

Doctoral Programme in English Applied Linguistics and

TESOL/TEFL

Doctoral School in Linguistics

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pécs

Krommer Zoltán

Exploring the Language Socialization of Study Abroad Medical Students in Hungary

Doktori (Ph.D.) értekezés tézisei – Summary of Doctoral Dissertation

Supervisor: Fodor Mónika, Ph. D.

Pécs, 2020

TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this exploratory research my aim was to uncover the reasons for some study abroad medical students' language learning success or failure in Pécs. The Medical School of the University of Pécs has been offering SA opportunities in the Hungarian educational context since the 1980s. International students have been a majority at the Medical School since 2012 (Császár & Wusching, 2014, p. 10), and their absolute numbers and relative percentage has continued to grow. As a language teacher at the Medical School, I have long faced the questions of how professional identity development and the social networks the students participate in are related. The present study intends to provide a qualitative analysis of the participants' unique experiences, considering the growing body of literature concerning both students' identities and study abroad second language acquisition.

The dissertation looks at the research investigating the connection between language and identity (Chapter one) and the relationship between language learning and study abroad (Chapter two). The connection between language learning and identity is reciprocal: the identity of the speaker constructs language, and language constructs the identity in return (Weedon, 1987, Norton-Peirce, 1995). Recently this reciprocal process has been theorised to be part of a "narrative identity work" (Benson et al., 2013, p. 9). The shift towards the understanding of identities as being narratively constructed has happened as part of a broader narrative turn within social sciences that has also ushered in an emergent interest in language and discourse (Hammack, 2014, p. 23). Narrative identity construction is understood as a fundamentally social process where events are given a story form that defines a person's identity, and provides the motivation for action (Hammack, 2008). Studies often treat identities "as dynamically constituted in relationships and performed with/for audiences" (Riessman, 2008, p. 137), as

demonstrated by Riessman with exemplary studies by herself (2004), Brown (1997), and Gallas (1994).

Perhaps the first major study investigating the relationship between linguistic features and identity was Labov's famous 1963 study of the year-long-residents of Martha's Vineyard. He concluded that residents of Martha's Vineyard used the non-standard pronunciation of certain diphthongs to signal their identities as native (Labov, 1963, p. 304). A decade later, Robin Lakoff (1973) argued that language use signals and enforces a marginal social status for women. One of the most influential models of the language-identity link has been Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (SIT). In this model, social identity is fundamentally subjective, derived from an individual's self-concept, as it pertains to memberships in social groups, and the significance the individual attributes to these memberships (Tajfel, 1978).

For the purposes of this study, my main theoretical framework is going to be the Language Socialization Theory, proposed by Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin (1984). While LST views membership in a community or group as a premise of socialisation, it also emphasises how access to a new language and participation in a new community is not automatic and without obstacles for L2 learners. For example, Duff (2004) demonstrated how a lack of shared knowledge of Canadian pop culture negatively affected ESL students learning outcomes in Canada (Duff, 2004).

The dissertation also builds on the concepts of intercultural posture (Yashima, 2002, 2009), L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), investment (Norton-Peirce, 1995) and agency (Mercer, 2011). International posture is often defined as language learners' attitude towards the international community in general, as well as their interest in international vocation, activities, and their tendency to approach and communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. Yashima et al. (2004) postulate a circular, self-reinforcing relationship

between intercultural communication experiences, interest in international communication and affairs, L2 motivation, and a willingness to communicate (p. 144).

Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System claims that language-learning motivation can come from three main sources: the learners Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and a positive L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self is the second language-speaking future self the language learner wishes to become. The Ought-to L2 Self is a self that possesses the attributes the learner believes he ought to possess to avoid negative outcomes. L2 Learning Experience is the motivation stemming from the immediate language learning environment and experience.

Norton-Peirce (1995) introduced the concept of investment to model language learners' historically and socially constructed relationship to language learning motivation. She argued that language learning is a way for learners to acquire social, and symbolic and often material resources. Learners should be understood as fully formed individuals with complex identities and multiple desires, who might, or might not be, invested in the language practices of their classrooms for numerous complex reasons. As McKay and Wong (1996) pointed out, an individual's needs and desires should be viewed as things that determine the students' investment in language learning.

Agency in language learning is understood along the lines of intentionality, cognition, and self-consciousness (Carter & New, 2004), but it is also connected to the learner's "capacity to achieve desired and intended outcomes" (Giddens, 1984, p. 15). This capacity involves not just an ability of autonomous learning, but also the learners' capacity to acquire a "right to speak" and impose reception on the interlocutors (Norton, 2000, p. 8).

Chapter two details how research has shown that the setting in itself does not guarantee better language gains than other settings would. Instead of clear-cut evidence of the linguistic benefits of study abroad settings, the research focusing on linguistic constructs and

gains in SA has led to the realisation “that many aspects of language development are nonlinear and . . . multivariate and dynamic” (Spoelman & Verspoor, 2010, p. 547). The extra-linguistic factors influencing SA experiences and language development in a study abroad setting are numerous, difficult to isolate or control, and therefore looking at individual factors “often yields inconsistent results” (Wang, 2010, p. 59). As Wang succinctly argues, these facts serve as a rationale for an exploratory qualitative approach towards language socialization in study abroad.

One of the earliest and most often quoted research into SA was John Carroll’s (1967) study that examined the language proficiency of 2,782 randomly selected language majors at 203 institutions in the continental US. He concluded that time spent as an SA student was one of the strongest predictors of foreign language proficiency. This finding has been supported by numerous studies over the years (e.g., Brecht and Davidson, 1991; Freed, 1995; Díaz-Campos, 2004). Even so, the impact of a study abroad context on students’ development of language skills is hardly a settled question. Study abroad seems to be most beneficial for the acquisition of oral proficiency and vocabulary items, and there is some evidence that it is also beneficial for the improvement in reading comprehension and written complexity, whereas the results concerning its impact on grammatical complexity are mixed. The ambiguity of the findings highlights the fact that study abroad functions as a complex system, and its study “requires researchers to take into account the whole person and the whole context” (Coleman, 2013, p. 36). Most research studies to this day have failed to approach study abroad in this manner, although many have investigated some aspects of the context.

In the last decades, an ever-increasing number of SA research has factored in the effects of extra-linguistics factors on language learning. Among others, these research works focused on the effect the stay abroad had on the students’ intercultural competence, the significance of the duration of the SA period on language gains, and the importance of social networks in SA

language gains. Regarding intercultural competence Engle and Engle (2004) stated that their SA students' intercultural sensitivity was positively affected by direct, authentic contact with the host culture and by "skilful mentoring which guides, informs, inspires, and stimulates the experiential learning process" (p. 232). Similarly, Anderson et al. (2006) found that the students from an American midwestern private university significantly improved their intercultural sensitivity after only four weeks in England and Ireland. However, whether an SA experience is conducive to the development of intercultural competence is by no means a settled issue in SA research. In fact, Shartner (2015) found that students' cultural empathy and open-mindedness declined during an SA experience.

The effect of length of stay is comparatively under researched and has only recently garnered appropriate interest. The dearth of research might be explained by the fact that two strong assumptions were shared by most SA researchers. On the one hand, it was assumed that the longer an SA period, the more benefits the students accrue (Dwyer, 2004, p. 151). On the other hand, a short-term SA experience was assumed to not be impactful enough to prompt an investigation. Thus, most of the research focused on populations that had at least three months of SA experience (Llanes & Munoz, 2009, p. 354). Llanes and Munoz challenged the assumption that short-term SA experiences "may not produce any significant change in subjects' second language proficiency" (Llanes & Munoz, 2009, p. 354). They found that even a three- or four-week-long SA experience can lead to significant improvement in listening comprehension, oral fluency, and accuracy. Llanes and Serrano (2011) investigated the effect of a month difference in the length of a SA participation, and found no significant difference between students who stayed abroad for two months and those who stayed for three. The findings of Lara, Mora, and Pérez-Vidal (2015) added another twist to the research into the effects of length of stay on language gains. They compared two groups Spanish-Catalan bilinguals before and after an SA of 3 and 6 months for the two groups, respectively. Their

statistics showed that the three months group showed more gains in accuracy and fluency than the students in the 6-month-long group, whereas there were no significant differences between the groups with regards to gains in complexity.

Another variable that influences language gains is the type and extent of social interactions that are created during SA. Contacts with the host university students and the local community provide SA students with seemingly crucial opportunities to practice their L2 in authentic situations. Researchers have often utilized the social network framework first proposed by Lesley Milroy (1980), who defined it as informal relationships contracted by the learner, which frequently results in interactions. Kinginger (2008), based on students' reports of their SA experiences, found that one of the main influencing factors in the high degree of individual variation in language outcomes among SA students in the development of social networks. Dewey et al. (2014) investigated the predictors of language use in six SA programs in six different countries. They examined the relationship of six predictors (the SA program, age, gender, initial level of cultural sensitivity, personality, initial L2 proficiency and social network size) and L2 use of 118 SA students, and found that the characteristics of the SA program and social network size were the most important predictors of language use.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was designed to research the impact of SA on identity construction through emergent themes found in SA students' personal accounts and through semi-structured interviews. The design is presented in detail in chapter three. In the first part of the research, SA students were prompted to provide written accounts of events during their SA period to uncover the emergent themes salient to their experiences. The second part of the research consisted of six semi-

structured interviews designed to reflect on the content of the emergent themes identified in the written accounts. Following Duff’s classification of case studies, the present dissertation can be best described as an explanatory-relational case study, as its goal is to find “causal or relational patterns among observations or yield explanations about” (Duff, 2008, p. 101) language learning in the study abroad context at the Medical School.

Table 1.

Outline of the research

Research questions	
RQ1	What aspects of identity construction manifest in students’ written life experience narratives?
RQ2	How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students’ identity construction?
RQ3	How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students’ agency construction?
RQ4	How do SA students construct the image of the training institution in narrative?
RQ5	What are the implications of the present narrative study for the educational institution?
First round of research	
Data collection of written accounts:	February 6 and 14, 2019
Participants:	133 first- and second-year SA students at UPMS
Data collection instrument:	A prompt reading “Please write a passage about how your life became different as a foreign student at Pécs. Think about a memorable event or events in your life – something you did or something that happened to you – when this was particularly strongly felt. Be as concrete and descriptive in your story as you can.”

Data analysis method:	Thematic analysis following two cycles of coding which resulted in descriptive codes and salient categories of the aspects of identity construction
Second round of the research	
Data collection of the interviews:	February 5 and 18, 2020
Participants:	Five SA students at UPMS
Data collection instrument:	A semi-structured interview (Appendix B) based on the salient categories identified in the personal accounts.
Data analysis method:	Thematic analysis focusing on the aspects of identity construction identified in the personal accounts.

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What aspects of identity construction manifest in students' written life experience narratives?
- 2) How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students' identity construction?
- 3) How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students' agency construction?
- 4) How do SA students construct the image of the training institution in narrative?
- 5) What are the implications of the present narrative study for the educational institution?

In part one of the study the informants were selected through cluster sampling. I asked my colleagues to distribute the prompts in their language classes, and one hundred thirty-three students decided to provide an account. They were asked to "think about a memorable event or events", "something you did or something that happened to you" when they felt this change particularly strongly. The prompt also reminded the participants to be concrete and descriptive.

I coded the accounts, after careful reading and rereading, first with descriptive codes (Saldana, 2009, pp. 70-73), which were then categorised into salient themes. I employed a content analysis approach. The analysis of the data was thematic. Instead of focusing on “how”, “to whom”, or “why” certain things were said, all of which are valid foci for research purposes, my main interest lay in “what” was said. The research thus highlighted the shared main themes in the data, according to what was the most prevalent for the participants. These shared themes connect the individual participants to a larger group of SA students and reveal the commonalities and dissimilarities of their accounts.

In the second round, five semi-structured interviews were conducted between February 5 and 18, 2020, at the University of Pécs. I selected the respondents of the interview project through convenience sampling. The written set of questions for the interviews was compiled on the basis of emergent themes identified in the first dataset of the study. Following Mackey and Gass’s (2015, pp. 225) recommendation, these questions were used flexibly and mostly as a guide, whereas the topics raised by the participants during the interviews were probed for more information. The interview questions asked about five topics: the participants’ experiences and feelings concerning Hungarians and the Hungarian language, communication difficulties experienced during the SA, intercultural adjustments and culture shock, the participants’ social networks in Pécs, and the participants’ self-analysis.

MAIN FINDINGS

Chapter four outlines the aspects of identity construction found in the accounts of study abroad medical students and explores their connection with the participants’ language socialization. I identified a total of five aspects of identity construction in the accounts, namely SELF-

EVALUATION, EVALUATION OF THE SA CONTEXT, ADJUSTING TO THE SA CONTEXT, SOCIAL NETWORKS, and COMMUNICATION. I present and discuss each of the five aspects in separate sub-chapters.

Table 2

The frequency counts for the aspects of identity construction identified in the written accounts.

Aspect	Frequency count
Self-evaluation	95
Adjusting to the SA context	72
Evaluation of the SA context	69
Social networks	56
Communication	36

Based on the aspects of identity construction identified in the accounts, international medical students in Pécs seemed to consider their study abroad experience to be a time of personal change and identity construction. They believed that it made them more open-minded, self-reliant, and multicultural. They thought that they became more knowledgeable about the world in general and about the cultures of their fellow SA students during their study abroad. Participants frequently evaluated themselves along these lines in their accounts. Not only was this the aspect of identity construction most often mentioned by the participants, being self-reliant, open-minded, and multicultural was the lens through which the participants presented other aspects of identity construction as well. In adjusting to the study abroad context, the participants wrote about how being open to new experiences and to other cultures were an important part of the adjustment process. Building a multinational social network of study

abroad students was often connected to becoming more open-minded and multicultural in their outlooks.

The accounts pointed to a limited interest in the host culture and members of the host community. Evaluation of the study abroad context was the third most common aspect of identity construction in the accounts, and it revealed the students' mixed opinions about Hungary, Hungarians and Pécs. Some participants considered Hungarians to be kind, whereas others described them as unfriendly and racist. Hungary was described as strange by five students, but familiar by two. Pécs was discussed in only five accounts, and three of those highlighted how, due to the lack of distractions it is a good place to study. Interestingly, only six participants mentioned having Hungarians as members of their social networks, and only three wrote about learning about the host country. In a related point, the participants also frequently wrote about having difficulties in communicating with Hungarians. Learning the Hungarian language was mentioned by a total of six accounts. Whereas the study students could evaluate their new study abroad context based on their personal experiences, they had only limited exposure to members of the host community and little investment in gaining access to them.

Chapter five investigates the interviews conducted with five study abroad medical students on their experiences. The analysis aims to point out the connections of the aspects of identity constructions defined in chapter four with SA students' access to social networks, agency, and language learning. One of the interviewees, Alim, looked for and found a historical connection of his ethnic identity to the host community in Hungary. This supposed historical connection led to an interest in Hungarian customs and possibly to his interest in learning the Hungarian language. He also viewed himself a self-reliant person, who looks for opportunities to gain membership in the host community. As he became a member of a Hungarian community of practice through his participation in the Thai boxing gym, this interest in the host community

served as a frequent topic of communication with the trainer of the gym. He was the only student among the interviewees, who managed to gain legitimate participation in a social network of Hungarians.

Meanwhile, Nora viewed herself mostly as a future doctor in Norway, and she evaluated her experiences in Hungary through the lens of her Ideal-Self as a medical doctor in her home country. She continued to rely on her at-home social network of friends and family members for emotional support and showed little investment in learning the Hungarian language or involving Hungarians in her social networks. Emma, another Norwegian student had similarly little investment in learning the Hungarian language. Despite her identity as a talkative and socializing person and an empathetic medical doctor, who looks out for the interests of the patients, her social networks in Pécs did not include Hungarians.

Aiza's identity as a multilingual and a successful language learner was at odds with her failure to learn Hungarian during her study abroad. Having a shared language other members of her social networks cannot understand was an important factor in the friendship she built with a Swedish-Burmese student. In conversation with Hungarians, she often relied on the Google Translate algorithm, and in the Hungarian language medical classrooms, for example in the clinical practice classes, Hungarian students translated for her. Both situations contrasted with her identity as a successful language learner, and made her feel unprofessional, which further exacerbated her negative feelings, and turned her away from situations involving Hungarians.

Finally, Jacob talked about his evaluation of Hungarians, who he perceived as more focused, and solution-oriented, less open to small talk, when compared to Norwegians. He also believed that the study abroad experience made him more independent and self-reliant, mostly due to a lack of support he received from members of the host community. He had only limited contact with Hungarians, mostly with Hungarian students that attended the same boxing gym

as he did. His social network, just like every interviewee except Alim, only contained other study abroad students. Jacob also talked about his identity as a language learner but his investment in learning the language was lacking. The interviewees' identities rarely led to seeking out access to members of the host community, or in the otherwise rare occasions when they had regular contact with Hungarian students, to value these connections and attempt to involve them in their social networks. The only exception was Alim, who found a meaningful historical connection between his identity as an ethnic minority and the host culture. His interest in the host culture, together with his identity as a self-reliant person, lead to a legitimate participation in a Hungarian-speaking community of practice and regular meaningful Hungarian input.

The third research question asked how the study abroad student's agency related to their access to social networks. Agency is often understood as a person's capacity to act on the world (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112), and students' belief in the growth of their own independence is also a belief in their own capacity to act and bring about effects (Karp, 1986). In the written the students often wrote about their belief that the study abroad experience had made them more independent and self-reliant. The participants also believed that due to the study abroad experience they became more knowledgeable about the world and other cultures. The period of their study abroad was viewed by the students as a time of personal growth and learning. This belief was exhibited by the interviewees as well. A crucial question concerning agency is how much individual choices are restrained by their sociocultural contexts. Since conceptions of agency differ in different cultures (Skinner et al. 1998), by becoming more knowledgeable about other cultures, the study abroad students at Pécs have also come across new conceptions of agency.

The interviewees shared the participants' belief that the study abroad experience contributed towards them becoming more independent. Jacob talked about his conviction that

he became more mature and independent during his stay in Pécs. For Aiza, being alone in Pécs was a difficult, but ultimately worthwhile experience that led to her increased independence. Nora also talked about her belief that the study abroad experience has made her more independent and emotionally resilient and thought that the study abroad experiences increased her future agency, or capacity to act as a medical professional.

Despite their beliefs of the study abroad being a time of personal growth and learning, and the proclaimed language learner identities, most of the interviewees did not exercise their agency over their Hungarian language learning or over constructing social networks that involve Hungarians. Nora talked about her lack of investment to study the Hungarian language and showed little interest in involving Hungarians in his social network. Emma took responsibility over her lack of Hungarian proficiency and claimed that she “should have learned more Hungarian” during her study abroad. She explained however, that she viewed Hungarian language learning a bad investment of her time, if she is only going to use the language occasionally. Whereas Nora and Emma were convinced that it would be necessary for them to take agency over their own language learning, and refused to do so, Aiza felt a lack of agency over her language learning. Aiza talked about her conviction, that her lack of Hungarian proficiency was mostly a failure of the Medical School. In her opinion, the university should have imposed more rigorous language requirements on the study abroad students and provided them with more and better learning opportunities.

The difference in Nora and Aiza’s conceptions in their agency over their language learning demonstrates the difference individuals might perceive in their choices (Kramsch, 2012). However much or little agency they believed to have over their own language learning, neither of them acted on their environment to facilitate their language learning, which might point towards the sociocultural context’s negative effect on the students’ Hungarian language

learning, which would be in line with a structuralist view of agency in language learning (e.g., Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, Wen & Clement, 2003).

In this case as well, Alim was the outlier among the interviewees. He took agency over his language learning and did not lack the investment to spend time and effort on it. The most important part of his learning strategy, which provided him with continuous meaningful Hungarian input, and with integrative motivation, was his success in building a social network that involves Hungarians. Alim achieved this by taking every opportunity to talk with and befriend Hungarians: he had daily talks with the staff of his local supermarket, was on friendly terms with his landlady, and most importantly, he became a legitimate member of a Hungarian community of practice in the form of a Thai Boxing gym. His Thai Boxing trainer was perhaps the most important member of his social network, and his welcoming attitude and interest in Alim's culture and history was an important factor in the construction of Alim's social networks.

Alim's participation in the Thai Boxing gym started within the structures of the Medical School, as a voluntary physical education class. Other interviewees also took part in physical education classes where they mingled with Hungarian students. Aiza signed up for a horse-riding class, Emma took part in two different dancing classes, in Jacob's case it was boxing. For various reasons, these experiences did not yield the same result as Alim's. Emma became friends with a Hungarian girl in the dancing class, but their friendship waned over the months. Jacob takes boxing lessons with Hungarians ever since, but their relationship did not progress beyond mere acquaintances. In contrast with Alim, who saw his Thai boxing trainer as an important asset in gaining knowledge about his environment and a guide in becoming a legitimate member in a community, neither Emma nor Jacob seemed to attribute importance to the Hungarian students in their physical education classes.

The fourth research question asked how the SA students constructed the image of their training institution in narrative. The Medical School was mentioned in thirty-one written accounts, and it was one of the more frequently mentioned topics. The students were uniform in depicting the Medical School as an entity that poses difficulties and challenges for the SA students, but the evaluation of these challenges differed between participants. Some participants expressed their displeasure over the high-workload and wrote about panic attacks and stress. Others welcomed the challenge and wrote about the difficulties as formative factors in their identity construction. They believed that these difficulties have made them more resilient and stronger.

Interestingly, of the interviewees, Alim talked the least about the role of the training institution in his SA experience. One of the few instances in his interview, when the training institution came up happened when he raised the issue of a possible shared Hungarian-Uyghur ancestry with one of his teachers. He met the most important member of his local social network, his Thai Boxing trainer in a PE class organised by the university, but their relationship soon surpassed the confines of the university. He also de-emphasized the importance of the social network he built with other SA students.

The importance of the university was more pronounced in the other interviews. Nora talked about her initial belief of Hungary being a less than desirable destination for SA. Once she arrived in Pécs she found that the teachers were “very educated”, and the university was harder than expected. She recounted being stressed all the time at the beginning of her academic career. Ultimately, she believed, that the difficulties she encountered at the university, and the lack of help she received from the instructors were formative in her identity development, and prepared for post-academic life better, than a Norwegian education would have.

Two other Norwegian students, Emma and Jacob arrived in Pécs after a year of studies at Bjørknes University College, and therefore by their arrival they already had a social network

of Norwegian SA students, with whom they remained close friends. Emma also talked about her dissatisfaction with the treatment of the patients at the teaching hospital, and of her efforts to treat them more humanely, than the local norm. The training hospital was the only place in Pécs, where she felt comfortable talking in Hungarian, and she tried to avoid social interactions and locations where pointing was not enough to communicate her intent. She emphasised repeatedly that she only built new friendships in Pécs with other students, and besides students the patients at the teaching hospital were the only people she sought out. Although she believed that an ideal SA experience also involves being a tourist in the host country, she also talked about how the demands of the university limit her opportunities for socialization and taking advantage of her environment's offerings. The university was the focus of her SA experience, both by choice and by program design. The image of the training institution she constructed is one that limits her possibilities and puts inordinate pressures on her time. Alternatively, the training institution provided her with the only contacts she had with members of the host community, and it was the locus of her social networks.

Jacob remained closest to the people he met in Oslo. Any new friends he made in Pécs he met in university classes. Since he only had classes with other SA students his "outer circle" of friends only contained SA students of other nationalities. Jacob talked about his training institution relatively little, and mostly as a place of building social networks, that consequently outgrow the confines of the university.

Aiza was the most critical of the training institution, although she also subscribed to the notion that her SA experience led to her becoming more independent and resilient. She believed that finishing the Medical School in Pécs was extremely difficult, and her academic success gave her pride and confidence in her abilities. She also felt that the demands of the Medical School had a detrimental effect on her social networks and limited her experiences as an SA student. She was frustrated over not being able to participate in local activities and being

underutilised in the teaching hospital. She also felt that the university failed to provide her with adequate opportunities and external motivation to study the Hungarian language. She blamed program design for this situation, and for her lack of Hungarian friends. Aiza's relationship with the training institution was fractious and looked for opportunities to supplement her medical training elsewhere.

The interviewees construction of the image of the training institution was varied. However, the three interviewees who talked about the institution the most viewed the Medical School as a difficulty to be overcome. This sentiment was also present in the written accounts. They reacted to the challenges imposed by the training institution in diverse ways. One frequent narrative described how the pressures and the difficulties of the university made the SA students more resilient and independent, and in turn, according to Nora, equipped to be effective medical professionals. At the same time SA students often believed, that the pressures and difficulties were compounded by failures of the program design, that had needlessly limited their experiences as SA students.

The last research question inquired about the implications of the present narrative study for the educational institution. The SA student population is a growing and ever more important stakeholder in the global, as well as in the local academic context. Therefore, I believe that it is paramount that we investigate the possibilities of improving SA student experiences and outcomes using their accounts. As a language teacher my focus is on the language learning success of the SA students and on their ability to receive regular, meaningful Hungarian input.

In the written accounts, participants frequently wrote about how study abroad had contributed to their self-assessed identity construction, evaluated their study abroad environment, and discussed their new, multicultural social networks they developed while in Pécs. However, mentions of developing friendships with Hungarians and of Hungarian language learning were rare.

I must mention first that the structure of the Medical School the study abroad students find themselves in is counterproductive towards them receiving regular, meaningful, and naturalistic Hungarian input. Second, even if some students consider themselves capable and willing language learners, like Aiza did, and others believe that better Hungarian skills would help them become more autonomous and successful in Hungary, like Nora did, study abroad medical students usually have a low level of investment in learning Hungarian. As Emma explained it in her interview, it is hard for these medical students to invest time and effort into learning a language they do not consider necessary for their future professional goals. And finally, in some cases, the students did not feel they had the necessary agency over their own situations. Nora expected the university to put in place structures that would necessitate her language learning, and Aiza talked about how the university separates study abroad and medical students by its structures.

However, Alim's case highlighted that given the right ingredients, it is possible for study abroad students to gain access to regular, meaningful, and naturalistic Hungarian input in Pécs through the development of a social network that contains multiple, central Hungarian members. In his case, a combination of investment, born out of finding a historical connection with the host community, that he felt important for his Uyghur identity, and agency over his language learning was the key to success. Alim's case is unique to him, but I believe that it demonstrated the importance of identity development, investment, and agency as necessary for study abroad medical students in Pécs to achieve similar outcomes.

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The dissertation yielded some questions that would merit a follow-up in the future. For example, the research suggests that for study abroad students in an English-medium education context to receive regular, meaningful input in the language of the host community it is necessary for the students to demonstrate identity development, investment, and agency. A logical next step would be to design a study to test this hypothesis. Also, the study focused on the perspectives of the study abroad students, and to get a fuller picture of the context, it would be desirable to investigate relationships of study abroad students and members of the host community from the perspectives of other stakeholders, including locals, university staff and Hungarian students. Since the research only involved medical students in Pécs, an investigation of study abroad students' experiences in other Hungarian faculties and universities might highlight how the specific circumstances of different universities might impact study abroad students, and to uncover similarities and differences in the experiences.

My hope is that even without the follow-up studies, this research has enriched our understanding of study abroad students lived experiences and might improve our abilities to ensure a successful study abroad period and the development of individuals taking part in them.

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