Often
    5 All of the time
Environment/Nature
    1 Never
    2 Once or Twice
    3 Sometimes
    4 Often
    5 All of the time
Dreams/Ambitions
    1 Never
    2 Once or Twice
    3 Sometimes
    4 Often
    5 All of the time
Daily Living/Daily Stresses
    1 Never
    2 Once or Twice
    3 Sometimes
    4 Often
    5 All of the time
Other topics you spoke on often in Arabic outside of class:

In what ways did out-of-class contact affect your learning of Arabic? Do you think it affected your grammar? Listening and speaking? Did it improve your confidence in the language?

In what ways did your speaking with natives outside of class affect your understanding of Arab culture? Please describe at least one meaningful exchange.

How much more Arabic have you taken, or what life experiences have you initiated to continue Arabic exposure post study-abroad?

Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement, My study abroad fulfilled the learning outcome described below.

 "Program graduates will be able to view themselves as agents for promoting understanding and dialog between the Islamic World and the West, with the ability to articulate cultural differences between the two particularly in regard to politeness and interpersonal relations, and to interpret current Middle Eastern events from a variety of viewpoints, explaining how others view these events."

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree

Based on the review you have just made of your out-of-class conversations. Do you have any suggestions that could aid educators in preparing students to better participate in out-of-class conversations while they are on study abroad programs?