
“I Thought That When I was in Germany, I Would Speak Just German:” Language Learning and Desire in Twenty-first Century Study Abroad

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We live in a time of unmatched global mobility and correspondingly, the number of U.S.-American students studying abroad continues to increase. For years now, applied linguists have displayed an increased interest in study abroad students' perspectives and desires about second language (L2) learning and use while abroad. Yet few studies have analyzed how these students' beliefs and desires are shaped by the broader discourses regarding monolingualism and diversity that surround them. This paper thus investigates the experiences of two U.S.-American students during their year abroad in Marburg Germany, considering the macro-level discourses regarding monolingualism and diversity that are perpetuated in the ways that they construct and negotiate desires about language and language learning at the micro level.

The findings reveal that for his part, Brad's personal history catalyzed a micro-level process of reimagining himself in order to avoid being associated with an imagined community of monolingual and monocultural Americans. When he tried to re-negotiate these desires, however, he was only able to rely on macro-level discourses regarding monolingualism that were common in the twentieth century and are clearly still prevalent in the United States today (Pavlenko, 2002b). The results also show that David, who articulated a desire for total German immersion and German friends only, struggled when he relied on twentieth century discourses regarding monolingualism to construct beliefs about language and language learning. In both cases, these struggles caused Brad and David to begin negotiate their desires and re-orient to language and multilingualism. Taken together, both cases demonstrate that study abroad students find it difficult to construct a self that is in sync with its own subjectivities, language, and local surroundings at the micro level given societal and institutional discourses at the macro level that continuously challenge their identity work, including their beliefs, desires, and goals.

INTRODUCTION

Discourses of desire and imagination often feature prominently in student narratives about expectations for and experiences with language learning and use in study abroad. Students tend to arrive in the host context with a range of beliefs and desires that may be challenged as they encounter linguistic and cultural differences in interaction with others. Navigating these differences can bring about bewilderment and emotional insecurity since expectations may not be met and beliefs may be contested (Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2004, 2008). In order to better understand how study abroad students situate, manage, and/or shift their desires and goals regarding language learning, scholars have investigated the ways in which learners narrate their desires vis-à-vis language learning and study abroad. In doing so, students' personal histories, the sociocultural contexts of their experiences with the second

language (L2), and the ways in which they co-construct talk and negotiate meaning with those around them have been considered. Recent research has also linked emic (or participant-relevant), micro-level constructions to broader, macro-level discourses that may inform the ways students imagine themselves, their experiences, and (their) future possibilities. The aim of the current study is to contribute to this area of research by documenting students' micro-level constructions of their desires and expectations about language learning in a year-long study abroad sojourn, while at the same time investigating the broader discourses that they perpetuate. This work reflects a shift in the field of second language learning and study abroad towards investigations of idiosyncrasy, complexity, and contextual embeddedness (e.g., Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2004, 2008; Marx, 2002; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Norton, 2000, 2001; Wolcott, 2013).

Of interest in the current study are the ways in which the two participants (in this study), both U.S.-American students studying abroad in Marburg, Germany for one year, talk about desiring particular experiences and/or outcomes and how these desires are contested as a result of their sojourns. Also of interest here are the ways in which ideological discourses regarding monolingualism and diversity “permeate all levels” of the participants' lived experiences and their creation of coherent learning narratives (Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 33). Despite today's “ongoing multilingual and multicultural ‘super-diversity’” (Wiley, 2014, p. 28), English monolingualism continues to be viewed as a central feature of American citizenship (Douglas Fir Group, 2016). The results will highlight participants' attempts to draw on discourses of monolingualism and diversity in the United States today in an effort to reconcile their own language learning and study abroad desires in their self-constructions. The findings of this study thus lend support to the claim that we can only understand study abroad students' narratives by situating them within learners' own histories, sociocultural institutions and communities, and ideological structures (Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Kinginger, 2009).

CONFLICTING DISCOURSES IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STUDY ABROAD

Today's U.S.-American sojourner manages her/his beliefs, desires, and imaginations about language learning and study abroad within the current context of globalization, the processes of which are now viewed as “ongoing and ever-evolving” and do not reflect a historical moment that has “definitively been reached” (Block, 2012, p. 58). Wang et al. (2013) note that, while globalization processes are not necessarily new, we are in a historical phase in which interconnectedness and mobility have acquired unprecedented levels on a global scale (p. 1). Migration patterns and the landscape of international education have changed in light of this increased ability to be connected and mobile. We know, for example, that the number of international students studying in the United States continues to increase (Institute of Higher Education, 2014) and that many post-secondary institutions in the United States now view internationalization as a central component of an undergraduate education that encourages both institutional growth and student engagement at the global level. The number of U.S.-American students studying abroad has also increased – doubled, in fact, since 1998/1999 (Institute of International Education, 2014). Yet the types of programs and experiences offered to American students have also drastically changed over the past twenty years, and relatively few studies have considered how the changing landscape of study

abroad informs the actual, lived experiences of today's sojourning students.

Changes in study abroad program offerings for American students also reflect how multilingualism has been discursively imagined in recent United States history. The belief that English is the natural language of the United States is commonplace. In fact, this belief has become so prevalent that heritage language loss among immigrants is often attributed to personal issues instead of larger historical, sociopolitical events. In her work, Pavlenko (2002b) describes the origins of this ideological structure in the United States and how the country was re-imagined as a monolingual nation state through the establishment of a naturalization policy in 1906. This policy "required aliens seeking citizenship to speak English," thereby securing the status of the language in the mind of American citizens (p. 177). Pavlenko also notes that discourses common to the Americanization campaign of World War I brought about the deterioration of particular language practices and helped promote a view of English as superior to other languages. Since then, American politicians have used ideological discourses regarding monolingualism and the superiority of English to foster loyalty and patriotism (Kramersch, 2009, p. 9). A recent example can be found in comments made by Donald Trump on Jeb Bush's use of Spanish on the campaign trail: "[Bush should] set the example by speaking English while in the United States" (Sullivan, 2015). The ideology that Trump draws on here, one that promotes the superiority of English and simultaneously delegitimizes multilingualism and immigrant language maintenance, represents the same discourse that informs how (American) study abroad programs are created and marketed. On the study abroad homepage of a private liberal arts college in the United States, we find the frequently-asked question, "Do you have to speak another language to study abroad?" paired with the answer, "No! There are programs in many, many countries that offer courses in all subjects taught in English, even where English is not the country's primary language" ("Why should I study abroad?", n.d.). This answer also undermines multilingualism and foreign language education by endorsing English language use beyond the borders of the imagined monolingual nation-state as a naturally desired option. Also promoted in this response is the notion that the world outside of the United States is made for monolingual English speakers. German-speaking students looking to study abroad likely encounter similar ideologies that promote the importance of English in today's world and are thus less likely to be presented with opportunities to study abroad using German only. In any case, discourses regarding monolingualism and multilingualism analyzed by Pavlenko (2002b) reflect ideological structures that are still prevalent in American political and institutional discourses today—namely, that language learning and language use comprise ancillary activities that can—but need not—be pursued during study abroad. Such an ideology communicates the belief that individuals' minds, bodies, and histories can be separated from all language learning and use.

Perhaps surprisingly, U.S.-American students who choose programs that foreground language learning may encounter similar discourses regarding monolingualism in marketing materials. On the study abroad website of a large public research university in the United States, advertisements for a study abroad program note that students should immerse themselves in a target-language environment where they will "be forced to speak with native speakers." Though this particular program emphasizes language learning in context, the descriptive text positions native speakers, typically imagined as monocultural and monolingual, as *the* experts from whom language learners can best learn to speak (Kramersch, 2003b; Modern Language Association, 2007). In this way, the authors of this text draw on discourses that would promote a "second monolingualism" (Kramersch, 2012, p. 108) or

“pluralization of monolingualism” (Pennycook, 2010, p. 12), as participants are led to believe that English should be left behind on the path towards native-like proficiency in the L2. The author also positions target language use as superior to English and additional language use, devaluing the resources that a multilingual subject might otherwise have at her/his disposal. In the current study, the participants’ desires reflect similar discourses, as they imagine using only German while studying abroad and position native speakers as desirable (monolingual) experts who are most qualified to speak with them or teach them German.

Similarly, beliefs about nationality and ethnicity may inform the ways in which study abroad students imagine who Germans and U.S. Americans are. Pavlenko (2002b) writes that another important part of the American narrative is the view that the United States is “a nation of immigrants” (p. 164). The image of the melting pot, which resulted from earlier turn of the (20th-) century immigration in the United States, is also central to this narrative. On the surface, ‘melting pot’ discourses appear to index a hybridity that promotes openness and multiple cultural perspectives. Yet, these images are often harnessed in a way that promotes the romantic blurring of boundaries, groups, and linguistic differences with the goal of fostering unity and a flattened diversity, as seen in recent comments made by politician Bobby Jindal: “I’m tired of hyphenated Americans. We’re not Indian-Americans or African-Americans or Asian-Americans. We’re all Americans” (Hohmann, 2015). If American study abroad students also draw on these discourses to imagine who Americans represent, they may be unable to envision different ways of talking about diversity and difference.

LANGUAGE LEARNING, DESIRE, & IDENTITY IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STUDY ABROAD

Findings of many studies reveal that L2 learners have conflicting desires, uncertain feelings, and multiple perceptions of language, language learning and investments in their language study (see Goldstein, 1996; Kouritzin, 2000; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002a). Scholars interested in illuminating how L2 learners construct their desires and imaginations investigate how they narrate their experiences and how these self-constructions impact linguistic and intercultural participation and development in study abroad. Crucially, learners’ play with imagined subject positions in the process of L2 learning often involves individual and social aspects and is also informed by both their participation in local communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the construction of imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) to which they may desire access. In this way, learners’ desires about and conceptions of language learning and study abroad are necessarily entangled.

Research findings also demonstrate that learners may endorse their own desires about language learning and study abroad in order to promote a successful and dependable life narrative. This is understood as a strategy to help them overcome moments of conflict and loss in a new environment that they are not yet accustomed to. Identity and learner subjectivity have therefore played an increasingly important role in L2 research, and desires about and imagined experiences with study abroad and language learning may promote, hinder or completely alter students’ own aspirations and the (perceived) successes of their time abroad. Kramsch (2009) lends support to this claim, writing that sojourning students find it challenging to construct a real self since, as emerging bilinguals, they may lack a sense of continuity and stability inherent to the unified self “that comes from being firmly grounded in the body and its neurological processes” (p. 76). In introducing the concept of

“synchronicity,” Kramersch argues that it more accurately describes how an organism feels when it is in sync with itself, its language, its environment, and others, rather unlike the concept of “stability” (p. 76). Students who are studying abroad may be said to feel “unsynchronized” as they attempt to construct a real self while navigating many dialectic dimensions of Self and Other in a new place. In an attempt to outline factors that contribute to learners’ ability to reach a state of synchronicity, Pellegrino-Aveni (2005) shows that the participants who orient towards learner-internal cues (e.g., attitudes toward the self, self-comparison) in order to establish feelings of security present a better sense of the self publicly as compared to those who rely only on cues from the surrounding social environment (e.g., peer behaviors and attitudes, persona of others).

In consideration of these discussions, my view of identity is informed by work on the “speaking subject, who gives meaning to him/herself and her environment through symbolic practices in dialogues with others” (Kramersch, 2003a, p. 108). Influenced by the Lacanian notion of the mirror stage, Kristeva (1988) notes that the experience of the mirror image highlights a basic split between the Self and the Other in human subjectivity. Language, too, is dialogic; the written and spoken word always addresses an Other, whether that Other is present or absent, real or imagined (Kramersch, 2003a, p. 109). In this way, identity and subjectivity are conceived of as interrelated concepts and are at all times historically co-constructed works-in-progress (Kramersch, 2003a). Pellegrino-Aveni (2005) reminds us to proceed carefully in our understanding and employment of the construct of identity, especially since identity research has become a prominent area of research in work on study abroad (e.g., Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, & Brown, 2013; Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2004, 2008; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Polanyi, 1995; Wilkinson, 2002). She critiques identity research in study abroad that has resulted in the categorizations of good and bad language learners. Pellegrino-Aveni instead proposes the notion of “reconstructing the self” as an appropriate way of describing what happens to language learners while studying abroad (p. 145). Defining the self as a mental representation of one’s own personal characteristics, Pellegrino-Aveni considers study abroad students in new linguistic and cultural environments to be “social actors” who find it challenging to construct a locally relevant self that approaches the self that they have been endorsing (p. 148). In this way, the interrelated nature of identity and subjectivity allows us to investigate the ways in which language learners construct, navigate, and negotiate who they are through dialectic negotiations of Self and Other, personal, internal cues, and social influences and constraints.

Learner desires and imaginations, in this view, also represent social constructs that result from individual processes of learning and socialization, and like beliefs and fears, they are recreated, reshaped, and creatively put into use according to particular situational needs (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003; Kallenbach, 1996). Wenger (1998) states that learners’ desires and imaginations should not be viewed as simple fantasy (p. 176). In other words, we should not assume that learners’ desires and ways of imagining study abroad are evidence of them distancing themselves from reality. Instead, they can be understood as contributing to learners’ creative efforts to identify with the Other and consider new possibilities for themselves in relation to the world and to potential new trajectories (Kramersch, 2009, p. 14). Learners’ discursively constructed desires about the kinds of experiences they want (or do *not* want) to have while abroad constantly reproduce their imaginations or desires. Participants thus play an ongoing, active role in the creation of diverse ways of situating themselves in unfamiliar contexts and actively participate in redefining themselves in relation to their experiences with learning an L2 and living in a new context. In so doing, they must learn to

successfully negotiate the “invention and convention dialectic” in real discursive practices as they manage their desire to belong (Wolcott, 2013, p. 130). Since imagination plays an important role in this process, desires and beliefs necessarily inform how study abroad participants perceive, assign value to, and take up particular subject positions that appear to have come from (within) a particular linguistic community. Imagining and desiring a particular kind of language learning and study abroad experience does not always lead to action; however, knowing about a learner’s desires can certainly help us to better understand how participants align with people and communities (Norton, 2000). An improved understanding of how a participant positions her/himself vis-à-vis others abroad also provides some insight into what s/he does (or does not do) in order to take part in local communities (Norton, 2000, p. 164) and the potential conflicts that may arise when s/he experiences a sense of discontinuity and instability in her/his environment with her/himself and those around her/him.¹

My understanding of how these constructions are contested and managed in-sojourn is informed by links/connections between participants’ self-constructions and macro-level discourses regarding monolingualism and diversity. For these reasons, I ask the following research questions:

1. What are the participants’ desires and imagined realities concerning language learning and study abroad? How do they talk about their desires and imaginations while abroad?
2. Do their shifting self-constructions appear to shape/be shaped by recent macro-level discourses regarding language learning and study abroad? If so, how?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) note that oral stories told by individual narrators allow us to learn a lot about their personal experiences and lived realities. Well-matched to the exploration of participants’ complex experiences studying abroad, beliefs about language learning, and self-constructions through the negotiation of desires and imaginations (p. 7), narratives allow people to shape their own subjectivities in a way that *they* find appropriate. This narrative agency corresponds to post-structuralist approaches. According to Riessman (2003), in interaction, individuals “select from a multiplicity of selves or persona that [they] switch among as they go about their lives” rather than disclosing an essentialized version of the self (p. 337). The analysis of learner narratives thus requires a qualitative, in-depth research design that foregrounds the idiosyncrasy of individual stories.

For this reason, I decided to investigate the oral narratives of Brad and David, two U.S.-American university students who, while studying abroad in Marburg, Germany for one year, participated in a large research study on language learning and community participation. The participants also filled out written questionnaires and participated in semi-structured interviews at three different intervals during their sojourn (i.e., at the beginning of their sojourn, at the beginning of their second semester abroad, and at the end of their sojourn).

¹ This section on language learning, desire, and identity and the first methodology section emerged from collaborative work on language learning and identity in study abroad carried out with Mareike Müller (2011, 2015).

All participants were asked to orally record personal reflections regarding ‘critical incidents’ that took place throughout the year abroad. I define ‘critical incidents’ as potential moments of conflict and/or emotional insecurity arising from the need to negotiate linguistic and cultural difference. Students were introduced to this concept at the outset of the study. I provided examples of ‘critical incidents’ (e.g., interactions that left them feeling happy, sad, embarrassed, successful, exhilarated, frustrated, angry, etc.) and we talked about how they might respond to and reflect on the incidents in an oral recording. For the purposes of this study, following the principles of a “within-case analysis,” (Duff, 2008, p. 163), I conducted a holistic content analysis of the data, considering participants’ narratives as a whole and reading and interpreting them for/with attention to self-constructions vis-à-vis language learning and study abroad. I analyzed their narratives in consideration of the contexts of their stories (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 13) and the ideological discourses informing their self-constructions.

Participants

Brad and David were selected for the current study due to the number of oral reflections they submitted and the amount of reflective detail they provided. At the outset of the study, Brad was a 20-year-old junior and communications major at a small, private liberal arts college in the Northeastern United States, and David was a 20-year-old junior and German major at a mid-sized state university in the Northeastern United States (see Table 1 for more demographic information). Brad and David met in October 2009, as there were many events planned for the tight-knit international student community. They also stayed in the same dormitory complex. However, their paths crossed relatively little, given their diverging interests, hobbies, and courses. Prior to the year abroad, David had never been to Germany and Brad had been once for a two-week trip. David explicitly stated that his goals included “learning German and German culture.” Brad, on the other hand, commented that he did not set specific goals for his year abroad and that his main reason for studying abroad was to escape his “boring ass college” back home in search of exotic linguistic and intercultural relationships. Brad seemed to want to take things as they come, although he also noted a desire to improve his German.

Table 1
Demographic Information of the Participants

	Brad	David
Gender	male	male
Native Language	English	English
Age	20	20
Year and Program of Study	3rd (Junior) Bachelor of Arts, Communication Studies	3rd (Junior) Bachelor of Arts, German
Sojourn Dates	August 2009 – July 2010	October 2009 – July 2010

David originally decided to take German due to his ancestry, even though he felt this was a very simplified way of explaining his interests in the language. David excelled in German and invested a lot of time and energy into learning German. He was a very motivated student

and intended to maintain academic excellence while abroad. David was also a very active member of his Lutheran church in the United States and felt a personal and spiritual connection to Germany and the German language. He decided to study abroad for a year in order to improve his German language speaking abilities and he hoped to improve his pronunciation in particular. Interestingly, however, David noted that he had never felt that study abroad was a good option for him and he was quite nervous about being abroad. He later attributed this to the fact that he found it difficult to make friends and remarked that many of his early experiences in Germany involved difficult moments that he hoped to never relive. David arrived in Marburg one week before the winter semester and enrolled primarily in seminars and courses that regular, degree-program German students also attend. He did not take many courses designed for international students, perhaps because he viewed himself as a higher-achieving student of German.

For his part, Brad did not take any courses designed for international students in the winter semester. This decision likely reflects his feelings about the pre-semester language course that he and other international students from his college took during the first six weeks of their sojourn. While Brad had initially hoped that participating in this pre-semester language course would constitute a “really intensive German grammar and vocabulary” experience and that his “German would get a lot better,” he was instead put off by the fact that the course introduced students to aspects of local history and culture. His comments indicate that, for him, learning German in a German institutional context is best facilitated by the transmission of a multitude of decontextualized words and structures presented by an expert teacher. Brad’s comments also communicate a belief that any other curricular plan does not lead to language acquisition. Unimpressed by this course and left to his own devices to enroll in courses for the winter semester, Brad avoided taking German language courses and instead enrolled in beginner Spanish and Italian language courses and a number of communications and psychology courses taught in English. In the summer term, David continued to take courses primarily in German, while Brad pursued coursework primarily in English. Brad did, however, add one German as a foreign language course in the summer term and continued taking a Spanish language course as well.

Though Brad and David had different goals and experiences while abroad, both students positioned themselves as different from other U.S.-American study abroad students in ways that reflect the discourses of monolingualism and multilingualism described by Pavlenko (2002b). The analysis will show that their desires and imaginations about language learning and study abroad both shaped and were shaped by these macro-level discourses throughout the year.

RESULTS

Brad: Exoticizing the Self and the Other

Brad’s case lends support to Pellegrino-Aveni’s (2005) finding that learners’ self-constructions are often situated along the dimensions of Self vs. Other and learner-internal cues vs. broader, social influences. According to his first questionnaire responses and interview, Brad began his year abroad with only a few specific desires; he wanted to meet Germans and speak a lot of German, do some traveling, and continue with his valued martial arts hobby. A *Muay Thai* boxing enthusiast, Brad made plans to join the local Marburg martial arts training center before he even arrived in Germany. During the year abroad, Brad

became very involved at the gym, attending a number of special events and seminars. Brad's experiences at the gym informed how he drew upon ideological discourses regarding multilingualism and diversity as he navigated learner-internal cues and other contextual factors in an attempt to reach a state of synchronicity in Marburg.

One of Brad's top priorities with regard to study abroad was to see the world and escape his boring life back home. Though he articulated a few goals, Brad was hesitant to give the impression that he had a list of expectations for his year abroad, noting that he was aware that "bad shit" would happen in Marburg too. Brad confided in me that he had depression and had been managing this condition for a number of years with medication. Brad was thus orienting to personal cues that may have helped him manage any disappointment arising from not meeting specific study abroad goals. In this way, he was trying to maintain a state of synchronicity, taking the many aspects of the self and his personal hopes for his year abroad into consideration.

Early on in his time abroad, Brad positioned himself as different from other Americans when speaking about L2 learning, noting his belief that "whenever Americans speak German, it's pretty horrible." In this way, Brad identified himself as different from other Americans, who, according to him, spoke German poorly. By judging the language skills of other Americans, he also distanced himself from them. Brad's comments about Americans also index his belief that to him, "Americans" are mostly comprised of monolingual English speakers who do not value multilingualism or are, at most, novice language learners. His notions about Americans also index qualities of people who cannot be considered members of this supposedly less sophisticated community. Due to Brad's emerging bilingualism and the fact that he viewed himself as an invested language learner, the construction of a community of "Americans" lacking (precisely) these qualities allowed him to position himself as different. Additionally, Brad's imagined community of Americans did not include non-white and/or multilingual Americans, nor Americans who value language learning, though it is clear that these groups certainly exist.

Brad also compared an imagined community of Americans (again, a group from whom he first separated himself) and an illusory group of "Europeans," stating that "[Europeans'] English is usually better than like an American's whatever other language and Americans suck." Here, Brad positioned Europeans as a like-minded group of higher-achieving and higher-functioning multilingual individuals (as compared to his imagined community of Americans). His beliefs about Americans and Europeans were both accepted and challenged throughout his time abroad, as he found that he had to navigate his own and other Americans', Germans', and other Europeans' impressions of Americans as well. Germans' conceptions about Americans were a particular source of elation for Brad (e.g., He felt special when Germans and other Europeans were surprised that a American could speak German so well) and frustration (e.g., He felt frustrated when Germans and other Europeans used English with him simply because they discovered he was an American).

In one reflection, Brad reported that he spoke German with some members and English with others at his Thai boxing gym. On one occasion, a fellow gym member heard him speaking English and told him that, when in Germany, people should speak German. In this instance, Brad did not question the ideological underpinnings of the gym member's comment and overtly agreed with him. The gym member's comment seemed to speak to Brad's own insecurities about how infrequently he used German at the gym, and he did not think that this person was wrong to call him out on it. Although multilingualism was supposedly valued by Brad (unlike those "other Americans" back home), he did not

recognize that acquiescing to the gym member's comment meant putting restrictions on his own valuable multilingual resources. Additionally, since Brad actively distanced himself from imagined groups of Americans who assume that all Germans speak English, he did, in fact, wish to switch back to using German. In short, Brad did not examine the ideologies informing this comment. He was surprised, however, when his Thai boxing trainer appeared to jump to his defense. Drawing on common discourses related to language and globalization, Brad's trainer retorted that, instead of chastising Brad for not speaking German, everyone in the gym should use this opportunity "to perfect" their English for as long as Brad is in Marburg/for the duration of Brad's stay in Marburg. In other words, the trainer strategically positioned Brad as a resource for gym members (desiring) to improve their spoken English, and his comment further indexed the value of English in today's globalized world. He also positioned Brad as a monolingual, English(-speaking) expert, whose influence was linked precisely to his highly valued identity as a native speaker. Brad viewed both the gym member and trainer's comments as very different, perhaps even in direct opposition. Brad reflected on the fact that he had never imagined himself as a resource for others, nor had he ever considered that his status as a native English speaker could be valued by the German-speaking individuals around him.

What continued to be unexamined by Brad, however, was the fact that the comments made by the gym member, the trainer, and, indeed, by Brad himself all reflected a particular ideological view on language still prevalent in the twenty-first century: that members of one nation state are native speakers of one language, that the native speaker of that language is the all-knowing expert, and that the learner is a hapless apprentice who should at all times yield to the omniscient mother tongue expert. When Brad reflected on the conflict at the gym, he could only do so by drawing on macro-level discourses that further supported this same ideology, namely, by positioning multilingual speakers as (or equating multilingual individuals to) infantilized individuals whose language use should appear to emanate from one (monolingual) being – a faultless native speaker.

During our first interview, Brad identified himself as primarily Caucasian and one-eighth Cherokee. He talked about the fact that his Native American ethnicity was visibly evident for some, though he downplayed this in the interview, stating, "I'm not even much like Cherokee." Brad seemed to feel that he was not allowed to claim 'authentic' Cherokee heritage for himself, noting that he had not grown up in a Cherokee community and did not speak Cherokee. Still, Brad observed that many Germans were often unable to "figure him out." Though he explicitly identified himself as "not (...) Cherokee," on many occasions, Brad reported using Germans' confusion about his ethnicity to avoid being positioned as a stereotypical monolingual Caucasian American. He sometimes expressed amusement at others' attempts to exoticize him once they discovered that he was part Native American: "The Germans, I guess they have fun with it um it's like ohh *real* real Indian (...) I'm like yeah sure (laughing) sure." On the other hand, Brad also became irritated when people found out he was American and, consequently, assumed that he must only speak English:

I was talking to [a girl at my gym] for a bit and she like thought I was Spanish or some shit (...) and she started talking to me in German (...) I was like talking to her a bit and then she said where you from (...) I was like I'm from the US and ever since then, she like won't talk to me in German.

Having encountered assumptions and stereotypes that reflect common discourses regarding

national and linguistic identities, Brad began to show some dissatisfaction with his initial characterizations of an imagined community of Americans, and he re-thought his one nation – one language assumption:

[I]t's really weird like I thought that when I was in Germany I would speak just German or like (...) it would be more consistent like it would just be like this and this period of time we'll speak just German and this period of time we'll speak just English but it mixes up so much it's just crazy and then I like I wondered like back home in (...) like multilingual (...) homes multilingual uh schools just (...) what it would be like (...) in New York or some shit like how (...) that would be like with your neighbors that are like bilingual, you know (...) maybe they're like you know Puerto Rican neighbors.

Brad's comments here show that, even in a twenty-first century U.S.-American context, discussions of multilingualism and code-mixing may only be relevant for recent immigrants who live in urban centers (e.g., "Puerto Ricans" in New York). Regardless, Brad's comments demonstrate his growing awareness that multilingual, non-white groups of Americans exist and that they may share certain multilingual experiences. In light of this realization, Brad begins to contest the 20th-century discourses regarding monolingualism that he had previously relied on when talking about multilingualism. His own experiences as a code-mixing bilingual in Marburg who had to navigate new and different contexts and practices appear to have led him to imagine national identity and multilingualism in different ways.

In some of his early oral reflections, Brad also expressed his desire to seek out new intercultural experiences and relationships, explaining that he was "big on the foreign thing." Again, he started his year abroad by positioning himself outside of an imagined community of Americans and by presuming that this group viewed foreigners and outsiders with suspicion. This was evidenced by the following comment, in which Brad described the first time he traveled from his small, rural hometown to an urban city in the United States:

(...) I won't lie to you I mean I'm not racist but I'm not around any other cultures [at home], so I mean that was new for me to be like see black people everyday even just that cause I'm just from an area where we don't have anybody.

Note that Brad's choice of the word "anybody" in the previous quote indexed any individual who did not look like those he had encountered in his hometown. More importantly, however, he identified these (mostly) white, monolingual Americans as belonging to some default acultural group (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2004). An imagined community of Americans was thus constructed in Brad's mind as a group of (mostly white) individuals who either existed outside of culture, or perhaps had no culture to speak of, in contrast to the "anybody" indexed in his description. As previously mentioned, Brad first identified himself as primarily Caucasian and, in so doing, aligned himself with these imagined acultural Americans. This seemed to be a way for him to stay in sync with the Brad he endorsed in the early months of his year abroad. That is to say, Brad first aligned with (mostly white) Americans whom he viewed as acultural and who exoticized the Other. However, he exoticized this Other by desiring contact with it, and by coming to view himself as different from other Americans (in the process). Through play with ethnic identity categories in interactions with Germans while abroad, Brad began to show an awareness of how macro-discourses regarding culture and diversity shape and are shaped by the ways in which we

engage in discussions on race, ethnicity, language, nationality, and sexual orientation at the micro level, observing:

(...) like, growing up (...) just hearing racist comments and things and like (...) every time I heard racism and shit I was like y'know I thought it was bad but like now I just realize how horrible it is it's these small comments and even like uhh homophobic comments saying the word like 'gay' things like that and that I really see that here like I don't know I just kinda feel bad about it.

Instead of continuing to yearn for and exoticize an Other, Brad began to problematize the ways in which people talk about and position one another. He noted that this talk contributes to the maintenance of certain ways of articulating difference and diversity that were common in the 20th century and that clearly endure in the twenty-first century as well. Here, however, he began to distance himself from these twentieth century discourses and thus contest them by noting that we need to think carefully about what we say, lending support to the fact that micro level talk about race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation shapes (our) views on culture and diversity.

Altogether, Brad's experiences abroad led him to rethink his beliefs about language learning and multilingualism and to re-consider how he desired an imagined Other (e.g., Germans and Europeans). In this way, he began to reorient to such topics as race, ethnicity, language, nationality, and sexual orientation through changes in his speech. All the same, these discourses played a major role in the construction of his beliefs and desires throughout the year abroad. Brad, did, however, begin to imagine himself, Americans, and multilingual speakers in ways that challenged the ideological discourses regarding monolingualism and diversity that still prevail in the United States today (Pavlenko, 2002b).

David: Desiring Perfect German and German Friends

Like Brad, David's case also exemplified the hardships and shifting desires of a learner who was living and studying abroad for the first time. Informed by similar ideological discourses regarding monolingualism and study abroad, David also approached these issues along dimensions of Self vs. Other and personal/internal cues vs. social influences. Though, as he noted early, he never felt that study abroad was right for him, David eagerly and enthusiastically embarked on his junior year abroad in Marburg, Germany, intent on giving the outward appearance of having settled in very quickly. This desire and his great enthusiasm for learning German did not diminish the crippling homesickness he soon experienced. Homesickness plagued David for the first few months abroad, and, during that time, he frequently lamented the fact that he struggled to develop meaningful friendships. David did eventually create a meaningful life for himself by navigating his own shifting subjectivities and orientations to study abroad, friendship, and the German and English languages and by orienting to personal cues and other social constraints.

Similar to Brad, David desired to be viewed as different from an imagined community of Americans lacking sophistication. This may be related to David's perception that study abroad was not meant for him. In this way, David distanced himself from study abroad and an imagined group of Americans students who chose study abroad for reasons other than language learning. He expressed his belief that students who decide to study abroad today are not very serious about their studies, nor about improving their German language abilities.

As a part of an attempt to dissociate from these imagined students, David strongly rejected English as a language of sophisticated communication. However, although his early desires regarding language use reflect discourses of monolingualism, the results show that David later shifted his desires regarding friendships and English language use. In order to negotiate who he was, David attempted to reach a state of synchronicity between different aspects of his sense of self, his desires, and his environment.

For David, settling in appeared to mean having only German friends. He eventually had to re-consider this intention, however, due to feelings of homesickness and loneliness. David noted, "I decided I changed that goal to be I'll make friends (...) not [just] making German friends, it's more realistic too." Until this moment, David's intense homesickness had left him feeling alone, depressed, and emotionally insecure. Though he never abandoned his desire for German friends, he started to manage his emotional insecurity through conversations with acquaintances in Marburg and with family and friends back home. Through these discussions, he shifted his friend-making desires and began fostering meaningful relationships with Germans and non-Germans alike. David oriented towards learner-internal cues as he realized that, in order to develop a social life in Marburg that would support his own emotional synchronicity, he would need to re-negotiate his desire to a) have only native speaking German friends and b) speak German all the time. This led David to take part in outings with groups of Americans and other international students in order to avoid further loneliness and homesickness. He also began meeting with other international students to engage in various theological and political discussions, something he was accustomed to doing back home. In the meantime, David continued to spend time with a group of German students who had studied abroad in the United States and shared similar religious convictions. This group made many efforts to include David in their social circle. Towards the end of his first semester abroad, he returned from a weekend trip to find multiple emails from his German friends who were planning a movie night and wanted to know if he could attend. Realizing that they were patiently awaiting his response before making plans, David was elated. He finally felt accepted by a group that he could call friends, noting, "It came to my attention that (...) now these people really do want me to come there. I'm really excited about that."

David's negotiated friendship desires resulted in an increasingly active social life in which he spoke a lot of German and English. Investing in many different groups of friends meant that David spent less time alone, and, consequently, the intensity of his homesickness began to diminish. In other words, he actively satisfied his desire to develop meaningful friendships with Germans in German and also made new connections in order to foster meaningful communication with other local peers, regardless of language. In this way, David began endorsing a version of himself that approached synchronicity with itself, its language, and its local environment. Like Brad, initially, David's twenty-first century desires about study abroad and language learning were informed by twentieth century discourses regarding monolingualism, as described by Pavlenko (2002b). However, an early period of homesickness led him to reflect meaningfully on his desires concerning social relationships and language use and make changes.

While David's desires vis-à-vis the German language shifted in important ways throughout the year, he, like Brad, tended to value German language use that was native-like and spoken primarily with native speakers. Mid-sojourn, however, David started to befriend other international students with whom he spoke German. He commented that his desire to have native-like pronunciation was shifting, saying, "I remember from the beginning (...) I

wanted to learn to speak German without an accent. That was the dream.” Here, David appeared unaware that he was drawing on discourses of monolingualism in which multilingual speakers are positioned as individuals whose language use should arc towards a particular (monolingual) being – the perfect native speaker. As the year progressed, however, David’s desire to speak German without an American accent (or with a native accent) shifted drastically, when he said, “you know what, that’s ok [that I speak accented German].” David re-negotiated his own desires with regards to L2 pronunciation as he began to realize that sounding like a native German speaker was either not a feasible goal or not a necessary one. In this way, he contested the twentieth century discourses regarding monolingualism found in Pavlenko (2002b). In general, David shifted his linguistic priorities due to a feeling of satisfaction with his German language abilities at the end of the year, when he stated, “simply put, I’m happy with my German.” Additionally, his active participation, whether in English or German, in many groups of friends eventually led David to re-negotiate his orientations to both the German and the English language:

Now for a bombshell I suppose. I always considered myself to be a German fanatic for the German language, German culture (...) but now you know what I don’t think the German language is the alpha and the omega anymore I really don’t feel that way (...) I think the English language is a very nice language.

David reflected on the fact that his new opinions on the English language may have resulted from the fact that speaking German did not make him unique in Germany, something that a German friend pointed out to him:

Here, everyone can speak German and the reason maybe I like English here is because the fact that I’m perfectly fluent in it (...) makes me special. There could be a degree of truth to that.

This statement appears to reflect similar discourses regarding the status of the English native speaker in the context of twenty-first century study abroad that Brad encountered in his boxing gym. This ideological stance positions English native speakers in Germany as “perfectly fluent” and “special” knowers, a point that David does not contest since he agrees that this may account for why he has started to appreciate the English language in Germany.

To summarize, David had to reimagine his expectations and desires with regard to (his) social life and language use since the self that he endorsed upon arrival in Germany was clearly not in sync with both itself and local practices. He rethought his initial desire to avoid affiliations with American study abroad communities in order to create social opportunities in a period of intense homesickness. At the same time, he continued to seek out opportunities to speak German with German students. Through these and other social experiences, David came to renegotiate his relationship with both German and English in ways that supported and contested discourses that have existed since the early twentieth century (Pavlenko, 2002b). In this way, David’s sojourn served not only as an important language learning experience but, like Brad’s, also contributed to processes of constant self-(re)imagination. These processes involved multiple aspects of language, mobility, history, and subjectivity that both challenged ideological discourses regarding monolingualism common in the United States (Pavlenko, 2002b) and reflected the interconnected world in which we currently live.

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrate that the participants in this study face new and unfamiliar social, linguistic, and cultural contexts and need to manage the contestation of their desires, imaginations, and subjectivities. The way they manage their shifting desires, imaginations, and subjectivities is informed by twentieth century ideological views on monolingualism and diversity that have been prevalent in American contexts for decades (Pavlenko, 2002b) and clearly remain influential in twenty-first century study abroad. At the same time, the participants encountered difficulties when they tried to rely solely on twentieth century ideological stances concerning monolingualism and diversity in twenty-first century study abroad. Ultimately, they recognized the necessity of contesting such discourses and shifting their beliefs and desires. While both Brad and David desired German-speaking friends and opportunities to use and practice German, those opportunities did not simply present themselves to either participant. Their approach to managing their shifting desires and imaginations was consistently informed by macro-level discourses regarding monolingualism, which affected their ability to integrate into the sojourn environment and take advantage of learning opportunities with both positive and negative consequences. In this way, continuing to position study abroad as a naturally-supportive context for language learning and (the development of) heightened cultural awareness falls short of acknowledging the complicated negotiations learners participate in with regard to who they are, how they would like to be perceived, and what they desire to achieve.

Brad's case serves as an example of the many shifting desires, community affiliations, and tensions in identity negotiation that a learner can experience while studying abroad, even in times of increased interconnectedness and mobility. His identity negotiations and beliefs about himself as a person and as a language learner were significant and triggered personal struggles due to the need to reimagine the role of different ethnic, psychological, cultural, and linguistic aspects in his own self-portrayal. Brad's desire to position himself as different from other Americans appeared to mediate his shifting subjectivities. However, he was unable to completely disregard aspects of his identity related to ethnicity, nationality, and language. Interestingly, Brad's beliefs about language learning/use and study abroad reflected this internal struggle. On the one hand, his desire to be viewed as a worldly citizen (or, at worst, an American who differentiates himself from others) seemed to help Brad himself as a legitimate participant in the local German-speaking community, fulfilling his quest for sophistication. On the other hand, Brad's desire to be viewed as different from other "Americans" conflicted with his inclination to portray himself as a successful multilingual when he began to understand that being an American did not have to mean being monolingual. Brad may have started to realize that one cannot simply shed one's L1 identity in order to acquire a second monolingualism (Kramsch, 2012, p. 108), but he remained unable to articulate this.

David, too, had to manage his shifting desires and beliefs. How he imagined himself appeared to change gradually, as he negotiated and even replaced certain beliefs over time. David was initially adamant about his devotion to German and noted that he would only make German friends and would speak only German. However, as he reflected on his own beliefs about his study abroad year, David's goals and expectations with regard to speaking and learning language, as well as making friends, shifted. Consequently, David was able to open himself up to a number of very fulfilling friendships and opportunities for German language use and supportive discussions in either German or English about shared

experiences and beliefs. David's changing views on making friends demonstrate a growing recognition on his part that meaningful interactions and experiences may take place in either language. Drawing on discourses of both multilingualism and monolingualism, he reflected on the shock he experienced in discovering that through renegotiating how to approach language use in study abroad, his views of the German and English languages had drastically changed. David later reported that he no longer viewed himself as a German fanatic and talked in great detail about his newfound appreciation for both languages. David also moved away from imagining himself as a participant in German-only communities, viewing social interaction and intellectual depth as crucial parts of community participation, not just whether or not German was spoken. His previously negative assessment of his own L2 pronunciation also shifted drastically, demonstrating that he was able to move towards synchronicity with his own desires, local environment, and shifting beliefs. Overall, both Brad and David's cases stress the fact that the achievement of a stable self may not be a realistic goal for those studying abroad. Being in sync with one's own subjectivities, languages, and environment appears to more accurately describe a process grounded in the constant exploration and juggling of multiple possibilities of self with simultaneous attention to learner-internal and contextual factors (see Kramsch, 2009; Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005).

Brad and David's in-sojourn reflections created ways for them to manage, renegotiate, and rethink many of their prevailing desires and beliefs about what they were experiencing during the year abroad. It is clear that the nature and impact of these negotiations on the sojourn are not predictable. However, having opportunities for discussion of ideological discourses regarding monolingualism, multilingualism, and diversity prompts students to reflect on potential struggles and insecurities and to practice strategies for managing contestations, conflicts, and frustrations while abroad. For example, Brad and David would likely have benefitted from pre-sojourn reflective tools that would have allowed them to create, validate, and critique their own desires, expectations, and beliefs about language, study abroad, and the Self and Other before their departure. If students begin to understand language use as "drawing strength from the flexibility and versatility afforded by their various languages" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 195), they can create and reflect upon narratives of possibility, which encourage them to both imagine and manage their imaginations. As Jackson (2008) outlines, reflections like these should be encouraged not only as part of pre-sojourn preparation, but also as a way of monitoring students while they are abroad and after they have returned. Blogging, journal writing, on-site and post-sojourn (oral or written) reflections, and general socio-emotional support serve as helpful tools to raise students' awareness of what they desire, how their imaginations and desires may impact their experiences abroad, and how they can shape their desires to achieve a sense of synchronicity during their study abroad experience.

This discussion has many implications for language teaching and classroom learning. For example, I wonder: Who are the gatekeepers of language learning and use in classroom contexts today? Students may not be prepared to draw strength from the flexibility afforded by multilingualism in study abroad contexts if foreign language instructors, by promoting L2-only classroom policies, treat the L2 as "fundamentally non-interchangeable" with the surrounding L1 context (Kramsch, 2009, p. 195) and foster the acquisition of a second monolingualism (i.e., a "pluralization of monolingualism," Pennycook, 2010, p. 12).

CONCLUSION

In this study, I found that Brad and David's desires and imaginations with regards to language learning and study abroad revolved around the wish to speak primarily German and become friends with local Germans. David, in particular, noted his goal and desire to speak only German. Both participants encountered challenges in-sojourn when these desires were not being met as they had initially imagined. Episodes of depression and homesickness were experienced by both participants as they managed their shifting desires and attempted to reach a state of synchronicity with themselves, their language use, and the new people and environments around them. Brad began to change his views of himself and who he imagined Americans and Germans to be through the time he spent at a local martial arts club. David continued to desire German interlocutors and primarily German language use, but eventually shifted his desires to include English-speaking friends and other possible German interlocutors (e.g., international students). Both Brad and David's desires and imaginations about language learning and study abroad have been shaped by twentieth century macro-discourses regarding monolingualism and diversity. These discourses link concepts of nation and language and support ideological views of monolingual nation states in which diversity is conceptualized as a flattened 'melting pot' of common beliefs, values, languages, and practices. Clearly, these ideological views endure in an important way in twenty-first century study abroad.

The current study underscores the importance of considering how students understand and imagine themselves within their local communities and the larger world in which they live. Analyzing factors that influence the process of reimagining oneself and one's position in both social and global contexts is hence a necessary step in helping to highlight how students give meaning to their experiences and associate feelings of success or failure with their time abroad. Brad and David's cases demonstrate that more should be done to encourage American students to critically reflect on their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds, histories, the ideological discourses that they draw upon, sociopolitical situations, as well as how these are similar and/or different from other populations of study abroad students, before, during, and after studying abroad.

As noted, future research should investigate pedagogical interventions that prepare students to critically consider how self-constructions in study abroad contexts may be informed by discourses that link (one) nation with (one) language and further promote these ideological constructs. Students could discuss strategies for responding to contestations of particular desires and beliefs in interaction with peer interlocutors in L2 classrooms and study abroad contexts (Hall, Hellermann, & Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Kinginger, 2009; van Compernelle, 2015). Such research would contribute to work that calls for students to be viewed as L2 learners *and* users in order to help them conceive of what it means to participate in the co-construction of ongoing community dialogue (Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2008, 2009). By investigating L2 interaction in classroom and study abroad contexts, scholars may come to better understand learners' interactional practices, including how they manage contentious moments and difference and whether transformed social action is possible, thereby adopting critical pedagogy as an educational framework for study abroad (Jackson, 2008, p. 210). Interventions like these can help us to better understand how today's students seek out, take up, and even reject certain subject positions, as well as how they deal with tensions that arise from their own desires and imaginations in the context of twenty-first century study abroad.

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