

CRITICAL EXPERIENCES IN STUDY ABROAD

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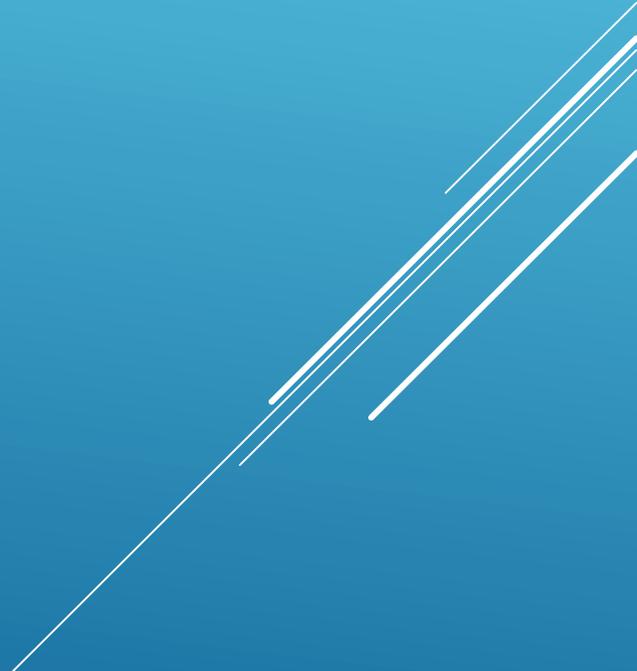
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- ▶ Background & assumptions
- ▶ Conceptual framework: identity, ambivalence and critical experiences
- ▶ Examples from a study
- ▶ Methodologies for identifying and analyzing critical experiences

OVERVIEW

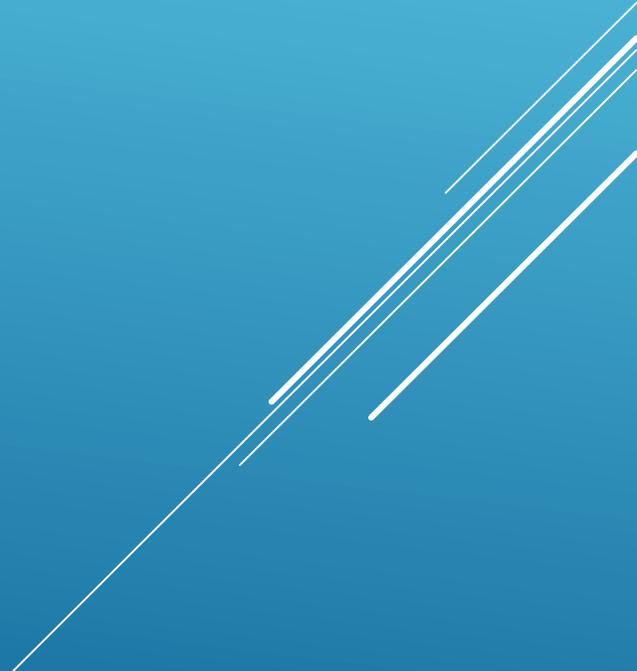
- ▶ Study Abroad as it connects to SLA
- ▶ TL is English
- ▶ Primarily language as speech

ASSUMPTIONS

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- ▶ Interested in the effect of study abroad on the **second language identities** of high school students
- ▶ Qualitative study with a large quantity of data
- ▶ Many studies focus on outcomes without accounting for the social context or reasons for those outcomes

BACKGROUND

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- ▶ Drawing on the work of theorists such as Bakhtin(1981), Bourdieu (1977) and Weedon (1996) post-structuralist notions of identity see it as:
 - ▶ “multiple, conflictual, negotiated and evolving” (Canagarajah, 2004)
 - ▶ “fragmented and contested in nature” (Block, 2007a)
- ▶ “...when we learn a language we are also forming a sense of self” (Jackson, 2008, p.34)

IDENTITY

- ▶ “Individuals are both the site and subjects of discursive struggle for their identity...the individual is constantly subjected to discourse. In thought, speech or writing individuals of necessity commit themselves to specific subject positions and embrace quite contradictory modes of subjectivity at different moments” (Weedon, 1996, p. 93-94).

IDENTITY

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- ▶ “Ambivalence... is the acute discomfort we feel when we are unable to read the situation properly and to choose between alternative actions.”
- ▶ “The situation turns ambivalent if the linguistic tools...prove inadequate...None of the learned patterns could be proper in an ambivalent situation – or more than one of the learned patterns could be applied; whatever is the case, the outcome is the feeling of indecision, undecidability, and hence loss of control” (Bauman, 1991, p. 1)

AMBIVALENCE

- ▶ “By critical experiences I mean periods of time during which prolonged contact with an L2 and a new and different cultural setting causes irreversible destabilization of the individual’s sense of self” (Block, 2002, p.4)
- ▶ These experiences lead a learner to question the cultural and linguistic norms which have up until that point formed the foundations of who they are and what they believe about the world.
- ▶ Not exclusive to study abroad but more likely to occur in situations where the cultural and linguistic setting is different.
- ▶ Result in the learner experiencing ambivalence

CRITICAL EXPERIENCES

- ▶ By design many programs seek to place participants in situations that will foster a change in the relationship between the TL and the learner:
 - ▶ Imagined communities
 - ▶ Experience TL as a living language
 - ▶ Improved proficiency
 - ▶ Cross-cultural understanding
 - ▶ Understand the value of the TL outside of the classroom

STUDY ABROAD

- ▶ We want learners to change how they see themselves in the world – as speakers of the TL
- ▶ Identity change comes from resolving ambivalence
- ▶ Ambivalence is generated from critical experiences
- ▶ What are those experiences which result in learners developing positive second language identities?

STUDY ABROAD

- ▶ **Critical Experience** – “I honestly couldn’t understand what was being said...and people’s displeasure would be shown quite openly on their faces...the only thing I could do was to try and fit in with the host family’s way of doing things. That was all I could do.”
- ▶ **Ambivalence** – “I couldn’t really blend in, I was the only Japanese surrounded by English people and I was like the representative of Japan, I became what all Japanese are like to them.”
- ▶ **Attempt to resolve** – Began to “long for Japanese food and Japanese conversation.” Retreated into her identity as Japanese by speaking Japanese to herself in her room

AMI

- ▶ **Critical Experience** – “They were separating the parts of [the city] by their race and their wealth...it was like a type of discrimination...it was quite shocking to see...most of the race were like African Americans or like immigrants...”
- ▶ **Ambivalence** – “Americans are saying that everyone is equal but looking at that it doesn’t really look equal.”
- ▶ **Attempt to resolve** – He interpreted the scenes as the result of a “multi-cultural society”, something that Japan was able to avoid because it is “basically single cultured” and “there aren’t huge differences in...race.”

TAKA

- ▶ **Critical Experience** – “The instructor was explaining about this activity we were doing...it was so fast...I was like ‘Huh? What is this guy even saying?’...I thought ‘Oh crap’...I just didn’t want to do anything then but I knew I had to participate, I just stood here with my mouth shut...it was the worst experience I had on the whole exchange.”
- ▶ **Ambivalence** – “...at first I felt inferior...I had a negative attitude at times. Then at night I would really regret it. I reflected on it a lot.”
- ▶ **Attempt to resolve** – “I thought that I need to be actively listening. If there is something I don’t understand and I just let it slide...It will come back to bite me. That happened so many times. I realized that I have to clearly say something like ‘Sorry’...I made a big point of doing that on the second half [of the exchange].”

DAISUKE

- ▶ Narrative Inquiry

- ▶ Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2014). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. New York: Routledge.
- ▶ Riessman, C.K. (2008) *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, Los Angeles: Sage.

- ▶ Values Coding, In Vivo Coding

- ▶ Saldaña, J. (2012). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage.

METHODOLOGIES

- ▶ SLA focused SA is about changing learners relationships to the TL
- ▶ What triggers changes in the second language identities of participants in SA programs?
- ▶ Identifying “critical experiences” will help us as researchers to better understand why learners respond to programs in the way that they do

CONCLUSION