

**Learners' Identity Negotiations and Beliefs about Pronunciation  
in Study Abroad Contexts**

by

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A thesis  
presented to the University of Waterloo  
in fulfilment of the  
thesis requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
German

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2011

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## **Author's Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores learner beliefs about pronunciation and their interaction with identity negotiations in a study-abroad context. Current research on studying abroad has experienced a wave of interest in learner-centered questions, gradually moving away from the narrow focus on students' linguistic development. In particular, the effects of study abroad on learner identities have attracted attention, revealing the impact of the dispositions of individuals, as well as of interlocutors, on the language learning process. The realm of speaking, especially with regard to pronunciation research, however, has hardly benefited from this interest in the individual perspectives of sojourners. Existing studies merely measure the extent to which learners appropriate native-like accents, resulting in partly inconsistent findings with limited insight into individual learning processes and factors. I thus adopt a different focus by qualitatively investigating the interplay between sojourners' beliefs about pronunciation and their identity constructions and negotiations.

My research is based on five case studies of Canadian learners of German. Each research subject has attended a German university for one or two semesters. In applying narrative inquiry as a research tool for both the within- and cross-case analyses, I investigate participants' accounts in interviews and e-journals, as conducted at different stages throughout the first sojourn term. Poststructuralist-constructivist conceptualizations of learner identities and beliefs guide the data analysis and interpretation. The results of the holistic and categorical content analyses give insight into the intricate relationship between beliefs about pronunciation and learners' identity work. In their narratives, learners appear to actively use pronunciation as a tool to construct identity facets in correspondence to specific communities of practice, giving meaning to their investment in the sojourn experience. This process of mediating between different identity constructions ap-

pears to be highly complex and partially conflict-laden. The participants' beliefs and reported learning behaviours are interconnected with their definitions of learning goals, which draw on native-speaker ideals to different extents and with varying results. These orientations are in turn related to the subjects' degrees of critical language awareness, the latter a factor that appears to play a vital role in shaping the ability of learners to take advantage of learning opportunities. In assessing participants' learning objectives and their readiness to reflect upon their beliefs and orientations, my study also sheds light on the influence of different learning factor constellations on intercultural learning.

The results indicate that unidirectional cause-and-effect relationships cannot be drawn between learners' beliefs about pronunciation and their abilities to approach their roles as intercultural speakers in sojourn environments. My study rather underlines the importance of illuminating individual learning experiences in their idiosyncrasies and complexities, which may lead to a stronger consideration of learners' subjective stances in both research and teaching practice. The findings of my study suggest that the primary way that language pedagogy can thus foster the ability to engage in intercultural encounters is by helping learners to become aware of their subjective stances, their self-constructions, and the influence of those on the learning process. Therefore, developing the ability and willingness to critically reflect is crucial, especially with regard to pronunciation. In illuminating the intricate nature of learner beliefs and their influence on the learning process, my study demonstrates the importance of qualitative, emic research into the acquisition of L2 pronunciation.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to thank my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Barbara Schmenk, for her continuous support and encouragement throughout the past years. She provided me with invaluable academic and personal guidance during my Ph.D. studies, and moreover gave me the inspiration which eventually led to the topic of this thesis. She was the perfect mentor at all the critical points of my dissertation writing process. I am indebted to her for her constant readiness to help find solutions to various problems, for her tireless efforts in helping me build my professional career, and for supporting me when I needed it most (including repeated invitations to outings in my lonesome research moments).

I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Glenn Levine, Dr. Grit Liebscher, Dr. Kristina Llewellyn, and Dr. Mathias Schulze, who have given me vital feedback for my thesis and inspiring suggestions for further research projects. I further wish to thank Dr. Sarah Turner and Dr. James Skidmore for their academic guidance and mentoring. For his encouragement and dedication to prepare me for an academic career path, I also would like to thank Dr. David John.

I am very grateful to the students of the University of Waterloo who have participated in my study. Without their willingness to devote their time to my project and allow me insight into their lives I could have not realized my research.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family, who supported me with their love, always believed in me, and without whom I would not be here today. Ich danke euch von ganzem Herzen. I am equally indebted to my husband, Sevag Gharibian, who accompanied me through all the ups and downs of the past years. His endless patience, readiness to listen, and emotional support have given me courage and strength throughout my studies. Շատ շնորհակալություն for always being there for me.

## **Dedication**

*To my family*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
BAK	Beliefs, Assumptions, Knowledge
BALLI	Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory
C1	First Culture
C2	Second Culture
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CHAT	Codes of the Human Analysis of Transcripts
CLA	Critical Language Awareness
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CoP	Community of Practice
CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EIL	English as an International Language
ELF	English as Lingua Franca
ENL	English as a Native Language
ERASMUS	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ESL	English as a Second Language
FLP	Functional Load Principle
GFL	German as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language or First Languages
L2	Second Language, used as an umbrella term referring to both second and foreign languages, unless otherwise specified

LFC	Lingua Franca Core
MDH	Markedness Differential Hypothesis
NNS	Non-Native Speaker
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
SA	Study Abroad
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language

## List of Symbols

.	period
?	question
!	exclamation
...	omission
#	pause between words
##	long pause between words
###	extra long pause between words
[.]	quotation mark
&=text	simple local event (e.g., laughing)
TEXT	stressed word or syllable
:	lengthened syllable
-	interruption on the word level
xx	unintelligible speech, treated as a word
xxx	unintelligible speech, not treated as a word

## 1 Introduction

Every year, millions of university students worldwide temporarily leave their home countries to study abroad<sup>1</sup>. They often hope to improve their foreign-language (L2) skills, to gain experience with living and interacting in foreign cultures, and to acquire professional skills that will be valuable in a global-market economy (Jackson, 2008). As one of these students, I started my doctoral studies at a Canadian university, and my experience with living and learning in a foreign environment sparked my interest in study-abroad research.

Over the last decades, universities and other educational institutions around the world have increasingly established research and teaching connections, with exchange programs being a crucial part of the global academic network. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that over the past three decades the number of tertiary students moving to another country to study has increased dramatically, from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to over 3 million in 2007, with an accelerated growth during the past ten years (OECD, 2009). Whereas Asian and European students account for the largest groups of students studying abroad with 47% and 24.9% respectively, African (10.5%), South American (5.4%), and North American students (3.8%) form much smaller groups.

In the area of foreign language study, exchange programs are often a vital element of departmental curricula. As Kinginger (2009) points out, “a sojourn abroad is normally considered to be a crucial step in the development of ability to use a language in a range of communicative settings” (p. 4f.), because the experience intensely exposes students to different types of authentic language input, to opportunities for interaction, and allows them

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<sup>1</sup> Studying abroad can take several different forms, depending on the purpose, duration, and institutional monitoring of the sojourn. In this study, it is defined as “*a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes*” (Kinger, 2009, p. 11).

contact with the target culture (Amuzie & Winke, 2009). Since Freed's (1995) publication in particular, scholars in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have comprehensively investigated the influence of study-abroad periods on learners' interlanguage and general proficiency development, using a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches (Kinging, 2008). Even though studying abroad does indeed appear to be a productive context for language learning, the outcomes are not always as remarkable or as evenly distributed among learners, as one might assume they would be. Huebner (1995), for example, states, "the overseas experience ... seems to result in a much wider variety of performances and behaviors among students than does study at home" (p. 191). Recent research results thus point out the significance of individual differences. Especially in study-abroad situations, learners' language use involves a complex interplay of individual dispositions and those of their interlocutors, a finding which emphasizes the diversity and individual variation among learners. Research studies on language learning abroad are thus confronted with a wide array of variable learning factors, different learning environments and social relationships, varying program objectives and activities, and many more challenging circumstances that have given rise to a broad body of research.

As Kinginger (2009) explains, investigations in study abroad often follow one of two directions, similar to other areas of SLA. At one end of the scale, product-oriented approaches can be found, which employ quantitative tools to interpret data, seeking to assess the outcomes of study abroad with statistical significance. The earliest study, often cited as an example for this research tradition, is Carroll's (1967) examination of the influence of study abroad on learners' L2 skills, the results of which appeared to strongly support study abroad as the only effective way to achieve advanced skills. Kinginger (2009) describes this research tradition in its subsequent development as follows:

Future researchers would base their work on global constructs such as proficiency, fluency, or pragmatic competence, often operationalized as tests. Such research designs aim to define the outcomes and judge the effectiveness of learner sojourns abroad, without necessarily taking into consideration the qualities of experience. The assumption that study abroad is analogous to an experimental treatment remains in place. (p. 38)

There are also recent study-abroad projects, such as the special issue of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* edited by Collentine and Freed (2004), which focus mainly on the development of specific areas of communicative competence, while applying quantitative tools (see also Block, 2007). Whereas Collentine and Freed's edition is situated in the North American context, recent large-scale European projects have been undertaken, for example, by Coleman (1996) and Rees and Klapper (2007), investigating sojourners' proficiency development as dependent on different learning factors.

Yet, with the increasing consideration of the individual learner in SLA research from the 1970s onwards, some scholars began to doubt the validity and informative value of such large-scale investigations of mainly linguistic sojourn outcomes. In order to gain deeper insight into the causes of learning outcomes and the nature of study-abroad experience, research turned increasingly to process-oriented interests and approaches. Pointing to the "neglect of in-depth longitudinal case studies examining the social-psychological profiles of individuals in addition to their personal variables" (Kinginger, 2009, p. 35), Schumann and Schumann's (1977; Schumann, 1980) first-person diary account was the first sojourn study that explicitly committed to a more interpretative-explorative framework. The qualitative, process-oriented approach to investigating study abroad then paved the way for the inclusion of more complex, dynamic, and learner-centered constructs.

## 1.1 Research Objectives

The present study attempts to follow in the footsteps of the process-oriented direction, while focusing on an area that has previously been surveyed predominantly from a product-oriented perspective, namely, learners' pronunciation development in study-abroad contexts. Existing scholarship on pronunciation in SLA (e.g., Hansen Edwards & Zampini, 2008; Leather, 1999a; Pennington, 1996, 2007a; Trouvain & Gut, 2007) indicates a strong interest in quantitative analyses of especially segmental<sup>2</sup> and partly also suprasegmental<sup>3</sup> elements of speech. The individuality and complexity of the pronunciation learning process, however, has thus far remained widely invisible, particularly in study-abroad contexts. The strong adherence to quantitative investigations is in turn mirrored in teaching approaches that treat pronunciation as a static, isolatable feature: as Canagarajah (2005) points out, "... pronunciation has been the most prescriptively taught aspect of language instruction. Pedagogies for accent reduction have bordered on the pathological" (p. 365). I therefore intend to counterbalance the tradition of etic, normative research and shed light on the process-oriented, sociopsychological realm of pronunciation learning.

Specifically, I am interested in sociopsychological factors of the learning process, entailing learners' perspectives on learning a foreign-language pronunciation, and the influence as well as the dependence of such perspectives on learners' identity work. Recent studies (e.g., Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2008; Pellegrino, 1998, 2005; Polanyi, 1995; Smit, 2002; Wilkinson, 1998, 2002) have shown that learner beliefs about the L2 form interpretative stances in relation to cultural otherness, impacting the quality and strength of

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<sup>2</sup> A segmental feature is a phonological unit that is considered to be an entity in itself, i.e., a simple consonant or vowel (Chun, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Suprasegmentals are phonological units that typically extend "over more than one sound segment in an utterance, over longer stretches of speech" (Chun, 2002, p. 3), such as pitch, tempo, and rhythm.

learners' social networks during the study-abroad period, as well as the performance of L2-mediated subject positions. Much of the research conducted on the perspectives of study-abroad learners, however, "investigates the impact of the study abroad experience broadly rather than focusing on specific language learning aspects" (Amuzie & Winke, 2009, p. 367). One of these rather broad areas of interest has been the process of entering and adapting to the new environment of studying abroad (e.g., Block, 2007; Byram & Feng, 2006; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2004; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002), often involving issues of identity construction. Yet, as Amuzie and Winke (2009) state, "little is known about how study-abroad affects what learners believe about language learning and what they believe about themselves as language learners" (p. 366). This statement holds especially true with regard to pronunciation learning in study-abroad contexts, an area which exhibits a general paucity of qualitative research.

Only a small number of studies (e.g., Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Marx, 2002) have investigated and attempted to reconceptualize pronunciation learning from an emic perspective, often drawing on Cook's (1992, 1999) notion of 'multi-competence', which promotes a more tolerant understanding of L2 learners' competence in comparison to native speakers. Based on their reconceptualizations, these studies usually establish a rather optimistic picture without going too far into the depths of complex and conflict-laden belief and identity construction processes. The question of how alternative orientations can be realized in teaching strategies remains widely unanswered as well.

Based on existing research and its desiderata, the present study aims to expand current insight in the pronunciation learning process by investigating how the interplay between pronunciation, identity, and learner beliefs is shaped in the context of language learning and study abroad. In reconstructing five learners' narratives of their sojourns, I



will examine their beliefs about pronunciation from an emic perspective and discuss how those beliefs interact with the students' identity constructions as learners and speakers of German as a Foreign Language (GFL). In order to develop a more holistic and integrative understanding of pronunciation in the overall learning and study-abroad process, I will research learners' beliefs and identity constructions within the context of their narrated experiences with intercultural encounters abroad. My interpretations of learners' accounts will be guided by poststructuralist-constructivist conceptualizations of identities and learner beliefs, allowing me to consider the dynamics, idiosyncrasies, and complexities of the learning factors involved. I will argue that it is particularly important to reframe the notion of pronunciation in learning and teaching processes as independent of the native-speaker ideal. It is thus a vital goal of this study to scrutinize alternative orientations toward pronunciation with regard to their potential to help learners approach L2-mediated encounters without inhibitions caused by beliefs about pronunciation and their influence on learners' identity negotiations. The findings of this study will thus be applicable to not only the teaching of pronunciation per se, but also to other areas of language instruction and sojourn preparation, promoting a more holistic and critically reflective teaching and learning of foreign languages.

## 1.2 Chapter Outline

The present study investigates learners' beliefs about pronunciation in their interplay with identity constructions as mediated by the study-abroad context. The following three chapters (chapters 2 to 4) will be devoted to mapping the theoretical terrain of the three notions of pronunciation, identity, and learner beliefs. Chapter 2 will illuminate different factors influencing the pronunciation learning process, with special foci on study abroad, learning

objectives, and teaching strategies. I will point out potential alternative orientations to the prevalent native-speaker ideal by drawing on notions of intelligibility, the intercultural speaker, and critical language awareness. Chapter 3 will outline the poststructuralist understanding of identities, upon which this work is based, and will conceptualize the notion of identities in intercultural encounters. In order to develop clear connections with the other theoretical concepts, I will review the results of previous research on identities, study abroad, and pronunciation. Chapter 4 will then shed light on learner beliefs from a theoretical and empirical perspective, also discussing existing research results in the areas of learner beliefs, pronunciation, and study abroad.

Chapter 5 will focus on the methodological approach of the multiple-case study. The process of data collection and interpretation will be guided by the principles of narrative inquiry, comprising both a holistic and categorical content analysis. Chapter 6 will then be devoted to the holistic content analysis, reconstructing the narratives of five participants in depth by drawing on data collected in interviews and e-journals. Based on vital themes established in the holistic content analysis and in theoretical considerations, chapter 7 will discuss the results according to three categories: (a) learners' nativeness orientations, (b) their critical language awareness, and (c) their intercultural-speaker qualities. Chapter 8 will conclude the findings of the empirical study in light of the theoretical discussions of earlier chapters and will establish pedagogical implications for the teaching of pronunciation and monitoring of sojourns as integral parts of encouraging students to form critically reflective stances and to take responsibility for their learning. Also, the limitations of this study and potential areas of future research will be discussed.

## 2 Pronunciation in Foreign Language Learning

Learner beliefs about pronunciation constitute the basis of the present work. The following overview will map the terrain of the present study by shedding light on relevant research on the nature of pronunciation learning and teaching. The first section will focus on the main characteristics and factors of the pronunciation learning process. Subsequently, two learning factors, which are closely related to my research interests, will be discussed in more depth: first, recent studies investigating the influence of studying abroad on pronunciation learning will be outlined; and secondly, I will focus on the definition of learning objectives and their potential to allow for a holistic and learner-centered conceptualization of pronunciation. Finally, the discussion of pronunciation learning will be related to major trends in the area of pronunciation teaching in order to provide a comprehensive picture of factors that may influence learner perspectives.

### 2.1 Fundamental Factors of Pronunciation Learning

In the process of learning a foreign language, the acquisition of the segmental and suprasegmental phonological elements is influenced not only by transfer from learners' first and other previously acquired languages but also by several social, psychological, and individual factors. In the following overview, important linguistic and non-linguistic factors shaping the process of acquiring L2 pronunciation<sup>4</sup> are outlined briefly.

The acquisition of L2 phonological competence requires both the reorganization of mental representations and categories as well as the reattunement of perceptual and motor processes in order to shape the perception and production of a phonological element ac-

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<sup>4</sup> The term *pronunciation* refers to the segmental (i.e., sounds in isolation and combination) and suprasegmental (i.e., pitch, length, loudness, stress/accent, rhythm) features of speech as well as their combined occurrence in coherent speech, including both standard, accented and dialectal forms (Chun, 2002; Doff, 2010).

ording to its properties (Leather, 1999b). This process is widely influenced by previously acquired languages, in particular the first language (L1), as Pennington (2007b) details:

Like acquisition of new variants (allophones of existing phonemes or new phonemes) in one's mother tongue, the acquisition of the new phones and sound categories of an L2 proceeds gradually on the basis of those already acquired ... For L2 this means building the new sound system by 'piggybacking' on the L1 sound system – and to a greater or lesser extent also on the other systems of the L1 – for grouping into categories and sorting differences. (p. 15)

Hirschfeld (2003) explains that transfer from previously acquired languages occurs mainly on the levels of phonological and phonetic structures and features, rules of distribution and combination, motor automatisms, auditory habits, as well as the interpretation of phoneme-grapheme relations. Within the context of German language instruction, Dieling and Hirschfeld (2000) provide a detailed outline of segmental and suprasegmental sources of errors that are caused by phonetic interferences from other acquired languages.

Because the formation of new perceptual and articulatory automatisms is influenced not only by linguistic but also by several non-linguistic factors, the interrelationship between learners' intelligibility, the accentedness of their speech, and individual dispositions is rather complex. Such individual factors are assumed to be the capacity of memory, ability for abstraction, musicality, ability to imitate, sense of rhythm, articulatory/motor skills, aural ability to differentiate, motivation, and learning strategies (Hirschfeld, 2003). Purcell and Suter (1980) found that accuracy in pronunciation is additionally determined by learners' aptitudes for oral mimicry (based on learner beliefs), the length of their in-country residences, whether they live with an L2 native speaker, and finally their degree of concern for pronunciation accuracy. Elliot (1995) confirmed that the latter variable ap-

pears to be the strongest factor in developing pronunciation accuracy, illuminating the importance of researching the influence of learners' individual perspectives on the acquisition process. According to the focus of the present study, the connection between pronunciation, learners' identity constructions and their beliefs will be explored in-depth in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. Due to its prevalence in research literature and its potential influence on the participants of the present study, one individual factor will be discussed in the following in more depth, namely the effect of age on learning L2 pronunciation.

The age factor in pronunciation learning has received extensive attention over the past decades. In earlier years in particular, several scholars (e.g., Asher & García, 1969; Lenneberg, 1967; Scovel, 1969, 1988; Seliger, Krashen, & Ladefoged, 1975) supported the idea of a 'critical period' after which the biological capacity to acquire native-like speech is hypothetically inhibited due to neurological maturation as well as motor skill constraints. Despite much interest, determining the starting and end points of this critical period has proved to be challenging, leading to very different assumptions on the researchers' parts. With regard to the offset time, for example, claims range from 'shortly after birth' (Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003) to 'puberty' (Johnson & Newport, 1989; Lenneberg, 1967; Seliger, 1978; see overview by Singleton, 2005). In an attempt to solve this problem, the term 'sensitive period' (Long, 1990) has been introduced to the discussion, suggesting a less abrupt offset time (see also Grotjahn, 2005).

More recently, the assumption of a 'critical' or 'sensitive' time frame for learning L2 pronunciation has been challenged by studies, proving that adult learners are not generally and automatically disadvantaged or incapable of language and pronunciation learning (e.g., Abu-Rabia & Kehat, 2004; Birdsong, 2007; Bongaerts, van Summeren, Planken, & Schils, 1997; Ioup, Boustagui, El Tigi, & Moselle, 1994; Moyer, 1999; Snow & Hoef-

nagel-Höhle, 1977). Therefore, with its focus on the age of first significant exposure to the target language, the critical period hypothesis (CPH) proves to be a rather simplistic approach to the complex interrelation between age and other factors in the learning process. Moyer (1999) points out that “without reference to environmental factors, cognitive skill development, and sociopsychological concerns, a strictly neurological framework for maturational constraints does not provide thorough explanation” (p. 84). It appears questionable, however, whether such insight has been communicated to teachers and learners, whose perceptions may be still guided by the assumptions of the CPH, possibly doubting to which extent adult learners, such as the participants of the present study, can acquire a foreign-language pronunciation.

Purcell and Suter’s (1980) suggestions above also point to a further important factor influencing the acquisition of L2 pronunciation, namely the availability of authentic input and interaction in the L2, which presumably increase in study-abroad contexts. The next section outlines major findings in the area of pronunciation and study abroad.

## 2.2 Pronunciation Learning in Study-Abroad Contexts

### 2.2.1 *Pronunciation Development and Influential Factors*

Whereas pronunciation is often said to receive less attention than other aspects of language learning in SLA research (e.g., Hirschfeld, 1994), scholars have taken a noticeable interest in the development of learners’ accents in study-abroad contexts. Despite several investigations, however, the results in this domain “are mixed, with most studies providing modest support for claims about the benefits of study abroad” (Kinginger, 2009, p. 80).

In particular, quantitative phonetic analyses with a focus on the development of specific segments of learners’ pronunciations are prevalent. Due to the dominance of U.S.-

based research in the field of study abroad, a large number of these studies investigate the acquisition of Spanish pronunciation by native speakers of English (e.g., Díaz-Campos, 2004; Lord, 2000, as cited in Díaz-Campos, 2004; Simões, 1996; Stevens, 2000). In these studies, sojourners were able to make changes toward the target norm of Spanish pronunciation in terms of, for example, vowel quality (Simões, 1996), non-aspirated word-initial plosives and word-final alveolar laterals (Díaz-Campos, 2004), reduced voice onset time for voiceless plosives (Stevens, 2000), and the quality of voiced intervocalic fricatives (Lord, 2000, as cited in Díaz-Campos, 2004; Stevens, 2000).

In the case of English native speakers learning German, O'Brien (2003) conducted a study with a group of 34 Americans, studying abroad at the University of Freiburg, Germany, for the duration of one academic year. As a result, O'Brien found that "subjects who spent the academic year in Freiburg perceived and produced the German high vowels /i:, y:, u:/ more like native speakers of German at the end of the year" (p. 115). In a companion analysis of the prosodic features rhythm, stress, and intonation, O'Brien (2004) found similar results, with study-abroad students outperforming the at-home control group.

Comparing these studies, however, indeed reveals inconsistencies in their findings, as suggested by Kinginger (2009). The subjects in Lord's (2000, cited in Díaz-Campos, 2004) and Stevens' (2000) studies, for example, improved their pronunciation of Spanish voiced intervocalic fricatives, while those in Díaz-Campos' (2004) study did not. Díaz-Campos resorts to Eckman's (1987) Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH), assuming that voiced fricatives may be more marked than voiceless plosives, "which could explain the lack of improvement in their production after the treatment period" (Díaz-Campos, 2004, p. 265). Yet, the MDH cannot explain the difference in results between Díaz-Campos', Stevens', and Lord's studies.

Such discrepancies appear to occur not just between studies situated in different learning contexts. Simões (1996), for example, found considerable differences even among his five participants. In fact, only two of these learners showed significant improvements in their pronunciation, whereas the other three still revealed a tendency to vowel centralization, a lack of linking between words, and the use of hesitation. In other areas, his learners moved even further from the target by overgeneralizing the trilled /r/ in sound contexts where a single tap in Spanish is correct. Additionally, his students continued to show American English rhythm and intonation patterns. Yet, Simões' study does not allow for deeper insights into the differences in individual learner results as well as the regressing developments. He simply assumes that the varying language levels at the beginning of the study-abroad period may have caused these findings.

Three of these studies (Díaz-Campos, 2004; O'Brien, 2003; Stevens, 2000) also compared study-abroad learners with those in domestic learning contexts, revealing some inconsistencies as well. Whereas both Stevens' and O'Brien's sojourners showed greater progress overall than the domestic group in acquiring more target-like pronunciation, Díaz-Campos found no advantage for the study-abroad group. On the contrary, the at-home group in Díaz-Campos' study outperformed the exchange students in the exit recordings, which he attributes to individual students in the at-home group with more years of prior language instruction and earlier exposure to the L2 in their lives. Additionally, Stevens' at-home subjects outperformed the sojourners in their improvement of the Spanish trilled /r/. The partly contradictory results of these studies thus point to complex relationships between the acquisition of L2 pronunciation and individual learning factors.

Besides years of prior language instruction and school level at which formal instruction began, these studies identified – usually on the basis of questionnaires – further



factors that may have influenced their results:

- Lord (2000, as cited in Díaz-Campos, 2004) suggests that instruction on certain pronunciation issues prior to studying abroad contributes to improvements.
- Díaz-Campos (2004) names the reported use of the L2 before the sojourn, reported use of the L2 outside the classroom during the sojourn in days and hours, gender, entrance OPI<sup>5</sup>, and exit OPI.
- Churchill and DuFon (2006) add learning context, length of time abroad, general proficiency level at the outset of the program, and opportunities for input.
- O'Brien (2003) also identifies confidence, motivation, and identification with the L2 culture as important factors, even though the study-abroad group, who apparently improved its pronunciation, became gradually more frustrated and reluctant toward interactions with native speakers.

Stevens (2000) even reports that different factors reveal positive correlations in different learning contexts. The at-home group's pronunciation appeared to be positively influenced by more similarity between L1 and L2 phones, less exposure to L2 aural media, and more use of the L2 outside of the classroom and conversation laboratory. The study-abroad group revealed a positive correlation between the improvement of pronunciation and a less positive attitude toward acquiring a native-like L2 pronunciation as well as more use of the L2 with other speakers of the same L1. This result may suggest that a less threatening environment aids students in improving their pronunciation.

The different, partly conflicting results of these studies indicate that the process of learning a foreign-language pronunciation cannot be viewed in a unidirectional way. Even under ostensibly favourable learning conditions, as given by the study-abroad context, the

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<sup>5</sup> Oral Proficiency Interview, administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

learning process is highly individual and outcomes may differ widely. These researchers attempted to explain their findings by recognizing a multitude of individual learner factors, possibly influencing the pronunciation development of their participants.

It is notable, however, that these studies focus primarily on the phonetic development of learners' speech and rely on quantifying data, usually gained through recordings and questionnaires. The methodological design hence does not allow for a deeper analysis of the individual learning process and complex aggregates of sociopsychological factors. The inconsistencies in findings therefore remain unsolved riddles, inviting authors (e.g., Díaz-Campos, 2004) to find intuitive explanations where in-depth insights into learners' experiences and beliefs are lacking. The reliance on quantitative, etic research designs, however, is widely unquestioned.

In order to gain a better understanding of the apparent individual differences in pronunciation learning, including their causes and effects on the overall learning progress, more insightful data are necessary. Qualitative, emic research designs may thus present a promising addition to the study of pronunciation developments in sojourn contexts.

### *2.2.2 Learner Perceptions on Pronunciation*

To this date, only one study (O'Donnell, 2004) considered student perceptions of language learning in study-abroad versus at-home contexts, while explicitly referring to pronunciation. O'Donnell compared participants' diary entries with the quantitative results of four companion studies (Collentine, 2004; Díaz-Campos, 2004; Lafford, 2004; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004), researching the subjects' language development in terms of their grammatical and lexical abilities, phonology, communicative abilities, as well as their oral performances and cognitive measures. By classifying diary entries according to context, student

evaluations of the situation, and social/psychological variables of the situation, O'Donnell calculated the proportion of positive and negative events for each diary record. The scores from the companion studies were then correlated with these perception scores.

In the case of pronunciation, O'Donnell found no significant correlations between the study-abroad group's diary entries and the pronunciation development of the group's members. The at-home group, however, showed a significant positive correlation between overall pronunciation and reports of positive home experiences. As a reason, O'Donnell notes that "several participants mentioned activities done outside the classroom whose goal was to improve their listening comprehension and speaking ability" (p. 106). Even though the study-abroad group "discussed problems with pronunciation to a much larger degree often searching for methods to improve" (p. 106), she concludes that neither learning context is superior for the acquisition of pronunciation, since neither group outperformed the other in terms of improved pronunciation (Díaz-Campos, 2004).

O'Donnell's findings thus suggest that studying abroad may not necessarily result in increased learning progress, but nonetheless may raise students' awareness of pronunciation as an influential factor in oral communication. Her study indicates, however, that handling large amounts of data requires abstraction, thus making it difficult to analyze in depth the accounts of learners. Her quantitative results contribute relatively few new findings to the existing companion study, leading her to regret that no measures of the learners' attitudes, degrees of motivation, and aptitudes were available. Believing that further quantitative measures of individual dispositions might have improved her findings, she concludes that "future studies should focus on such differences in order to more fully understand the relationship between perceptions of learning and second language acquisition" (p. 94).

In light of the paucity of qualitative, emic research in pronunciation learning, I would qualify O'Donnell's conclusion and instead suggest researching learner perceptions in a more exploratory and contextual fashion instead. In order to investigate the role that pronunciation and learner perceptions of pronunciation play in the language learning process and during the sojourn, quantitative research designs offer only limited access to the complex nature of the learning process, as O'Donnell's study shows. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 will therefore develop a wider angle, both in terms of the considered sociopsychological factors and methodological design of the present study.

Strongly interrelated with learners' perceptions of pronunciation learning are their definitions of learning objectives, constituting an influential learning factor in both in-class and study-abroad contexts. These learning objectives may be informed by two different orientations, namely, the "nativeness principle" and the "intelligibility principle" (Levis, 2005). In the following, I will discuss both orientations with regard to their potential to support the learning process. In an attempt to harness the advantages of the intelligibility principle in particular, I will propose the concepts of the "intercultural speaker" (Byram & Zarate, 1997; Byram, 2008) and "critical language awareness" (Fairclough, 1992; Train, 2003) as extensions to the conceptualization of pronunciation in the L2 learning process.

## 2.3 Pronunciation Learning Objectives

### 2.3.1 *Nativeness versus Intelligibility Principle*

Corresponding to the different waves of interest and their perspectives on pronunciation, research and pedagogy have been influenced by the discussion and pursuit of two different orientations, namely, the "nativeness principle" and the "intelligibility principle" (Levis,

2005). Although teachers and scholars mostly doubt the validity of the native-speaker construct (Jenkins, 2007), some realms of foreign language curricula and teaching practice still appear to be influenced by this model. One of those realms is pronunciation training, in which a native-speaker orientation still seems to be pervasive in classroom practice, teaching materials, and presumably in the minds of students. Investigating learners' beliefs about pronunciation thus necessitates a consideration of their learning objectives and influence of a potential orientation toward nativeness on their learning process.

The nativeness principle relies on the assumption that native-like pronunciation is the desirable and achievable objective of L2 instruction, thus presenting the 'native speaker' as the unquestionable ideal for both teacher and learner efforts. This orientation is largely based on a hierarchical distinction in which native speakers are privileged over their non-native counterparts, which then implies clear role expectations for both: "Non-native speakers are supposed to learn the rules of the native speaker's standard grammar, vocabulary and idioms. In turn, the native speaker is supposed to provide the norm against which the non-native speaker's performance is measured" (Kramsch, 1998a, p. 16). Learners are supposed to strive to eliminate their foreign accents, following an idealized norm that may be difficult to emulate, and not only in articulatory respects. Even the most successful L2 learners may fail to find outside recognition of their efforts, as the native speaker's authority is legitimized by birth, education, and membership in certain social communities (Kramsch, 1998a). This inevitably inferior position may eventually discourage learners, who, in Cook's (1999) words, are constructed like "ducks [who] fail to become swans" (p. 187).

Research has therefore clearly questioned this "static, homogenous, depoliticized, and decontextualized" (Doerr & Kumagai, 2009, p. 299) principle that "inherently sug-

gest[s] that an accent is, in itself, a bad thing, and is subject to *treatment, intervention*, or even *eradication* in much the same way as a language pathology” (Munro & Derwing, 1999, p. 286). Rather, it has been shown that only a small percentage of learners are actually motivated and able to achieve native-like pronunciation (e.g., Bongaerts, van Summeren, Planken, & Schils, 1997; Flege, Munro, & MacKay, 1995; Ioup, Boustagui, El Tigi, & Moselle, 1994; Moyer, 1999). Such work maintains that native-speaker competence as the ultimate goal of L2 learning is neither achievable nor desirable, but rather unrealistic and potentially identity-threatening for the majority of speakers, particularly in the area of pronunciation. Nevertheless, Levis (2005) argues that this model still influences pronunciation training in class and the development of teaching material. Accordingly, if this claim holds true, native-speaker orientations are likely to influence learners’ beliefs and learning objectives with regard to pronunciation learning as well.

The majority of studies investigating students’ pronunciation learning objectives have been conducted with respect to English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Second Language (ESL), and International Language (EIL). Timmis (2002) found that 67% of EFL, ESL, and EIL learners would prefer to speak English like a native speaker. As many as 95% of all adult ESL learners in Derwing’s (2003) study desired native-like pronunciation. With regard to learning English, research indicates a clear prevalence of the native-speaker orientation (see also Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Lippi-Green, 1997). Yet, it remains unclear whether such an orientation also exists in GFL learners, what role different learning environments (e.g., in-class vs. study-abroad) play, and how a native-speaker orientation influences learners’ sense of self and their willingness to use the L2 in communicative situations.

As an alternative orientation to the nativeness principle, the intelligibility principle defines mutual understanding as the overall target of pronunciation training, implying that different features of the foreign accent influence intelligibility to different extents. In this context, the term “intelligibility” is defined as the degree to which an utterance is understood by a listener (Munro & Derwing, 1995). However, it should be noted that intelligibility does not automatically correlate with the degree of accentedness of speech. As Munro and Derwing (1995) showed, even though listeners may detect noticeable accents in learners’ speech, only some accents are difficult to understand. Munro (2008) concludes that “the fact that millions of second language users around the world communicate successfully using foreign-accented speech indicates that accent-free pronunciation is *not* a necessary goal for either learners or teachers of second languages” (p. 194).

Thus, the concept of intelligibility is based on learners’ communicative needs, widening the scope and understanding of pronunciation training. Whereas the nativeness principle carries traces of the audiolingual approach to teaching languages and encourages a concentration on isolated segments and drill practice, the intelligibility principle invites instructors to train segments and suprasegmentals in more meaningful contexts, as well as in connection with other skills and language aspects. Furthermore, tolerance toward an intelligible accent also supports learners’ potential desires to express identity through their speech, an aspect which will be investigated in depth in chapter 3. Focusing on intelligibility thus gives consideration to learners’ individual needs and learning goals, potentially supporting their readiness to engage in L2-mediated interactions.

Despite its clear usefulness as a guiding principle for pronunciation instruction, the transformation of the intelligibility principle into concrete learning objectives remains a challenge. Levis (2005) postulates on a very general level that in accordance with this

principle, “instruction should thus focus on those features that are most helpful for understanding and should deemphasize those that are relatively unhelpful” (p. 370f.). The definition and classification of such helpful versus unhelpful elements has created plenty of discussion, yet the results appear vague and partially problematic. One part of the challenge is that “*intelligibility* is complex and tangled up with different views, personalities and experiences” (Macdonald, 2002, p. 8f.), emphasizing the individual nature of pronunciation needs and goals (see also Hansen Edwards, 2007). Establishing a set of predefined learning objectives on a segmental and suprasegmental level therefore remains complicated and can only be pursued with reference to the respective context of instruction. The other main challenge consists of the difficulty of defining learning objectives without drawing on the native-speaker versus non-native-speaker dichotomy. Whereas this problem has hardly been addressed in GFL research, scholars in EFL/ESL/EIL have developed models that attempt to specify learning objectives in accordance with the intelligibility principle. In particular, the Lingua Franca Core and the Functional Load Principle, discussed in the following section, have attracted attention recently, focussing on the question of which pronunciation elements are particularly important for learners to acquire.

### 2.3.2 *Models Promoting the Intelligibility Principle*

Jenkins (2000, 2002, 2007) developed the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) model as a response to the international spread of English and the ever-expanding group of non-native speakers. Her intention was to “find a means of promoting mutual pronunciation intelligibility in ELF [English as Lingua Franca] communication, and to encourage acceptance of those pronunciation features that are regularly and systematically pronounced ‘incorrectly’, and found not to impede intelligibility for an NNS [non-native speaker] listener” (2007, p.



22f.). The LFC classifies different segmental and suprasegmental features of English pronunciation into the core or non-core category, based on empirical research in contexts in which English was used as a lingua franca by non-native speakers. As a result, Jenkins believes that learners can now decide whether they learn English for communication with other non-native speakers, making only core features relevant to them, or whether they intend to use English in native-speaker contexts, requiring both receptive and productive skills in pronouncing core and non-core features intelligibly. In so doing, Jenkins (2007) intends to put non-native accents on the same level as regional native accents and to “resolve the intelligibility-identity conflict by enabling NNSs to express both their L1 identity and membership of the international ELF community, while remaining intelligible to their ELF interlocutors, and still able to understand ENL [English as a Native Language] accents” (p. 25).

While the concept of the LFC has received ample attention among researchers, Jenkins (2007) admits that the responses are rather polarized. Whereas attempts have been made to transfer the model to different teaching contexts (e.g., Walker, 2001), other scholars criticized the model for legitimizing non-native English accents and for the general nature of the core and non-core classification for use in lingua-franca situations (for a detailed description of and commentary on such criticism see Jenkins, 2007). In the context of my study, I both value and distance my work from Jenkins’ proposal. I concur with the need to develop an alternative learning goal that allows language learners to retain an intelligible degree of accentedness in their speech, allowing for less identity-threatening, more realistic, and individualized learning goals. However, besides existing criticism toward the validity of the empirical approach and appropriateness of the specific phonological classifications (Munro & Derwing, 2006), it remains unclear whether Jenkins achieves

her goals, largely due to the generalizing and abstracting nature of her approach as well as its failure in overcoming the native-speaker vs. non-native speaker dichotomy.

In terms of the LFC's generalization, it seems to be an idealized assumption that listeners have similar difficulties in adjusting to accented speech, leading to similar judgements of intelligibility, independent of their first languages or regional dialects, situational factors, and the general communicative situation. Even more detrimental is Jenkins' approach of delineating a 'two-class society', in which learners may be classified according to whether or not they intend to communicate with native speakers. Aside from the question of how the distinction between core and non-core learners should be realized in heterogeneous teaching contexts, the model actually strengthens, rather than abandons the native speaker as the benchmark of prestige and learning success. Jenkins' claim to resolve learners' identity conflicts thus appears highly questionable, as core learners may feel labelled as second-class learners, acquiring only a basic set of phonological items with limited prestige and applicability, whereas non-core learners are once more asked to submit to their native interlocutors' ostensible needs. Consequently, the model reduces the complex and dynamic interrelationship between learning objectives, identity constructions, and learner beliefs to a simple equation between target listeners, on the one hand, and learners' assumed willingness to adjust to a phonological external norm, on the other hand.

Another model that also attempts to define pronunciation learning goals according to intelligibility is the Functional Load Principle (FLP) (Brown, 1991; Catford, 1987; King, 1967; Meyerstein, 1970; Munro & Derwing, 2006). While examined mainly on the basis of the English language, the FLP has been used in Applied Linguistics to rank segmental contrasts according to their importance in pronunciation accuracy. As Munro and Derwing (2006) explain, "their final determinations were based on factors such as fre-

quency of minimal pairs, the neutralization of phonemic distinctions in regional varieties, segmental position within a word, and the probability of occurrence of individual members of a minimal pair” (p. 522). Thus, the FLP has been suggested to aide curriculum choice in pronunciation training (Brown, 1991), predicting that high functional load errors obstruct listener comprehension most severely.

Based on their empirical investigation, Munro and Derwing (2006) confirm that “high functional load errors had a greater impact on listeners’ perceptions of the accentedness and comprehensibility of L2 speech than did low functional load errors” (p. 529). Yet, they admit that the model stops short of considering prosodic elements of speech as well as the context of communication. Additionally, the model entirely ignores sociopsychological factors and therefore the individuality and complexity of the pronunciation learning process, and expects the learner to submit to at least some pre-defined norms based on a native-speaker standard.

Thus, both the LFC and the FLP model are based on native-speaker norms and a narrow understanding of pronunciation learning, ignoring the influence of individual, sociopsychological factors on the acquisition of L2 pronunciation. The search for concrete segments and prosodic features to be included into a pronunciation curriculum appears to be a one-way street, leading back into the direction of the nativeness principle. In order to harness the opportunities offered by the intelligibility principle without narrowing our understanding of pronunciation, it is important to explore additional concepts that take learners’ communicative needs in intercultural encounters into account. For this purpose, I propose the intercultural-speaker model (Byram & Zarate, 1997) as the ideational basis for the intelligibility principle, just as the nativeness principle is founded on the native-speaker model. As a model, the intercultural-speaker construct may allow for more com-

plex and comprehensive definitions of learning goals, shifting the focus from specific phonetic elements to a more integrative approach to teaching ‘*pronunciation-as-language*’.

### 2.3.3 *The Intercultural-Speaker Model*

Byram and Zarate (1997) coined the term “intercultural speaker” as a response to the prevalence of native-speaker standards in the context of foreign language learning, and the subordination of the language learner to these standards. In an attempt to overcome the native-speaker orientation, Byram (2008) suggests:

One of the outcomes of teaching languages (and cultures) should be the ability to see how different cultures relate to each other – in terms of similarities and differences – and to act as mediator between them, or more precisely between people socialized into them. (p. 68)

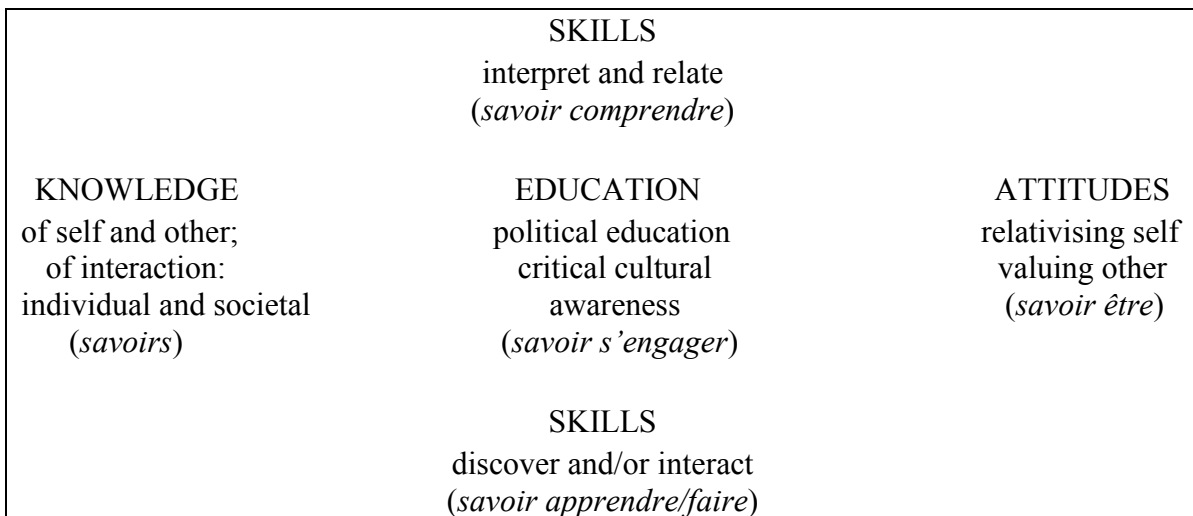
Intercultural speakers are said to be able to take on an external perspective in intercultural encounters, fostering their understanding of different cultures, languages, and language varieties. In analyzing one’s own and others’ behaviour, the intercultural speaker detects underlying beliefs and values, allowing for mediation between different groups and dispositions.

As a fundamental component of acting interculturally, Byram (1997) defines the notion of “intercultural communicative competence”, encompassing affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions, which serve as objectives of foreign language learning:

- *Attitudes*: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own (*savoir être*).

- *Knowledge*: of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction (*savoirs*).
- *Skills of interpreting and relating*: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it, and relate it to documents from one’s own (*savoir comprendre*).
- *Skills of discovery and interaction*: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices, and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*).
- *Critical cultural awareness/political education*: ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices, and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries (*savoir s’engager*). (Byram, 2008, p. 69)

Figure 2.3.3 Factors in intercultural communication (Byram, 2008, p. 230).



Even though Byram’s model focuses mainly on speakers’ cultural behaviour, awareness, and identity, its relation to linguistic components should not be overlooked. Particularly

learner pronunciation may function as a mirror of cultural identity and readiness to adjust to different speech communities, as will be outlined in chapter 3. Thus, the intercultural-speaker model allows for viewing pronunciation as a tool that speakers can handle flexibly, using it to respond to situational factors and mediate between different languages, cultures, and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this regard, pronunciation is not understood as the teaching of isolated phonetic elements that are realized either correctly or incorrectly, but rather as a social practice that helps speakers to act at the boundary of different cultures and languages. In this “third place” (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993), speakers may use their pronunciation to position themselves, outwardly projecting different aspects of their identities and transporting cultural meaning in their flexible handling of pronunciation. Learners may thus shift their focus from ‘*pronunciation-in-isolation*’ to ‘*pronunciation-as-language*’.

The intercultural-speaker model, however, faces challenges in its realization, which may also apply to the subjects of the present study. It appears that language learning in classroom contexts often does not create the desire to develop empathy and identification with another cultural group, limiting the achievement of intercultural-speaker qualities (Kordes, 1991; Meyer, 1991, both as cited in Byram, 2008). Also, researchers have questioned the willingness and abilities of learners to resist the hegemony of the native-speaker model (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999), a claim supported by studies on students’ objectives with regard to pronunciation learning (see above Derwing, 2003; Timmis, 2002). The intercultural-speaker model thus expands the intelligibility principle on an ideational level, but does not present a set of practical guidelines, allowing learners to overcome their native-speaker orientations and gain awareness toward the role of pronunciation in intercultural encounters. To this end, the concept of “critical language awareness” (CLA)

(Fairclough, 1992) may present insight into how learners can approach their roles as intercultural speakers through critical reflection on their beliefs about pronunciation, learning objectives, and the effects of those on their senses of self and learning processes.

#### 2.3.4 *Critical Language Awareness*

Introduced by Hawkins (1984), the concept of “language awareness” refers to “the deliberate attempt to draw learners’ attention to the formal properties of their L2 in order to increase the degree of explicitness required to promote L2 learning” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 204f.). Language awareness can be seen as both a mental attribute and a pedagogic approach that encourages learners’ curiosity to discover language-in-use as a tool to convey meaning (Bolitho et al., 2003). “Critical language awareness” (Fairclough, 1992) takes the approach one step further by motivating students to investigate the relationship between language and social context, and to “identify ideological practices that deceptively use language in order to maintain a social and political power structure” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 205). Based on these theoretical assumptions, the development of CLA entails a focus on linguistic variation of language in use in order to reflect upon the consequences of external norms, such as native-speaker standards, for language teaching and learning.

CLA thus aims to develop learner awareness of language, culture, and self through an exploration of the interplay between identity, normativity, and variability in language classrooms and beyond (Train, 2003). Because CLA casts doubt onto accuracy and appropriateness as based on native-speaker norms, it at once also offers the opportunity to help students understand both the function of pronunciation in intercultural encounters as well as the linguistic and social limitations that an orientation toward nativeness may cause. Specifically, Train (2003) suggests five components (see below) that may help to opera-

tionalize the concept of CLA and allow learners to explore their own and interlocutors' beliefs about language and language learning, their positions as speakers and learners of languages, and their identity negotiations in intercultural encounters. If learners become critically aware of such stances, they may be able to redefine potential nativeness orientations and counteract prescribed norms, building realistic and motivating learning objectives for language learning.

The above mentioned five CLA components which allow learners to discover and overcome inhibiting structures, provided through the social context of teaching and interacting, are as follows:

- Exploration (and ultimately transformation) of speakers' individual and collective beliefs (ideologies, attitudes, biases, prejudices) surrounding language;
- Appreciation of variation as inherent in language and learning;
- Questioning of dominant linguistic and cultural knowledge (e.g., native standard language) and how it is constructed and represented;
- Critical reflection on the tension and interplay that exist in language education between creative individual uses of language and conformity to institutionalized norms;
- Insight into the sociocultural construction of speakers' identities and "realities" in a multilingual and multicultural world. (Train, 2003)

Train's suggestions of how CLA can manifest itself in learners' perspectives on language learning appear to be a promising extension of the intercultural-speaker model. In the present study, it thus will be of fundamental interest to the analysis of the empirical data (chapter 6) and discussion of results (chapter 7) to determine what orientations participants have with regard to pronunciation learning and how these views influence their abil-



ities to participate in the study-abroad environment. I will employ Train's (2003) components to determine the participants' abilities to critically reflect on their beliefs, and relate the results to the participants' readiness to engage in intercultural encounters and take on mediating positions (chapter 7). In so doing, I intend to investigate the conditions under which students may shift their orientation from the learning-inhibiting and identity-threatening native-speaker model to their role as intercultural speakers, requiring the flexible handling of pronunciation dependent on different learning and communication contexts. These insights will then lead to suggestions of how the intercultural-speaker and CLA concepts can be incorporated in in-class pronunciation training and sojourn preparations (chapter 8). Based on existing research (e.g., Golombek & Jordan, 2005) investigating the influence of reflection-encouraging teaching methods upon the abilities of learners to reimagine themselves in the native speaker versus non-native speaker dichotomy, CLA appears to be a promising approach for allowing learners to critically reflect on their own and interlocutors' perceptions. This in turn may allow learners to become aware of their roles in the learning process.

In order to understand the sources of students' beliefs about pronunciation and to develop recommendations for incorporating the results of this study into in-class language instructions, it appears necessary to outline current teaching conditions in the area of pronunciation. The following section will thus discuss the consideration of pronunciation in different teaching methods and approaches, the didactic suggestions given in major teaching guidelines, and the main desiderata with regard to teaching pronunciation as described by research literature.

## 2.4 Teaching L2 Pronunciation

Although pronunciation plays an important role in the acquisition of both productive and receptive skills in the target language (Dieling & Hirschfeld, 2000), methodological waves of interest have determined teaching approaches in foreign language classes over the last century: “Irrelevant in the grammar translation approach, pronunciation grew in prominence with the rise of the Direct Method and Audiolingualism, only to be pushed again to the sidelines with the ascendancy [sic] of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Natural Approach” (Jones, 2005, p. 178). In connection with earlier versions of the CPH, which claim that it is practically impossible for adults to acquire a sound L2 pronunciation, Krashen’s (1982) argument that pronunciation is an acquired (as opposed to learnt) skill led to the virtual disappearance of pronunciation in early ‘communicative’ textbooks. Focused instruction on pronunciation ‘accuracy’ was thus perceived as at best useless and at worst detrimental (Jones, 2005). In recent years, pronunciation has experienced a new wave of interest, caused by the insight that the strongly pragmatic orientation of the CLT approach, deeming pronunciation training a barrier in the learning process, may lead to rather insufficient communicative skills:

Many teachers and teacher educators have recognized that some L2 students need direct assistance with pronunciation: for the last two decades, considerable numbers of people have come out of communicative classrooms who, despite large vocabularies and good comprehension skills, have difficulty making themselves understood. (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001, p. 52)

The increasing interest in pronunciation teaching focuses especially on methodological questions, aiming to determine effective teaching strategies for pronunciation instruction.

Macdonald, Yule, and Powers (1994), for example, tested the effectiveness of four different pronunciation teaching methods, namely (a) traditional teacher-guided drilling activities, (b) self-study drilling activities with tape recorders, (c) interactive activities based on modified repetition and interaction, and (d) no intervention, used in four different groups of learners. The researchers, however, found no teaching technique that was significantly better, because “it may simply be that the variance among participants within any particular condition is so large that it confounds any measure of variance between the condition groups” (p. 87). Macdonald et al. thus suggest that the success of instruction is largely dependent on learners’ expectations of the learning situation and on other, yet unspecified affective variables. They conclude that “the wide range of different individual reactions should serve as a reminder that the individual learner may represent a more powerful variable than does the instructional setting in the acquisition of pronunciation” (p. 95f.). Although this conclusion is fundamental in its consideration of the widely neglected individual differences in pronunciation learning, qualifications have to be made with regard to the pedagogical design of the study. The three teaching strategies employed only drill practice and guided student-teacher interaction, suggesting a lack of gradual progression and meaningful communicative practice, possibly influencing the non-significant effects on the learning process.

As early as in 1986, Pennington and Richards called for a ‘top-down’ approach to pronunciation training, focusing more strongly on broader and meaningful stretches of speech to supplement the practice of isolated sounds. This insight led in turn to an increasing awareness of the communicative importance of both segmental and suprasegmental features (e.g., Brazil, Coulthard, & Johns, 1980; Brown & Yule, 1983; Derwing & Munro, 1997; Munro & Derwing, 1995). The revived interest in pronunciation has thus aimed at

overcoming the single-sided accuracy focus of Audiolingualism in order to integrate pronunciation training in the communicative classroom. To this end, more advanced didactic approaches have been developed, promoting exercise typologies beyond ‘Listen and Repeat’ pattern drills. Such exercise typologies generally focus on both listening and speaking exercises in order to establish both new perceptual and motor processes consecutively (e.g., Chun, 2002; Hirschfeld, 2003; Kelz, 1999; Morley, 1991).

Due to the growing interest of research and practice, pronunciation training has also found entrance into language teaching and assessment guidelines such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) and the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (ACTFL, 2006). The CEFR generally places a strong emphasis on oral skills, multilingualism, and (inter-) cultural competence and explicitly integrates pronunciation teaching and learning in its description of communicative learning objectives. In this context, the CEFR provides a clear outline of different skills and competences necessary for achieving intelligible pronunciation, starting with a close description of “general phonetic awareness and skills” (p. 107), which is followed by a more detailed analysis of what the “phonological competence” (p. 116f.) of a learner should entail. In so doing, the framework also states which skills should be trained with regard to segmental and suprasegmental elements of speech at the six different skill levels of the CEFR. Finally, the framework attempts to clarify how learners are “expected/required to develop their ability to pronounce a language” (p. 153). Hence, the CEFR demonstrates a clear consideration of pronunciation in the language learning process, emphasizing segmental and suprasegmental elements as well as discussing progress indica-

tors at all competence levels. Awareness-raising exercises or CLA as learning objective, however, are not included.

The ACTFL guidelines (2006) also focus on teaching foreign languages in meaningful, communicative, and interdisciplinary contexts, thus forming cultural understanding in their learners. In terms of the “Knowledge of the Linguistic System” (p. 294), however, these guidelines offer only brief and vague commentaries on the grammatical, lexical, phonological, semantic, pragmatic, and discursive learning goals for learners of German. With regard to pronunciation, criticism from different scholars reveals that these limitations have hardly been improved over the last years (Chun, 1988; O’Brien, 2004). Therefore, O’Brien (2004) highlights the following desiderata with regard to the treatment of segmental and suprasegmental features in the German Standards of the ACTFL guidelines:

future revisions ... should include an evaluation of intonation at the lower levels and should speak to the role of pronunciation at all levels ... The knowledge of the sound system defined in the German Standards should include not only awareness of the ‘phonological features’ but also the understanding of how segments are realized in spoken German. This should be coupled with students’ ability to utilize the prosodic aspects of German for grammatical, lexical, pragmatic, and discourse purposes as they are essential for successful communication. Progress indicators for the Communication Standard at each of the grade levels should include a discussion of pronunciation. (p. 7)

It therefore can be noted that the ACTFL guidelines appear to consider pronunciation as well as other linguistic competences to a considerably lesser extent than the CEFR. Additionally, both frameworks tend to miss discussing how pronunciation can be integrated into the wider speaking training beyond the focus on specific segments and suprasegmen-

tals and what general role learner beliefs may play in the language learning process. Although the latter factor may present too much detail within such guidelines, the learner perspective should at least be discussed in the form of learning objectives. There are no instances, however, which may cast doubt onto the validity of external norms.

As a result, not only do the leading guidelines of European and North American language teaching reveal limitations in their treatment of pronunciation, but so too do teaching materials, teacher education, and classroom practice. It has been shown that in most cases commercially produced course books and other teaching materials, such as CD-ROMs, either do not cover pronunciation at all, or if they do, present activities very similar to audiolingual texts, relying on ‘Listen and Repeat’ drills and decontextualized words and sentences – even in cases in which the teaching material is specially constructed for pronunciation training (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001; Jones, 2005; Müller, 2008).<sup>6</sup> Also, an insufficient number of foreign language teachers (at least in the areas of ESL and GFL) have received pedagogically appropriate training with regard to teaching pronunciation due to deficient training opportunities in university programs and continuing education as well as limited research publications in comparison to other areas of language teaching (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001; Hirschfeld, 2003; Macdonald, 2002). Consequently, pronunciation training in L2 classes appears to have noticeable limitations, mainly pertaining to a lack of integration of pronunciation in communicative contexts, a strong focus on segmental elements rather than a balance of segmentals and suprasegmentals, as well as insufficient training material for different learner needs and interests (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001; Hirschfeld, 2003). Macdonald (2002) points out that teachers also feel uncomfortable with assessing and monitoring student pronun-

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<sup>6</sup> In these studies, the teaching material investigated was geared to either ESL or GFL contexts.

ciation in class so that “students’ pronunciation is only really noticed when the teacher cannot understand them; otherwise it is largely neglected” (p. 8).

The achievements and desiderata in the area of teaching pronunciation are to be considered in the accounts of participants in this study. Although students may retrospectively select only salient memories and may not be able to comprehensively reflect on the pronunciation training they received, their recollections and beliefs about pronunciation are nevertheless influenced by their in-class experience in this area. It will thus be of interest to investigate what students remember from their pronunciation training in class and how their memories relate to their definitions of learning goals and their abilities to use the foreign language in the study-abroad setting. The results will then inform suggestions for modifying pronunciation instructions.

## 2.5 Conclusions

As outlined in this chapter, the pronunciation learning process is influenced by a multitude of highly individual learning factors, resulting in very different learning outcomes. Researching learners’ pronunciation development solely as a matter of segmental and suprasegmental changes, which could be captured in the moment of a laboratory recording, does therefore not suffice, as the influence of learning factors other than linguistic interferences and possibly learners’ age can hardly be assessed.

Yet, in the context of studying abroad, which constitutes a major learning factor in the present study, quantitative research designs and narrow understandings of pronunciation predominate. The reviewed research suggests that studying abroad does not automatically result in pronunciation improvements and considers several, mostly external learning factors, which may be responsible for individual learner differences. In order to gain a

deeper understanding of the complex learning process, exploring internal learning dimensions may add important information. The dimensions explored in this study are learners' identity constructions and beliefs about pronunciation, which appear to be strongly interrelated with the pronunciation learning process, as explained in chapters 3 and 4. In order to investigate such factors in depth, etic-quantitative research methods may only provide superficial information, necessitating the use of emic-qualitative designs (see chapter 5).

Through investigating learners' beliefs, I will research their conceptualization of pronunciation, which may be largely informed by their orientation to either intelligibility or nativeness. This orientation may in turn influence their sense of self as a learner and speaker of the L2. Considering that pronunciation training may still be influenced by isolated imitation practice, this study aims to use the intercultural-speaker and CLA models to establish identity-supporting, holistic learning goals and teaching recommendations.



### **3 Identity and Language Learning**

This chapter discusses the concept of identity and its interrelation with the language learning process. After briefly outlining major developments in research, I will define post-structuralist conceptualizations of identity, which underlie the present study. By drawing in particular on the notions of “communities of practice” and “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991), my discussion of poststructuralism will lead to an attempt to conceptualize identity in intercultural encounters and to connect it with the intercultural-speaker model. Subsequently, I will reflect on research findings in the areas of identity and pronunciation as well as identity and study abroad, in order to connect the theoretical discussion with empirical insight relevant to this study’s research interests.

#### **3.1 Early Research on Identity in SLA Contexts**

Research in the field of SLA has a long tradition of considering identity aspects, as Block (2007) outlines: “[T]aking place from the 1960s onwards [SLA research] also carries ... references to the concept of identity, even if in many cases the term was never used” (p. 47). Important and often-cited studies that can be counted as precursors to current research on identity in SLA contexts are, for example, Lambert’s (1967) research on motivation in English/French bilinguals in Canada, Schumann’s (1978) Acculturation Model focusing on the influence of social variables on migrant workers’ L2 learning success, Brown’s (1980) model of culture shock and its dependence on affective and sociocultural variables, and Bailey’s (1983) diary study on competitiveness and anxiety in foreign language learning. As opposed to more recent conceptualizations, these early studies tend to frame identity “as a fixed and measurable phenomenon, clearly relatable to successful or unsuccessful language learning experiences” (Block, 2007, p. 72), thus marking a structuralist and

normative approach in both the theoretical understanding and empirical investigation of identity.

In an attempt to classify approaches that explicitly study identity from a linguistic perspective, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004a) outline the early eras of socio-psychological and interactional research, followed by more recent poststructuralist conceptualizations. Socio-psychological approaches draw on Tajfel's (1974, 1981) theory of social identity and/or Berry's (1980) theory of acculturation, explaining the negotiation of identities in second language learning, language use, and language contact outcomes through group memberships. This approach subsequently has been criticized for its assumption of a one-to-one correlation between language and ethnic identity, for the way it essentializes identities, and for a monolingual and monocultural bias, "which conceives of individuals as members of homogenous, uniform, and bounded ethnolinguistic communities and obscures hybrid identities and complex linguistic repertoires of bi- and multilingual living in a contemporary global world" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004a, p. 5).

Early interactional approaches to linguistic identity, such as those utilized by Gumperz (1982) as well as by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), concentrate on negotiation of identities through code-switching and language choice. Although these early interactional approaches moved beyond the socio-psychological ones by viewing identities as fluid and constructed in linguistic and social interaction, they have been criticized for

their use of an untheorized concept of identity to explain language practices, for their failure to account for the possibility of speakers' identity construction using language resources that do not 'belong' to them ... and for ignoring the fact that identity is not the only reason for code-switching. (Jenkins, 2007, p. 200)

The present study, however, attempts to investigate learner identities, examining how such identities are reflected in learner beliefs and in narrated learning behaviours. Specifically, I aim to explore how the construction and negotiation of identity facets in the study-abroad environment are interrelated with learner beliefs about language and pronunciation learning. To this end, I turn to poststructuralist approaches, which recognize the uncertainty, instability, and contestability of identities in connection with power relations in different social settings, allowing to consider the specifics and challenges that learners face when crossing borders and immersing themselves in L2-mediated environments.

### 3.2 Poststructuralist Conceptualizations of ‘Identities’

In recent years, many social scientists, including applied linguists, have pursued poststructuralist approaches to the study of identity, leading to a number of monographs and edited volumes (e.g., Bayley & Schechter, 2003; Block, 2006, 2007; Jackson, 2008; Jenkins, 2007; Norton, 2000; Omoniyi & White, 2006a; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004b). Despite its vagueness, the term “poststructuralism” denotes the surpassing of structuralism and its search for universal and invariant laws of humanity that are operative at all levels of human life (Block, 2007). Poststructuralists therefore move beyond the search for universals “to more nuanced, multileveled and ultimately, complicated framings of the world around us” (Block, 2007, p. 13).

The discussion of poststructuralist approaches to identity is often traced back to Chris Weedon (1987, 1997) and her notion of “subjectivity”, which describes the individual’s sense of self and perceived relation to the world as “precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). Poststructuralists thus assume that identities are not fixed characteristics, but

rather “socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions and language” (Block, 2007, p. 27), in order to maintain sense, balance, and coherence in their lives. The way an individual speaks and sounds therefore forms an important avenue through which aspects of identity can be constructed, negotiated, and ascribed in interaction:

By their accent, their vocabulary, their discourse patterns, speakers identify themselves and are identified as members of this or that speech and discourse community. From this membership, they draw personal strength and pride, as well as a sense of social importance and historical continuity from using the same language as the group they belong to. (Kramsch, 1998b, p. 65f.)

In so doing, individuals are said to constantly reconcile aspects of their current identities with their accumulated pasts, all with certain anticipations of future events in mind.

Based on the variety of groups an individual may claim allegiance to, a person’s linguistic and cultural identity constructions are fluid, complex, and multilayered. Post-structuralists thus often refer to identity in its plural form, ‘identities’, in order to avoid static descriptions. Blommaert (2005) also emphasizes the importance of considering and differentiating between self-constructed subject positions and those imposed on the individual by others: “Whenever we talk about identity, we need to differentiate between ‘achieved’ or ‘inhabited’ identity – the identity people themselves articulate or claim – and ‘ascribed’ or ‘attributed’ identity – the identity given to someone by someone else” (p. 238). Omoniyi and White (2006b) therefore emphasize that, from a poststructuralist perspective, identity is not fixed; it is instead constructed within established, but varying contexts that are moderated and defined by intervening social variables and expressed through language(s). Additionally, identity is a salient factor in every communicative context

whether given prominence or not, and it therefore informs social relationships and the communicative exchanges that characterize them. Managing the construction of different identity aspects in response to intervening social factors and ascriptions by others in a given context thus causes a dynamic and ambivalent process, which is liable to conflict.

The process of constructing and negotiating identity is hence perceived as “embedded in larger social, political, economic, and cultural systems” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004a, p. 10), allowing for unequal power relations manifested in ethnicity, race, nationality, social class, gender, language repertoire, and other social variables. Consequently, individuals do not just develop their senses of self, but also “social environments provide conditions and impose constraints whilst individuals act on those same social environments, continuously altering and reshaping them” (Block, 2008, p. 143). Individual agency in the construction of identities is therefore both constitutive of and constituted by social structure, while being negotiated through ongoing narratives involving self-reflection and self-thematisation (Straub, Zielke, & Werbik, 2005, as cited in Chik & Benson, 2008).

Subdivided into economic, cultural, and social capital, Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of “symbolic capital” (1977, 1984, 1991) offers a way to conceptualize the creation of power relations through social variables and to analyze the influence of such relations on individual identities and linguistic practices. First, economic capital describes an individual’s financial wealth and income as well as his or her property and assets. Secondly, cultural capital refers to valuable and legitimate cultural resources and assets, which exist as dispositions and behavioural artefacts (such as attitude and accent), associations with particular artefacts (such as books and qualifications), and connections to certain institutions (such as universities and professional associations). In this context, linguistic proficiency,

including the aspect of pronunciation forms an important part of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), hence facilitating an individual's recognition by a socially dominant group. Language thus works as a significant mechanism of power, as "varieties in language use (e.g., code-mixing, accents, vocabulary choices) tend to reinforce the position of each interlocutor" (Jackson, 2008, p. 26) in a particular social space. Thirdly, social capital manifests itself in institutional contacts, concerning the connections to and relationships with less, equally, or more powerful others. The individual gains symbolic capital in the form of prestige and reputation when the different kinds of capital are perceived and recognized as legitimate by a dominant group or institution (Bourdieu, 1991). Due to its dependence on legitimation, symbolic capital is distributed unequally within any given speech community.

Bonny Norton (2000; Norton Peirce, 1995) discusses the implications of poststructuralist identity conceptualizations on the language learning process. Drawing on Weedon's (1987, 1997) notion of subjectivity and Bourdieu's (1977) notion of cultural capital, Norton (2000) re-conceptualizes the interrelationship between language learning, motivation, and identity, arguing that

the learning of a second language is not simply a skill that is acquired with hard work and dedication, but a complex social practice that engages the identities of language learners in ways that have received little attention in the field of SLA. (p. 132)

Norton views language learners as having a complex social history and multiple desires that are constantly changing in response to situational factors. When learners engage in the process of learning and using a foreign language, they are not merely exchanging information, but also 'investing' in the acquisition of symbolic and material resources that will increase the value of their cultural capital. In this way, learners constantly organize and

reorganize their senses of self and relations to the social world: “Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space” (Norton, 2000, p. 11).

The notions of capital and investment may help in analyzing power issues, shifting motivations, and identity conflicts in the narratives of students studying abroad. Also, these concepts require a thorough analysis of learners’ contacts to the target language and its speakers, which may shape their opportunities of language practice, willingness to ‘invest’ in new social networks, and their perceived learning progress. This need will be addressed in the following section.

### 3.3 Conceptualizing Identity in Intercultural Encounters

In order to describe the nature of learning and the sources of potential learning obstacles in intercultural encounters more closely, I draw on Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger’s (1991; Wenger, 1998) notions of “communities of practice” and “legitimate peripheral participation”. Building on individuals’ acceptance into particular social groups, these concepts investigate the relationship between informal/situated learning, the development of knowledge/skills, and identity (re-) construction in social contexts.

The main premise of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory is the understanding of learning as a situated activity and as “an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p. 31) involving the individual’s introduction to and participation at multiple levels in a given community of practice. Such a community is conceptualized as “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 464). In line

with poststructuralist conceptualizations of identities, communities of practice should, however, not be treated as bound and stable entities, but instead as dynamic constructs entailing multiple memberships and inner diversity, conflicts, and instability (Jackson, 2008).

By participating in the practices of a particular community, a newcomer becomes gradually acquainted with its values, beliefs, and modes of interaction. Through this engagement in social practice, which Lave and Wenger (1991) call “legitimate peripheral participation” and which entails learning as an integral constituent, newcomers may move from “peripheral participation” to “full participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The access to learning opportunities, however, is restricted by certain “rules of entry” (Block, 2007, p. 25), conveying and sustaining power relationships within communities of practice. In a supportive environment, learners are offered exposure to the “mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and their negotiation of enterprise, and to their repertoire in use” (Wenger, 1998, p. 100). Yet, newcomers are only given the chance to move from peripheral to full participation if they receive enough legitimacy to be positioned as potential members. In order to gain legitimacy, the ‘apprentice’ needs to acquire sufficient and appropriate capital (see section 3.2), in the form of, for example, appropriate accents, attitudes, skills, and qualifications. Jackson (2008) thus explains that

moving towards full membership in a CoP [community of practice] not only involves a significant amount of time, effort, and motivation on the part of the newcomer, but the willingness of the hosts (the ‘core’ members) to share their expertise and resources with them. (p. 44)

Due to these measures of control and selection, legitimate peripherality may not necessarily result in legitimate participation because “the social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning” (Lave &



Wenger, 1991, p. 98). This way, the constricted access protects the existing community from certain risks that the acceptance of newcomers involves, because “granting legitimate participation to newcomers with their own viewpoints introduces into any community of practice all the tensions of the continuity-displacement contradiction” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 116). Communities of practice are thus constantly shaped and reshaped under the influence of interacting members and newcomers, creating the need to protect the foundations of their practices to some extent.

In this context, building understanding of the shared practices of multiple communities requires the individual to construct corresponding identity facets “that can include these different meanings and forms of participation into one nexus” (Wenger, 1998, p. 160). According to their momentary social environments and levels of inclusion in these environments, individuals are thus said to constantly negotiate identity aspects in relation to these communities, both as a form of future investment and as a reaction to present requirements in the interaction with full participants. In the context of L2 learners studying abroad, gaining access to new communities of practice may thus present substantial identity challenges because “when central participation is the subjective intention motivating learning, changes in cultural identity and social relations are inevitably part of the process” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 112).

In intercultural encounters, the ability to cope with such identity challenges is an integral and desirable aspect of the learning process, as it requires learners to gradually understand the underlying practices of L2-mediated communities and decenter from their own values, beliefs, and behaviours in order to participate in mutual endeavours. Gaining access to such communities thus requires and supports the development of intercultural-speaker qualities (see section 2.3.3), which are closely connected with the ability to dy-

namically restructure identity facets according to situational demands. As a result of being confronted with various cultural and linguistic modes of interaction, students may develop hybrid “third-place” identities (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993), marking “an in-between position that challenges them to redefine their relationship both to themselves and to the foreign language and culture” (Kramsch, 1998, as cited in Allen, Dristas, & Mills, 2007). In this process of ‘investing’ in their identities, learners may use pronunciation as a tool to outwardly position themselves and negotiate identity aspects in relation to communities they desire or refuse to access. Yet, aside from Nicole Marx’s self-account (2002; see section 3.6), the nature of this negotiation process via pronunciation is widely unexplored due to the limited understanding of and research interest in pronunciation development in study-abroad contexts (see section 2.2). It is therefore of interest to this study to investigate which constraints and opportunities study-abroad students may experience in entering new communities of practice, how this experience may influence their identity constructions, and how they handle these challenges with tools such as pronunciation.

In connection with the prevalence of native-speaker standards in foreign language instruction (see section 2.3.1), it is particularly interesting to examine how sojourners handle identity constructions in relation to perceived linguistic and social norms of interaction, which ostensibly more powerful members of the native-speaker community tend to impose on the less powerful non-native ‘newcomers’. Research results suggest that study-abroad students may feel sidelined and disempowered due to experiencing difficulties in engaging with native speakers, thus seriously inhibiting their learning progress (e.g., Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2008; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; McKinlay, Pattinson, & Gross, 1996; Nesdale & Todd, 1993; Stangor, Klaus, Stroebe, & Hewstone, 1996; Wilkinson, 1998). As outlined in section 3.5, learners’ inability to overcome such difficulties

and adjust to common practices may then result in frustration, resistance, and elevation of, for example, nationalistic or gendered subject positions. It will thus be of interest to the present study to analyze which role pronunciation plays in this process of reconciling familiar aspects of language use and identity construction with those required within new communities, and how learners' (in-) ability to critically reflect on normativity, variability, and self (see section 2.3.4) influences their access to new communities of practice.

The next section discusses important research on identity issues in the language learning process, including studies that adopt a poststructuralist perspective as well as significant precursory works. According to the focus of the present study, the research selected is concerned with identity in pronunciation learning and/or study-abroad contexts, despite the general wealth of recent studies conducted in the field of identity in foreign language learning (e.g., Belz, 2002; Block, 2008; Lantolf & Genung, 2003; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001) and adult migration contexts (e.g., Block, 2006; Goldstein, 1996; Norton, 2000; Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001).

### 3.4 Identity and Pronunciation

With the emergence of identity issues in SLA research, scholars have become aware of “the importance of studying how individuals use language to display their identities and group memberships in particular sociocultural settings” (Jackson, 2008, p. 37). Particularly, the area of L1 pronunciation attracted researchers' attention, resulting in several studies revealing the influence of certain identity facets on dialect adoption and use (e.g., Kramaræ, 1981; Labov, 1966, 1970, 1972a; Scherer & Giles, 1979; Wolfram, 1969).

The first major investigation of the relationship between identity aspects and the acquisition of L2 pronunciation was conducted by the American scholar Alexander Guiora

and his colleagues from the late 1960s until early 1980s. Guiora attempted to explain the connection between the acquisition of native-like L2 pronunciation and certain personality constructs, particularly empathy, in order to provide new thoughts on the controversy about the CPH (see section 2.1). Both pronunciation skills and empathy were seen as “profoundly influenced by the same underlying processes, namely, permeability of ego boundaries” (Guiora, Paluszny, Beit-Hallahmi, Catford, Cooley, & Dull, 1975, p. 45).

Following Freud’s theory of *The Ego and the Id* (1923/1990), Block (2007) summarizes Guiora’s understanding of the ego as follows: “the ego develops as the child becomes conscious of a world outside his/her own body, acting as a voice of reason and deliberation to control the base instincts associated with the ‘id’” (p. 52). Guiora thus views children as having a weak language ego and high ego permeability, which means their identities are less threatened when encountering an additional language, resulting in more openness toward language input. Adolescents and adults, on the other hand, appear to be different in their ability to acquire authentic L2 pronunciation. Their personalities are believed to be concluded, sharply restricting the flexibility of their ego boundaries. Guiora et al. (1975) outline the consequences of this development on language learning as follows:

With pronunciation viewed as the core of language ego, and as the most critical contribution of language ego to self-representation, we see that the early flexibility of ego boundaries is reflected in the ease of assimilating native-like pronunciation by young children; the later reduced flexibility is reflected in the reduction of this ability in adults. (p. 46)

To link identity even more explicitly with adults’ difficulties to reduce L1 influence on L2 pronunciation, Guiora et al. (1975) explain that “it becomes impossible to lose totally one

of the most salient identifying characteristics of any human being, a means by which we identify ourselves and are identified by others, namely, the way we sound” (p. 46).

As the key to success in language learning and ego penetration, Guiora and his colleagues introduce the concept of empathy, assuming that the more empathetic a person is, the more likely it is that this person will acquire authentic L2 pronunciation, successfully shedding native pronunciation habits. In order to manipulate empathy and increase the permeability of ego boundaries, Guiora and his associates administered different doses of alcohol (Guiora, Beit-Hallahmi, Brannon, Dull, & Scovel, 1972) and valium (Guiora, Acton, Erard, & Strickland, 1980) to relax their participants. Both groups of participants, students of Thai at an American university, were asked to take a Thai pronunciation test after having consumed alcohol and valium respectively. Whereas the researchers did not find a direct correlation between the test performance and the dose of valium, students who had ingested alcohol in the medium range (1.5 ounces) outperformed those who had consumed no alcohol or more than 1.5 ounces. Guiora et al. (1972) concluded that small amounts of alcohol lower inhibitions and increase empathy and ego permeability, which results in better L2 pronunciation. This finding led Guiora, Buchtel, Herold, Homburg, and Woken (1983) to propose the Affective Variable Hypothesis, stating that “variation in a given personality template will have a demonstrable effect on an important facet of second-language behavior” (p. 4), which in this case is pronunciation. Applied to the context of studying abroad, this hypothesis may explain potential changes in learners’ beliefs about L2 pronunciation as a result of variations in their senses of self caused by the new cultural, linguistic, and social environment.

The work of Guiora and his colleagues is remarkable in the sense that the strongly intertwined relationship between L2 pronunciation and identity first received attention and

empirical investigation. However, as Block (2007) cautions, this work has also received much criticism, suggesting, for example, that pronunciation might have improved because of relaxed muscles and not because of enhanced ego permeability. Block (2007) adds that Guiora “was too dependent on questionnaires and controlled experiments to engage in a more exploratory approach to identity” (p. 53). Since Guiora did neither take any social, cultural, or other contextual factors into account nor the influence of interaction on identity constructions, he could not show how individuals construct their identities through pronunciation in response to their environments.

At the end of the 1980s another group of researchers led by Jane Zuengler investigated the relationship between identity issues, L2 pronunciation, interlanguage development, and the influence of certain contextual factors (Dowd, Zuengler, & Berkowitz, 1990; Zuengler, 1988, 1989). Zuengler’s findings mark a small departure from the narrowly focused approach pursued by Guiora and colleagues. By drawing on Labov’s notion of “stereotypes” (1970, 1972a) and Trudgill’s (1981) extension of this concept, Zuengler (1988) showed that speakers’ ethnic identities may be reflected by the use of certain phonetic variants. Her native Spanish-speaking participants focused particularly on changing the /r/ when mimicking American English speakers, displaying a tacit awareness of the function of different allophones of /r/ as social markers for portraying different ethnic identities. Thus, “the results of this study add to our knowledge of how perceived identity can be tied to specific features of a language, whether the native or the target” (Zuengler, 1988, p. 47). In their review of different studies on L2 pronunciation, Pennington and Richards (1986) support this finding by emphasizing that “phonological features are among the most salient linguistic dimensions used by speakers to create a sense of personal identity” (p. 215). They state that speakers may actively choose to either retain certain L1 features of their

speech as markers of a specific ethnic or group identity or may adopt certain pronunciation features of the L2 in order to express their wish to integrate into an L2 community.

In a more recent investigation of L2 pronunciation and its connection with ethnic group affiliation and identity, Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005) present the results of two studies with French and Chinese native speakers respectively who were learning English in Quebec. With the help of stimulus tapes and questionnaires, Gatbonton and her colleagues revealed that L2 learners treated their peers' pronunciation as an indicator for the degree of the ethnic affiliation of these peers, emphasizing the importance of pronunciation in the ascription of a speaker's identity. It appeared that the more native-like L2 learners sound, the less their peers perceive them as loyal to their L1 home group – independent of ethnic backgrounds and socio-political contexts. Learners thus have to find a balance between the need to become communicatively intelligible and efficient in their L2 pronunciation, and the construction of certain facets of their identity, marking loyalty versus disloyalty toward their L1 versus L2 group. The researchers conclude that:

Language learners are typically subject to social forces arising from both the target- and home-language groups, pressuring them to constantly renegotiate their identities as members of both groups. In doing so, learners may either enhance or suppress one of their two identities by manipulating their language, in particular, their pronunciation of both languages. (p. 492)

These two studies of Gatbonton and her colleagues were conducted in the realm of foreign language learning in the L1 environment (French learners of English in Quebec) and second language learning in target-language communities (Chinese students of English at two Montréal universities, enrolled in degree programs instructed in English). Hence, the specific connection between learners' attitudes and beliefs toward the L2 pro-

nunciation and their identity work in study-abroad programs is yet to be investigated and forms the main interest of the present study. Moreover, studies conducted at the interface of L2 pronunciation and identity construction rely predominately on the use of questionnaires and laboratory environments to elicit learner perspectives and experiences. These out-of-context and snapshot-like procedures, however, can only provide very limited insights into learners' experiences and perspectives, and thus reveal a rather simplified understanding of their multilayered and complex identities.

A study on identity and L2 pronunciation that could overcome some of these limitations has been conducted by Lybeck (2002) on nine American women who were living in Norway for periods ranging from one to almost three years. Drawing on Schumann's (1978) acculturation model and Milroy's (1987) social network theory, Lybeck measured her participants' acculturation in terms of their success in establishing social exchange networks in the host environment. Lybeck explains her approach as follows: "Because the acculturation model is based on learner identity, and Guiora et al. (1972) have argued that learner pronunciation is most closely tied to learner identity, it seems probable that pronunciation is most likely to be affected by acculturation" (p. 175). The data collection consisted of three interviews, conducted in Norwegian and English over a six-month interval. The interviews were then qualitatively analyzed for information about participants' social networks and their attitudes toward Norwegians. Norwegian parts of the interviews were also analyzed for native-likeness of participants' L2 pronunciation by applying both a global rating and an evaluation of the /r/ realization. Lybeck found that:

Those learners who were engaged in supportive exchange networks within the target culture were provided meaningful frameworks within which they could access and acquire both linguistically and culturally appropriate behaviors, effectively re-



ducing their cultural distance, whereas those who were left outside of these networks or whose needs were not met by target-culture networks did not. (p. 184)

Therefore, those participants who were successfully integrated into Norwegian communities also tended to use the Norwegian /r/ frequently and have high pronunciation accuracy, which according to Lybeck reflected their identification with and low distance from Norwegian culture.

Even though Lybeck's (2002) study takes participants' own perspectives into account and employs a longitudinal, individual-based, and partly qualitative research design, there are still serious limitations both in her and the other aforementioned studies. First, most studies investigating the relationship between identity and L2 pronunciation remain rather unspecific in terms of their understanding and theoretical framing of the concept 'identity', resulting in the partial treatment of identity as a static, narrow, and single-layered concept. The unreflecting treatment of identity may be part of the reason why Lybeck employed Guiora et al.'s (1972) questionably established connection between identity and pronunciation as the basis of her work, without engaging in a critical discussion of its value and limitations. Secondly, the prevalent goal of L2 pronunciation learning appears to be the rather problematic native-speaker ideal, providing the standard for judging learners' success or difficulty in identifying with and integrating into L2-mediated communities of practice. Conceptualizing identity from a poststructuralist perspective, however, requires transferring the characteristics of this phenomenon to the study of pronunciation as well. Individual pronunciation should also be viewed as a phenomenon that is dynamic, multilayered, dependent on social context, and influenced by power relations, negotiation, and agency. Investigations in the appropriation of and beliefs about pronunciation therefore need to move beyond context-free (i.e., laboratory-like), generalising (i.e.,

quantitative), and superficial (i.e., questionnaire-based) research designs. However, the connection between learners' identity constructions and their stances toward pronunciation has not yet been explored with a theoretical and methodological approach that considers the contextuality, individuality, and complexity of learning processes. The existing results, although clearly suggesting that pronunciation and identity are intricately linked, draw a very narrow picture of both constructs, mainly confirming intuitive assumptions.

My own study therefore attempts to qualitatively research individual learner beliefs about pronunciation from an emic perspective (see chapter 5). The appropriation of pronunciation, which has been researched in the past mainly through analyses of learners' segmental and suprasegmental developments (see above and section 2.2), will thus be investigated from participants' own perspectives through an analysis of their narratives. In applying a poststructuralist framework to the study of pronunciation and identity, I aim to contribute new insights to the complexity and idiosyncrasy of the learning process, moving beyond the limitations of studies in the area of pronunciation and identity development. As a first step in this direction, Marx (2002) published an analysis of her own experience as an exchange student, which will be discussed in detail in section 3.6. Before tying all three elements of identity, pronunciation, and study abroad together, I will next turn to research on sojourners' identity developments.

### 3.5 Identity in Study-Abroad Research

Considering identity issues only since the mid-1990s, study-abroad research has started gradually to move beyond its narrow perspective of focussing solely on how sojourns affect the linguistic development of students. A growing body of research has begun to take into account the intercultural and identity-related aspects of studying abroad, moving also

from quantitative, etic research approaches to qualitative and partly emic designs, which entail accompanying students over the duration of their sojourns.

Even though several aspects of identity are potentially worth researching, a prominent thread, particularly in research on American study-abroad programs, concerns issues related to gendered subject positions. Isabelli-García (2006), Polanyi (1995), Talburt and Stewart (1999), and Twombly (1995), for example, have investigated cases of sexual harassment in male-female interaction, caused by deviating images of masculinity and femininity between men in the host culture and female study-abroad students. Whereas these studies focus mainly on how such negative experiences influence the L2 learning process, Block (2007) outlines their impact on those women's L2-mediated subject positions. He explains that "women on SA [study abroad] programmes can find their prospects for developing TL [target language]-mediated subject positions constrained and curtailed by the self-imposed limitations on their movement that come as a result of having been sexually harassed by strange men in public" (p. 165). Thus, instead of finding a balance as both learner and user of the L2, these women felt uncomfortable and powerless, often due to the inferior position that was ascribed to them and later became internalized due to their inability to present themselves as equal and powerful interlocutors. It can be assumed that withdrawing from L2-mediated communities of practices naturally limited not only these participants' language learning but also their understanding of and exposure to the host culture, aggravating their tainted perspectives.

Students who experienced negative situations while studying abroad often counteracted the perceived inferior subject position by enhancing other aspects of their identities, such as national facets, in order to revalidate their threatened senses of self. As Block (2007) clarifies, "national identity emerges as a subject position trumping all others when

a student's individual sense of self is thrown into crisis" (p. 170). Even though notions such as the "intercultural speaker" (see section 2.3.3) suggest the possibility of developing at least some degree of intercultural competence in study-abroad situations, many cases rather result in an increased emphasis, elevation, and idealization of national identity aspects. As Wilkinson (1998) underlines, "the confirmation of native identity [is] necessary to enable the students to face the potentially threatening situations of linguistic and cultural difference" (p. 32). As a result, these students often sought contact with their L1 peers and deprived themselves of access to L2-mediated communities of practice, a tendency that appears to limit the development of intercultural competence, for example in the form of intercultural-speaker qualities, thus further creating a spiral of negative and self-fulfilling experiences.

Research investigating U.S. American students going abroad only rarely discovers cases in which participants manage to overcome identity conflicts by opening up to intercultural encounters and learning processes. An exceptional study in this regard is Kinginger's (2004) often-cited, longitudinal, and in-depth case study, in which she accompanies and analyzes the study-abroad experience of her participant Alice. Due to a socially underprivileged background, Alice had to overcome severe obstacles before being able to study French at university and enrol in a study-abroad program. Imagining French language and culture as the missing link between her difficult background and her desire for elegance and sophistication, Alice started her study-abroad year with sheer admiration of everything French. However, her naïve and romanticized approach gradually caused a state of deep frustration in France that she could only overcome when she started to establish informal contacts outside of the university setting, leading to a more stable, informed and balanced perspective toward the French language, culture, and her own sense of self.

Regarding Alice's development as a person and learner of French, Kinginger concludes the following:

Alice's journey thus far has involved negotiation of many facets of her identity: social and linguistic, but also gender and class identity, which are tightly interconnected and have been challenged simultaneously in complex ways over the course of her foreign language learning. Perhaps the difficulty of teasing apart these aspects of identity negotiation stems from the comprehensive nature of Alice's goal. For Alice, becoming a speaker of French is a way of reorienting herself in the world – a 'mission' wherein she summons her own strategic use of personal experience, talent and resources to upgrade her access to cultural capital, become a cultured person, and share her knowledge with others. (p. 240)

In outlining the idiosyncrasies of Alice's language learning process under consideration of her social background, past and present obstacles in life, imaginations of French society and her own 'French' self, as well as her opportunities for participation in different communities of practice, Kinginger draws a fine-grained and holistic picture of identity negotiation at the interface of language learning and study abroad. In providing data from journals, e-mails, letters, and conversations, Kinginger shows that study-abroad learners strive for coherent life narratives, seeking to resolve the conflicts and ambiguities they experience as a result of the geographical, social, and cultural displacement in their new environment. Also, Alice's ability to overcome a severe identity crisis by actively 'investing' in access to communities of practice outside of the given university setting presents an exceptional case in U.S.-based research thus far and underlines the importance of investigating sojourners' social networks as to their influence on identity work, the language learning process, and the development of intercultural competence.

When reviewing study-abroad research that has been conducted in the U.S. context, however, the specifics of American policies of foreign language education need to be considered, as they may have a dominant influence on the way students approach and handle the challenges of their sojourns. As Kinginger (2004) points out, there is little official support for the study of foreign languages due to “a deeply held suspicion toward multilingualism per se” (p. 221). Whereas U.S. immigrants are required to assimilate by giving up their native languages, foreign language learning is reserved for the innocuous Americanized monolingual person. “Within this ideological environment, foreign language learning exists as a marginalized add-on to an elite education fundamentally unconcerned by the potential of foreign language competence to expand learners’ cognitive and social repertoires” (Kinger, 2004, p. 222). Different from the U.S. American approach to foreign language education are policies of European countries as well as those of Canada – the two regions directly related to the present study. Particularly in Europe, the expansion of the ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) program has attracted several research studies. As Block (2007) points out, “however, most studies have either been questionnaire based, providing surveys of changing attitudes over the SA experience, or dealt with the development of intercultural competence without going too far into identity issues” (p. 177).

An exception to this trend is Murphy-Lejeune’s (2002) study, which researches students crossing European borders for the purposes of studying or working abroad. Murphy-Lejeune portrays noticeably the influence of different foreign-language and study-abroad policies as well as border-crossing mentalities on the nature and success of such sojourns, allowing for a comparison between U.S. and inner-European study-abroad experiences (see also Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2009). Although both ERASMUS and U.S. stu-

dents shared similar concerns about spending time abroad, as regards, for example, the L2 competence and access to local communities of practice, European students appeared to be more realistic about the cultural and linguistic challenges often encountered during sojourns. They had already experienced previous encounters with foreign cultures and revealed a general desire to travel to foreign countries, express themselves in foreign languages, and expose themselves to living in foreign environments and relationships.

Thus, in comparison to students from the U.S., these European students “were relatively well equipped to imagine what a study abroad sojourn would involve” (Kinginger, 2009, p. 199). The different starting basis in turn resulted in a higher motivation to gain access to local communities of practice and to overcome initial challenges, hence allowing these participants to form L2-mediated subject positions related to such communities. Therefore, the escape into strengthened nationalistic subject positions based on a limited understanding of the foreign environment cannot be found to the same extent in Murphy-Lejeune’s study. Block (2007) concludes:

There is little in Murphy-Lejeune’s accounts of the kind of awkwardness exhibited by American students. Interestingly there is no mention of conflict, discomfort or confusion related to local norms of heterosexual contact. Although the point is not generally addressed overtly in the US-based literature, there is a sense that on the whole, the American SA participants are relatively unseasoned and even naïve travellers on their first – and quite likely last-ever – extensive sojourn outside the US. (p. 180)

Instead of building on nationalistic subject positions in order to counterbalance experienced threats to their identity constructions, the ERASMUS students in Murphy-Lejeune’s research “embody an emergent pan-European identity as participants in a much larger

pan-European project that sees ever-greater social, political and economic integration across the European Union and the prospects of living and working across European nation state borders” (Block, 2007, p. 180). The stark contrast between the European and U.S. students’ experiences and their L2-mediated subject positions clearly mirror very different foreign language policies. In comparison to the U.S. approach already described, the European Union places great emphasis on the importance of foreign language learning, promoting plurilingualism in response to its cultural and linguistic diversity (Council of Europe, 2001). Nevertheless, there are signs in Murphy-Lejeune’s study suggesting that the increased cross-cultural awareness and intercultural competence may not necessarily last, as going home meant for some of the participants an abrupt but required change in their identity work in order to ‘fit in’ to local communities in their home environment.

Whereas both the United States and Europe have been the focus of several research studies on study abroad, the experiences of Canadian sojourners are relatively unexplored. A number of studies have focused on students, particularly from Asian countries, who study abroad in Canada (e.g., Dion & Dion, 1996; Huxur, Mansfield, Nnazor, Schuetze, & Segawa, 1996; Matsumura, 2001, 2007; Sasaki, 2004, 2007; Warga & Schölmberger, 2007; Wood, 2007; Zheng & Berry, 1991) as well as on inner Canadian exchanges between Anglophone and Francophone provinces (e.g., Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1995). Most of these studies, however, concentrate on different aspects of students’ linguistic improvement and are rather unconcerned with aspects of identity development.

To date there is little research on Canadian students studying abroad, reflecting the comparatively low interest in Canadian study-abroad programs on federal and provincial level. Whereas the U.S.-based independent Institute of International Education supports, oversees and monitors study-abroad programs in the United States in an extensive way,



the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada has only a division dedicated to International Relations, allowing for a relatively limited support for and research on Canadian students' study-abroad activities. In terms of its policies on foreign and second language education, however, Canada differs noticeably from the United States. Built on the values of cultural diversity and equity, Canada largely supports two official languages, minority-language education, and second language learning (Hudon, 2010). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2005), for example, defines student success as the development of mental flexibility and problem-solving skills, a sense of cultural stability and continuity, an understanding of their own cultural and family values, and an awareness of the value of cultural diversity and multiple perspectives. Despite the paucity of research on the study-abroad experience of Canadian students, it can be assumed that Canadians may be more experienced with encountering tolerance toward foreign languages and cultural practices in their everyday lives, perceiving diversity as part of their normality. A sub-goal of this work is therefore to understand and analyze the particularities of Canadian students and their language learning biographies in their influence on handling (identity) challenges in study-abroad situations.

To my knowledge, only one study has investigated an account of a Canadian student studying abroad with regard to identity-related concerns thus far. Since this exceptional account combines the main thematic elements of my own research project, it will be discussed in depth in the following section.

### 3.6 Identity and Pronunciation in Study-Abroad Contexts

The interplay of pronunciation learning and identity constructions in study-abroad settings has to-date been hardly investigated, even though several studies concentrating on two of

these three factors have collected compelling evidence for the importance of researching the role of pronunciation in foreign language learning in more complex arrangements.

Only one study has taken up this aggregate of three factors. In a retrospective first-person account, the Anglophone Canadian researcher Nicole Marx (2002) examined her own experiences of negotiating membership in multiple linguistic, national, and cultural communities encountered during her study-abroad time in Germany and her subsequent stays in Canada and the United States. Based on diary entries and remarks made by interlocutors, Marx describes how she actively manipulated her accent when speaking German and English as a means of mirroring preferred identity constructions. She did this in order to override her status as an exchange student in Germany and to outwardly portray changes of her self-perception within different environments.

Upon her arrival in Germany, Marx felt displacement and loss of aspects of her linguistic and cultural identity because of being perceived as an ‘American’ (as opposed to ‘Canadian’). In an attempt to counteract her ascribed identity, she actively sought access to German language and culture and avoided groups of English-speaking sojourners. More importantly, due to being accepted into host communities, she also started to appropriate alternative accents in her L2 German, exercising agency in establishing more preferred identity facets for herself. Since Marx was not yet able to produce a native German accent, she resorted to her first foreign language, French, which she had started to learn at a young age. In adopting a French accent in her German speech, Marx intended to “cloak... the fact that I was a native speaker of English” (p. 272). In line with this change, she also started to adjust her outer appearance from what she perceived to be Canadian (or American from the assumed perspective of Germans) to the clothing and behavioural practices of German students.

Her active linguistic and cultural ‘remodelling’ and the desire to become part of German-speaking communities of practice was accompanied by the decision to prolong her stay in the host country from six months to a full year, and then finally to three years. The intent to immerse herself longer in the L2 culture and language also increased her wish to be rated as a competent speaker of German and to overcome the foreigner status. Marx noticed that “after approximately one year in the L2 setting, I began consciously to attempt to achieve a German native speaker accent” (p. 272), which also included the adoption of colloquialisms and dialect forms. Interestingly, at about the same time she started to perceive difficulties in speaking and writing in her L1 English – a tendency that even increased over time.

After having spent more than three years in Germany, Marx finally returned to Canada. By then, she found that her English pronunciation exhibited both British and German influences, which she interprets as the consequence of attempting over a long time to cloak her Canadian/American background for the purpose of distinguishing her current self-conception from prior identity constructions. Marx explains that

this shift may have in part been due to the fact that I had constructed a new C2 [second-culture] identity, one which contained labels ascribed to me by interlocutors ... Having assumed the identity of a non-native in the C2, it becomes difficult to shed the role of foreigner, now integral to one’s conception of self, upon return to the C1 [first culture]. (p. 274f.)

Therefore, the appropriation of foreign-language pronunciation features in her Canadian English outwardly conveyed changes in her inner self to members of her L1 culture, emphasizing that her ‘old identity’ had been influenced by the acquisition of new identity aspects. She eventually resolved this struggle of aligning her past experiences with her

present by subsequently studying abroad in the United States. This stay brought Marx closer to her Canadian culture and language, and she realized that “English had, once again, become a language with which I could identify and which I enjoyed writing and conversing in. In effect, I returned to being a native Canadian and moved psychologically away from the C2” (p. 276). Interestingly enough, she returned to work in Germany after only five months in North America, casting partial doubt on the interpretation of her own experience.

In addressing her difficulty in fully attaining a native German accent (despite her strong desire to do so), Marx concludes that her achievement may be labelled “multi-competence” (Cook, 1999). Without drawing on native-speaker ideologies, this term reflects both her successful participation in and acceptance by the host community as well as the complex interrelationship between her first and second languages, resulting in reciprocal influences. Marx interprets her continuous shifts in accents in both her L1 and L2 as part of her multicompetence, mirroring a process of “self-translation” (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Pavlenko and Lantolf’s metaphor refers to the reconstruction of identities that “[entails] a phase of continuous loss and only later an overlapping second phase of gain and reconstruction” (p. 162). Through this process, Marx believes to have reconciled past and present identities into an overarching unification of self. She proposes that “we become multicompetent but ‘imperfect’ speakers of both the L1 and L2, displaying foreign accents in both languages which reflect the omnipresent foreign aspects of our selves and our identities” (p. 278).

In many respects, Marx’s study serves as an exemplar for my own research project. To some degree, she resembles several participants of the present study, being an Anglophone Canadian study-abroad student who studied French as the first foreign language

before starting to learn a second foreign language by the end of high school or beginning of university. Furthermore, not only do the involved geographical regions equal my own project, but so too do the main factors investigated relate to my research interests. Additionally, Marx adopts a poststructuralist approach to the study of identity and its reflection on pronunciation, resulting in the methodological choice of a qualitative-interpretative frame. However, due to its single-case design, this study presents limited insight. The first-person account cannot avoid a high amount of subjectivity in the perception and interpretation of experience, since researcher and subject are the same person. It may even appear possible that Marx adjusted – consciously or unconsciously – her memories of studying abroad to the theoretical concepts, which she found useful in making sense of her experience. My study will thus draw on and expand Marx’s accounts, as explained below.

### 3.7 Conclusions

This study is based on poststructuralist conceptualizations of identity, which allow for the investigation of sojourners’ subject positions in their dynamic, instable, and conflict-prone natures. Specifically, I aim to employ the notions of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation in order to research students’ access to and their investment in learning opportunities within the study-abroad environment, as well as the interrelation between their learning and identity work. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notions are particularly suitable because they allow for connections with the intercultural-speaker and CLA model, outlined in chapter 2. In critically reflecting on their preconceived notions, values, and beliefs, which may include identity-inhibiting learning objectives, sojourners may be able to build identity aspects in correspondence to communities they wish to access, promoting their language and intercultural learning. It is therefore of interest to this study to

research learners' beliefs about language and especially pronunciation in relation to their ability and willingness to adjust to new L2 communities and benefit from the sojourn.

In this respect, several studies (see section 3.4) investigated the relationship between speakers' identities and their beliefs about or appropriation of pronunciation. Although their findings evince the close connection between identity and pronunciation, the limitations in the conceptualization and research of pronunciation as discussed in chapter 2 also apply to the studies reviewed above. Specifically, poststructuralist ideas have not yet expanded into research on pronunciation and identity due to the dominance of quantitative, etic investigations in the latter. Based on insights gained from studies on learners' identities and study-abroad experiences, however, it can be assumed that identity conflicts, which are a salient factor of many sojourns, are interrelated with learners' pronunciation and may influence their learning processes. It is therefore necessary to move beyond phonetic analyses when researching the relationship between pronunciation and identity and to adopt an emic, qualitative research design. Only then can deeper insights in the complexity and idiosyncrasy of the learning process be gained, as Marx's (2002) account suggests. In comparison to her partially similar study, I intend to broaden the scope of researching the aggregate of pronunciation and identity issues in study-abroad contexts. I will increase the number of and variability among participants and adopt a wider theoretical and methodological frame to the interpretation of data.

Whereas two parts of the theoretical foundation have been outlined in chapter 2 and 3, the next chapter will be dedicated to learner beliefs and their connection with identity, study abroad, and pronunciation. Learner beliefs constitute the third major concept of my research and respond to the need for both introspective and retrospective data, allowing for in-depth insight into participants' perspectives and identity constructions.

#### 4 Learner Beliefs

Since the present study aims at researching learner perspectives and self-constructions in the process of studying abroad and learning L2 pronunciation, the following sections will survey theoretical understandings and methodological research approaches in the area of learner beliefs. After outlining the role of learner beliefs in SLA research, I will then define the concept and explain its interrelationship with the learning process and the learner's sense of self. Subsequently, a classification of different approaches to researching learner beliefs will be introduced and discussed, which will then lead to an outline of major research results in the areas of learner beliefs and pronunciation, as well as learner beliefs and study abroad, in accordance with my research interests.

##### 4.1 Learner Beliefs in Language Learning Processes

Research on the nature and effects of learner beliefs on foreign language learning constitutes a relatively young field in Applied Linguistics, which has been addressed only since the mid-1980s (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003a). As much of the research conducted in the twentieth century was more concerned with problems of language teaching than aspects of language learning, for several decades the learner remained largely invisible beneath form- and structure-related research (Benson, 2005). However, since the late 1950s, the growing influence of social psychology, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics on foreign language teaching made researchers increasingly aware of “the diversity among and within the populations of learners” (Benson, 2005, p. 7). By the late 1970s, *learner-centeredness* constituted a key concept in foreign language teaching, indicating that research in SLA has shifted from teacher-directed instruction to student-centered learning. In contrast to earlier research, scholars gradually have recognized “that learners are indi-

viduals and that their individuality may have significant consequences for their learning” (Benson, 2005, p. 5). This shift in research accounts for individually diverse approaches to language learning, with researchers criticizing the tendency to treat variability in language learning as secondary to universal characteristics of the cognitive learning process, and thus forming a noticeable body of work on individual learner difference as Larsen-Freeman (2001) indicates.

Considered one area of individual learner difference, learner beliefs have strongly gained research interest within Applied Linguistics, besides other (socio-) psychological factors, such as language aptitude, learning style, age, and motivation (Ellis, 2003). Initially, the interest toward learner beliefs sprang from questions about “how more successful learners approached language learning tasks and the facilitating strategies they brought to the process of learning a language” (White, 2008, p. 121). These early studies centered on the idea that research could quantitatively identify, describe and classify the beliefs, activities and practices of ‘good language learners’ (Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978), in order to help less successful students with particular teaching techniques by changing their ‘erroneous’ beliefs. Yet, more recent studies increasingly recognize the complex nature of such beliefs, considering how the latter “are constructed in everyday contexts, and how they may be modified or transformed or come into play in different social contexts” (White, 2008, p. 127).

With this shift in focus comes the understanding that learner beliefs are not merely metacognitive constructs or “opinions and ideas that learners ... have about the task of learning a second/foreign language” (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003a, p. 1). Instead of conceiving of beliefs as universal and stable learner characteristics, recent research emphasizes their highly individual, interdependent, complex, and dynamic natures (Bernat, 2006; Kal-



lenbach, 1996; White, 2008). Learner beliefs are social constructs arising from individual processes of learning and socialization, and are reproduced, modified, and creatively employed according to situational needs (Kallenbach, 1996). They are the result of numerous factors shaping one's thinking and belief formation, often related to learners' identities, the nature of languages and language learning, and contexts of language learning and use. As Kallenbach (1996) emphasizes: "Subjektive Theorien stehen ... in engem Bezug zu der Lebenspraxis, aus der heraus sie rekonstruiert werden, und lassen sich deshalb an diese rückbinden; sie integrieren kognitive, affektive und interaktive Aspekte ..." (p. 18) (see Appendix A.1 for the translations of all German text passages of this chapter).

In line with the constructivist conceptualization of beliefs, my understanding of this concept is based on Woods' (1996, 2003) definition of and differentiation between beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge (which he refers to as 'BAK'). Woods (2003) conceives of knowledge and beliefs as two extremes on a spectrum, "with the more publicly accepted, factual, demonstrable, and objectively defined elements at one end and the more idiosyncratic, subjective, and more identity-related elements at the other end" (p. 206). Closely related to beliefs and knowledge are assumptions, which Woods (2003) defines as "provisional acceptance[s]" (p. 205) that allow learners to treat something as 'true' for a specific purpose. Based on this wide definition of beliefs, I do not differentiate beliefs from other terms such as 'perspectives' and 'views', but use them synonymously.

The study of beliefs is intricately linked to aspects of learner identity, as Barcelos (2003a) shows, while drawing on concepts which I discussed in chapter 3. She emphasizes that "identity is co-constructed in interaction with others" (2003a, p. 177), speaking to the dependence of individual self-constructions on social variables, the communicative context, and interpersonal relationships. Considering Lave and Wenger's (1991) concepts of

communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation (see section 3.3), Barcelos (2003a) argues that “identity, learning, and beliefs are inseparable” (p. 177). Specifically, the learning process involves gaining concrete experiences in interactions with others, a process that shapes and is shaped by the individual’s sense of self. In the process of giving meaning to these experiences, the individual establishes connections with the past and modifies future experiences through the formation of beliefs. Barcelos (2003b) concludes that “understanding students’ beliefs means understanding their world and their identity” (p. 8). Belief research must thus strongly consider the contextuality and individuality of the learning process, requiring approaches that illuminate learners’ self-constructions in depth.

As such, beliefs influence the actions and situational interpretations of learners, constituting a “significant contributory factor in the learning process and ultimate success” (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005, p. 1). Therefore, research on learner beliefs and reflection on the potential impact of beliefs on language teaching and learning can inform foreign language pedagogy; for example, in syllabus design and teaching practices. In this context, it is important to note that the beliefs of teachers significantly influence the learning process and the learner perspective as well, “so daß es bei aller Lernerorientierung wesentlich ist, auch die Binnensicht der Lehrer/innen zu erforschen” (Kallenbach, 1996, p. 42). Accordingly, the investigation of teacher beliefs forms a strongly related and growing research field, as, for example, several articles in Kalaja and Barcelos (2003b) demonstrate.

In line with the initial understanding of beliefs as stable constructs and the recent scholarly reorientation to more holistic framings, research on learner beliefs reveals different theoretical and methodological approaches. Below, a classification of learner belief research (Barcelos, 2003b) will be introduced, illuminating the capacity and suitability of

different approaches for researching the relationship between beliefs, identity, and learning.

#### 4.2 Methodological Approaches to the Study of Learner Beliefs

Ana M. F. Barcelos (2003b) has brought forth a comprehensive review of previous investigations of learner beliefs, as well as a three-fold classification of research approaches. She groups studies into normative, metacognitive, and contextual approaches according to the definition of beliefs, methodology, the conceptualized relationship between beliefs and actions, as well as advantages and disadvantages. Barcelos acknowledges, however, that the distinction of these approaches might not be as straightforward in practice.

The normative approach usually defines beliefs as stable “preconceived notions, myths or misconceptions” (Barcelos, 2003b, p. 11), which are often investigated with the help of Likert-type questionnaires and descriptive statistics. A widely used and partly modified questionnaire is the “Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory” (BALLI), developed by Horwitz (1985), whose study constitutes one of the pioneering works in this field. Such questionnaires offer the advantages of being precise, clear, and potentially anonymous, flexible in terms of time, place and resources, as well as appropriate for large numbers of participants and outside contexts (Barcelos, 2003b).

However, they also bear serious limitations as they cannot guarantee the consistent interpretation of questionnaire statements by individuals, making it difficult to investigate the unmediated beliefs of learners, who often tend to frame their answers according to statements anticipated by the researchers (Dufva, 2003; Kallenbach, 1996): “they [the questionnaire statements] do not measure beliefs but, rather, responses to the researcher’s formulation of a belief” (Dufva, 2003, p. 148). Also, questionnaires do not allow for draw-

ing conclusions from beliefs as to the students' actual learning behaviour, because both the width and the depth of the data appear limited and tend to neglect individual learner cases (Grotjahn, 2003). These studies thus limit themselves "to establishing a relationship of cause and effect between beliefs and actions" (Barcelos, 2003b, p. 15) by building on the assumption that people are aware of their beliefs and can accurately report on them (Woods, 2003). In order to overcome the limitations of this etic and quantitative approach, some researchers try to validate their results by providing learners with additional opportunities to express their own beliefs, such as interviews or student essays (e.g., Huang & Tsai, 2003).

Another method of studying learner beliefs can be found in the metacognitive approach, which defines beliefs as metacognitive knowledge that can be investigated in verbal accounts of semi-structured interviews and self-reports (Barcelos, 2003b). Although the use of interviews allows learners to elaborate and reflect on their experiences, this approach aims at classifying beliefs as more or less favourable by only using learner statements, investigated through the use of content analysis. Thus, beliefs are again not inferred from actions, and the role of contextual factors remains disregarded, "wobei notwendigerweise von den Einzelfällen stark abstrahiert werden muß, um zu möglichst allgemeingültigen Aussagen zu gelangen" (Kallenbach, 1996, p. 49). Both normative and metacognitive approaches appear to employ a rather simplified perspective, leading researchers (a) to neglect the individuality of learners by comparing them to a successful and autonomous ideal, and (b) to treat beliefs as fixed a-priori constructs (Barcelos, 2003b). Yet, in comparison to the widely employed normative approach, the metacognitive approach is applied in a few studies only, such as in Wenden (1986, 1987).

In order to gain a deeper and less generalized understanding of learner beliefs in specific contexts, current research increasingly approaches this field from a broader perspective, which Barcelos (2003b) refers to as the contextual approach. Grotjahn (2003) describes its purpose fittingly: “Um ein wirkliches Verständnis des Forschungsgegenstandes Lehren und Lernen von Sprachen zu erreichen, ist sowohl das *Verstehen* von Intentionen und Handlungsgründen aus der *Innenperspektive* als auch eine *kausale Erklärung* der beobachtbaren Handlungen und Verhaltensweisen aus der *Außenperspektive* notwendig“ (p. 497). These studies investigate and interpret learner beliefs with the help of various methods, including, for example, ethnographic classroom observation, diaries and narratives, as well as discourse and metaphor analysis (Barcelos, 2003b). In addition, the approach of triangulation is often employed in order to research one subject with different methods, validating the consistence of data and results (Aguado & Riemer, 2001). Therefore, beliefs are understood as contextual, dynamic, and social constructs, which need to be analyzed from a rather qualitative, interpretative-explorative, and emic perspective. Woods (2003) summarizes that “the issue in research on beliefs, therefore, is not one of ‘accuracy’ of beliefs, but of the process of construction and reconstruction of beliefs for specific situated and contextualized purposes” (p. 206). Due to the time-consuming nature of most ‘contextual’ methods, this approach is more suitable for small samples.

In order to investigate learners’ self-constructions in their dependence on beliefs about pronunciation, only a contextual research design can allow for an in-depth understanding of the underlying processes and factors. Chapter 5 will outline and discuss the methodological design of the present study. In the following section, research findings with regard to learner beliefs about pronunciation and studying abroad will be discussed in order to complete the picture of this study’s theoretical and empirical foundation.

#### 4.3 Learner Beliefs and L2 Pronunciation Learning

While learner beliefs have been investigated in different areas of SLA, the learning and teaching of L2 pronunciation is conspicuously absent among the literature on beliefs in SLA and L2 pedagogy (Brown, 2009); only a small number of studies have been conducted on this aspect to date. Existing results underline the importance of this research area, because learner beliefs do not only provide information about learner perspectives on the nature of the learning process, but they may also influence the acquisition process and the concrete actions of students (Cenoz & García Lecumberri, 1999). In the late 1980s, Flege (1987) and Schneiderman, Bourdages, and Champagne (1988) already suggested that affective and social factors may have an impact on L2 pronunciation. Later studies, which I will outline below, have investigated this connection in more detail.

The first study to be introduced is the only major investigation of learner beliefs about pronunciation and pronunciation training to date. In their study of 86 Spanish and Basque learners' views on the acquisition of English pronunciation, Cenoz and García Lecumberri (1999) investigated their participants' awareness of the difficulty and importance of English pronunciation, their beliefs about influential factors in the acquisition of pronunciation, and their attitudes toward English accents, also considering the potential effects of different first languages on phonetic awareness, beliefs, and attitudes. As a result of the questionnaire-based study, the scholars found that their learners believed that contact with native speakers, listening exercises, motivation, and language proficiency were particularly influential factors in the acquisition of L2 English pronunciation. On the other hand, phonetic training, personal abilities (e.g., musical ear, ability to mimic), and knowledge of other languages appeared as less important to these learners – contradicting general research findings about the nature of pronunciation learning (see section 2.1). Fur-

thermore, due to their secondary school experience, the participants associated pronunciation training mainly with the practice of segmental elements, whereas suprasegmentals were not regarded as significant aspects. Finally, Cenoz and García Lecumberri also found a relationship between the perceived difficulty of specific English accents and the attitudes toward these accents, as “both groups tend to hold less favourable attitudes towards those accents that are perceived as more difficult” (p. 12).

With regard to the different linguistic backgrounds of the two groups (Spanish versus Basque), the authors concluded that membership within the same community and shared experience in the exposure to the L2 (such as shared classroom experience) exert a stronger influence on learners’ beliefs, attitudes, and language awareness than do their linguistic backgrounds. These findings suggest that learner beliefs about pronunciation are largely affected by participating in certain communities of practice as well as by language training in class, both of which communicate messages to learners that may become part of their subjective theories. Regarding in-class training in particular, this conclusion implies that the non-reflective and insufficient training these participants experienced may support stereotypes about a specific pronunciation as well as impedimental perceptions about the significance and nature of pronunciation training.

Even though most studies on learner beliefs focus on students of English as a Foreign or Second Language, a small number of investigations in the area of German as a Foreign Language have been carried out. One of those studies has been conducted by Chavez (2009) with 134 American university students, researching the ‘folk linguistic beliefs’ of these learners about German pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Chavez’ study adopts a somewhat different focus than Cenoz and García Lecumberri’s (1999) investigation, which concentrated on beliefs about pronunciation training only.

Chavez found that pronunciation was the component of which participants in this study had the most preconceived notions. Such notions were often rather negative, leading her to conclude that “the potentially biggest obstacle to students’ choosing German appeared to be pronunciation” (p. 17). The influence of instruction on such beliefs seemed to be rather limited, simply equipping learners with a more detailed vocabulary with which to express the same ideas. Notably, the differences in instruction only referred to the number of German courses different groups had taken in Chavez’s study, and not the amount of instruction received specifically on pronunciation. All learners had possibly experienced classes without focus on pronunciation, so that the gain in linguistic skills was not reflected in these beliefs. This observation may explain why no significant differences between first, second, third, and fourth-year learners could be found.

Furthermore, learners from different language levels often connected the sound of German with negative and stereotypical associations, which Chavez suggests may be portrayed by media. Moreover, Chavez found that learners are rather unaware of the broad spectrum of different regional and national varieties of German and their pronunciations, which may be caused by a limited instruction in this area. Also, “learners talked about language as if speech could, in fact, be broken down into acoustically isolatable words and as if in German each letter corresponded with a specific, invariable sound” (p. 16), which also led learners to perceive German pronunciation as very rule-governed. The rather stereotypical beliefs that Chavez found in her study appear to be evoked not only by media portrayals but also by insufficient pronunciation teaching, as demonstrated by the learners’ lack of awareness toward the phonetic characteristics of the German language. These results suggest that deficient phonetic instruction may support the maintenance or rise of learner beliefs that draw on uninformed images and possibly prejudices.



Similar to other studies of learner beliefs about pronunciation, Chavez followed a clearly normative approach, researching learners' beliefs and perceptions from a quantitative perspective, aiming at elucidating 'positive' and 'negative' beliefs in learners (as can be seen, for example, in Chavez attesting German a "sound problem" [p. 17] due to her participants' impressions of harshness and ugliness). This stance also reflects on her pedagogical conclusions, suggesting that "in teaching we might make greater efforts to explicitly dispel mistaken ideas about German pronunciation" (p. 17). At this point, however, Chavez fails to give concrete suggestions as to how to didactically realize the 'dispelling' of stereotypical learner beliefs. Such conclusions appear generally problematic because, in line with the conceptualization of beliefs in the previous two sections, the study of learner beliefs should not be judgemental. The classification of beliefs into positive and negative ones does not allow for deeper insights into the sources and functions of such beliefs in learners' constructions of self, also limiting opportunities to develop insightful pedagogical recommendations.

Besides investigating learner beliefs about pronunciation and pronunciation learning, other studies have attempted to shed light on the relationship between learner beliefs and the influence of other affective factors in learning a foreign-language pronunciation. Smit (2002; Smit & Dalton-Puffer, 1997), for example, shows that learners have their own – albeit partially conventional – ideas about how important accent and pronunciation are in relation to their individual learning goals, allowing for insights into affective factor complexes. In her investigation of the pronunciation-related attitudes and motivations of 141 Austrian learners of English, Smit found that learning goals reflecting high intrinsic motivation correlated with low anxiety and high levels of self-efficacy, while extrinsic motivation was rather independent of these factors. Therefore, it appeared that the former

aggregate of factors formed a favourable basis for acquiring an L2 pronunciation, reflecting beliefs and attitudes conducive to achieving high levels of intelligibility. Smit (2002) thus concludes that “a positive attitude towards pronunciation learning as such seems to help” (p. 102). Along with these factors, Smit also identified certain aspects, such as a generally high proficiency in the L2, self-confidence, and the readiness to work independently and intensively, as contributive to the successful acquisition of L2 pronunciation.

These insights lead Smit (2002) to conclude that

perhaps the most important outcome in this context is that the first and most central factor is not directly linked to the classroom at all, but rests solely within the individual learners and their readiness to accept the challenge of changing their pronunciation and their willingness to work hard to reach that goal. (p. 101)

Learner beliefs about pronunciation learning are therefore strongly linked to several other affective factors that may influence how beliefs are translated into concrete actions in the learning process. Yet, in converting beneficial beliefs, attitudes, and motivation into actual willingness to work on pronunciation difficulties, another important factor may challenge learners. Smit (2002) suggests that degrees of willingness rely particularly on learners’ identity constructions, motivating them “to adapt their own pronunciation to what they, at that moment, perceive to be desirable and ideal” (p. 102). This conclusion is crucial as it underlines the strong interdependence between learner beliefs and other affective factors, as well as the construction and negotiation of certain identity aspects, thus influencing learners’ choices and steps in acquiring L2 pronunciation.

In the context of German as a Foreign Language, Moyer (1999) researched learner beliefs within a similar factor complex as Smit (2002), namely focusing on the relation-

ship between advanced American students' motivation, age, received instruction, as well as pronunciation accuracy and fluency in German. Her main finding of interest in this section concerns the relationship between motivation, learning goals, and achieved level of pronunciation skills, specifying and supporting Smit's (2002) results. Even though other studies (e.g., Nunan, 1988; Stevick, 1982; Willing, 1988) have found that "learners consistently give extremely high priority to mastery of pronunciation of the target language when opinions and preferences are investigated" (Macdonald, Yule, & Powers, 1994, p. 76), the majority of Moyer's participants believed that "sounding native was important but not critical" (p. 88). This result may imply that native-like pronunciation was neither realistic nor necessary for most participants, an inference that supports my discussion of learning goals in section 2.3. Only in one case did Moyer find a speaker who combined both very high ratings on the nativeness of his accent and the desire to acculturate and sound German. These results give reason to assume that learners' beliefs about the importance of pronunciation, combined with preferred identity constructions and certain motivational factors, may indeed influence the extent of willingness and efforts in achieving certain pronunciation learning outcomes. It has to be noted, however, that both Moyer's (1999) and Smit's (2002; Smit & Dalton-Puffer, 1997) investigations draw on a static understanding of highly complex concepts, such as motivation, identity, and learner beliefs. In combination with their quantitative research approaches, they can hence only highlight general tendencies.

Another study of interest in the area of learners' beliefs about their pronunciation needs has been carried out by Derwing and Rossiter (2002). This study examines whether there are mismatches between students' perceptions of their pronunciation needs and difficulties, the instruction they received, and accounts of their natural reactions upon perceiv-

ing communication difficulties. In this study, 100 adult ESL immigrant learners in Canada with Polish, Spanish, Cantonese, and Japanese backgrounds and similar levels of accent-ness of speech were interviewed.

As Derwing and Rossiter discovered, the preferred communication repair strategy for all language groups was paraphrasing (56%), followed by self-repetition (28%), writing/spelling (7%), volume adjustment (5%), speaking clearly (3%), and slowing down the speech rate (3%), although the latter ones exhibited different distributions among the language groups. Moreover, one third of the participants perceived often or very often that people had trouble understanding them, leading almost half of the learners to perceive pronunciation as the primary source of speaking difficulties. Furthermore, more than half of the students believed that pronunciation contributed to their communication problems. Yet, when asked how difficult they thought it was for other learners of English to understand their pronunciation, 70% claimed there were either no or only little problems, reflecting mismatching beliefs. In line with the learners' lack of awareness of the accentedness of their speech, 39% of the subjects were unable to identify specific areas of difficulty. Almost half of those learners who actually could name specific problems stated that some segments were difficult to pronounce for them, whereas only 10% of the mentioned problems were related to prosody. Not surprisingly, only 8% had ever taken a pronunciation course, while 90% of all participants would take such a course if one were available.

This study suggests that there is a mismatch in several respects between the students' perceptions of their needs and current teaching offerings. While the overwhelming majority of students state an interest in pronunciation courses, only a marginal number had the opportunity to attend such a course. In comparison to Moyer's (1999) results, Derwing and Rossiter's findings reveal more realistic learner beliefs about the importance of pro-

nunciation. Upon being asked whether they would like to sound ‘native’, Moyer’s students disagreed, suggesting that pronunciation may not be of great importance to them. Derwing and Rossiter, however, approached this question from a different, more pragmatic angle, asking their subjects about communication difficulties and their willingness to attend pronunciation courses, without suggesting native-speaker standards as learning goals. Students thus seem to perceive the importance of working on their pronunciation much more readily when not confronted with identity-threatening and unrealistic learning goals, but with practical benefits for their communicative skills.

Moreover, Derwing and Rossiter also point out deficits in current pronunciation teaching practices. With regard to the importance of suprasegmentals on pronunciation, “the L2 learners’ responses suggest that they are either not getting instruction or, if they are, they are not benefiting from it” (p. 161). Considering the possible discomfort of teachers toward teaching pronunciation in general (see section 2.3), the study implies that at least communication strategies should be practised more intensively, in order to help students overcome intelligibility problems. Ideally, however, pronunciation training would be offered as part of foreign or second language instruction, raising students’ awareness toward pronunciation as an important element of their communicative skills and enabling them to overcome pronunciation-related communication difficulties while establishing realistic and desirable learning goals.

In conclusion, the findings from the studies discussed in this section form an interesting backdrop for my own research interest. They demonstrate that learners’ beliefs about pronunciation are induced by both their social environment as well as by classroom experience, and greatly influence students’ decisions and actions in the learning process. As such, beliefs about pronunciation also appear to be related to learners’ identity con-

structions, in that the portrayal of desired identity aspects seems to influence their readiness to work on their pronunciation. The partial mismatch between beliefs may also be related to learners' investment in maintaining positive self-images, requiring an adjustment of beliefs to situational demands. The results thus point to a complex relationship between learner beliefs and other sociopsychological factors, posing challenges to teaching practices that are often ignored rather than addressed in both classroom and research.

Yet, despite informative insights, some methodological and thematic desiderata are noticeable. First, most studies in this area are conducted with large numbers of participants, making it necessary to approach the collected data quantitatively. This in turn leads to an evaluation of results that is aimed at classification and generalization, ignoring individual trends and greatly narrowing as well as simplifying our understanding of the complexity of this issue. This specific desideratum will be addressed in my study in the pursuit of a 'contextual' research approach, which will be outlined more closely in chapter 5. Secondly, the factors accounted for have thus far neither entailed the context of studying abroad and entering new social and learning environments nor have they offered an in-depth investigation of the interrelationship between learner beliefs and identities with regard to pronunciation. Due to the exceptional experience of studying abroad, however, one may assume that both learner beliefs and different aspects of identity are contested to a much higher extent than in familiar classroom settings in learners' home environment. It is thus particularly interesting to study the development and nature of such beliefs that have been influenced by rich experiences with and new insights about L2 pronunciation and its importance in communicative situations and in the learning process.

#### 4.4 Learner Beliefs in Study-Abroad Contexts

Throughout the process of learning a foreign language, learners form beliefs about the nature of language and language learning, and these beliefs may result in certain actions and choices with regard to language use and learning behaviour, influencing the extent to which learners take advantage of and benefit from learning opportunities and contexts.

The first major investigation of learner beliefs in study-abroad contexts has been conducted by Miller and Ginsberg (1995), analysing the ‘folklinguistic theories’ of American students on their sojourn in Russia. Referencing 80 narrative diaries, 29 oral narratives and 10 notebook journals, Miller and Ginsberg “describe some of the theories that students studying abroad have about the nature of language, how it is housed in the mind, and how it is learned” (p. 294). Three main conclusions were reached in this study: first, students’ beliefs about language exclude many of the features of language for which study abroad is particularly advantageous. Often, students focused on referential and structural elements only, believing that there is one correct way to say things within a unified language system with fixed rules (see discussion of native-speaker ideals and critical language awareness, section 2.3). Therefore, students often relied on textbooks and dictionaries, limiting their understanding of pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of language and the development of communicative competence.

Secondly, learners’ beliefs about language and language learning led them to recreate classroom situations in interactions with native speakers outside of class, despite the fact that students denigrated the usefulness of classroom activities during their stay abroad. This in turn resulted in students practising the same language chunks over and over again, leading to a “perceived interactive hollowness” (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 308) and to students spending time with people they already knew, avoiding new acquaintances.

Thirdly, Miller and Ginsberg found that students did not take full advantage of the unique opportunities for learning afforded by study abroad. “Students thus often ignore productive learning situations which they think do not qualify as language learning” (p. 311), such as situations in which they cannot actively speak but may train their listening comprehension. Also, students appear unwilling to take risks in practising their language skills and are overly concerned with the correctness of their utterances, limiting the learning opportunities of studying abroad. Miller and Ginsberg thus show that students’ beliefs affect their learning behaviour, their attention to and selection of certain communication modalities, and the overall quality of their interactions abroad. In particular, learners’ visible focus on correctness and nativeness appears to inhibit their ability to engage in meaningful interactions in the target language, limiting their learning progress. Yet, due to the large amount of participants and data, these researchers could only analyze main trends, neglecting individual developments and deviations from their generalizations.

A more recent study on the influence of learner beliefs on the study-abroad experience has been conducted by Isabelli-García (2006). By analyzing diary entries and social network logs of four American students studying abroad in Argentina, Isabelli-García explored how differences in learning motivation and attitudes toward the host culture affect social interactions with native speakers and the overall success of studying abroad. In opposing the study-abroad results of high-achievers and low-achievers, Isabelli-García demonstrates that ‘integrative’ motivation and the maintenance of positive beliefs and attitudes toward the host culture may be more successful in enabling the student to establish social networks with native speakers than mere ‘instrumental’ motivation and practical impediments to maintaining a positive attitude. Strongly related to these learning factors appeared to be the learners’ senses of self and their concurrent reactions to identity ascrip-



tions during interactions with others. One female participant, for example, felt attacked by sexual comments from strange men, restricting her movements in L2 communities and leading to an elevation of national identity aspects (see section 3.5). In turn, she withdrew gradually from learning opportunities, limiting her language improvements.

As a result, Isabelli-García (2006) concludes “that the type of motivation the learners had in learning the target language, the attitude they maintained toward the host culture, and the strength of their social networks were all connected” (p. 254). In turn, the strength and quality of students’ social networks appeared as strongly related to learners’ cultural awareness and the degree of achieved “ethnorelativism” versus “ethnocentrism” (Bennett, 1986). Although not invalid, these conclusions appear somewhat limited as they draw on clear-cut, static equations between learners’ motivation ‘type’, beliefs about the L2 culture, and their ability to integrate into L2 communities, abstracting from other contextual factors and the complexity of constructs such as learner beliefs, identity, and motivation. Although Isabelli-García discusses the notion of “investment” (Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995) and underlines that “motivation is not a fixed personality trait” (p. 254), she nevertheless draws on problematic, classifying notions of motivation (integrative, instrumental, resultative, etc.) and cultural learning (Bennett’s [1986] six stages of acculturation). Her approach to considering the fluidity of the learners’ development of identity and their investment in study-abroad settings thus appears inconsistent with her data interpretation, leading to simplified and stereotypical conclusions.

Research on learner beliefs in study-abroad contexts has generally paid much attention to the establishment of social networks with L2-mediated communities, as this appears to be a crucial factor in shaping the overall success of the study-abroad term – from the perspective of both researchers and learners. One important community in which so-

journalers often place a lot of hope in the host family they live with. Wilkinson (1998) showed in her case studies of two American students, Molise and Ashley, how influential the quality of contact with the host family can be on the impressions and beliefs that students form about their sojourn and their success in learning the foreign language. While studying abroad in France, Molise felt treated like a family member by her hosts and was even included in various family activities, whereas Ashley's family limited their care to merely providing room and board, hardly offering any communicative practice to their sojourner. Wilkinson thus noted differences in both learners' beliefs about the French-speaking community: since Ashley's family did not provide support and explanation, she reacted to cultural differences defensively, denigrating the French environment and erecting social barriers by, for example, strongly seeking contact with other Americans. Molise, on the other hand, perceived her host family as the main source for practicing her French and receiving advice and cultural explanations, and thus a support for limiting her frustrations and enabling her to engage with cultural differences from a more tolerant perspective.

Besides illuminating the different living situations, Wilkinson (1998) considers that "other factors, such as their level of language proficiency, the nature of the pre-departure preparation meetings, the absence of an on-site director, their own cross-cultural experiences prior to their stay in France, and so forth, all had an impact [on these learners' beliefs] as well" (p. 133). With regard to cross-cultural experiences, Molise spent her childhood in refugee camps in various Asian countries before immigrating to the United States, whereas Ashley came to know foreign countries mainly from the tourist perspective. In line with Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) findings (see section 3.5), Wilkinson (1998) concludes that "Molise's hybrid identity would seem to weaken her ties to one particular ethnic group, making it less threatening for her to try on a new identity as a foreigner in

France” (p. 134). Wilkinson thus considers a relatively wide aggregate of different contextual factors, allowing for deeper insight into the interrelationship between students’ study-abroad experience, their beliefs, and identity constructions.

Relatively independent of the living situations of students, several studies have noted that students’ initial beliefs and expectations about their stays abroad and their use of the foreign language vary widely from their actual experiences in the host country. In her study of 43 American learners of Spanish, Mendelson (2004) found that learners’ pre-sojourn beliefs and expectations about the nature of language learning in Spain differed widely from those impressions voiced post-program. Before leaving for Spain, many of her participants expressed the desire to become fluent while studying abroad, anticipating that Spain would provide them with “ample opportunities for ‘cultural learning’ and an immersion environment” (p. 48). Accordingly, most students vowed to communicate in the foreign language whenever possible and praised the host family environment as very conducive in this regard.

After studying abroad, however, a number of participants voiced their disappointment, revealing changes in their beliefs about the effectiveness of sojourns. The shorter the period the students stayed in the host country, the more likely they were to believe that they did not make full use of the learning opportunities provided. Many students were disappointed by their inability to interact in Spanish as much as planned pre-program, mentioning reasons such as “nervousness, lack of courage, lack of effort, lack of time, ‘avoidance’ of interactions by staying within the comfortable company of English speakers, and a dorm environment unsupportive of Spanish usage” (p. 49). Some of these students also mentioned the accents and rates of speech of others as problematic factors. Even though some participants had the opportunity to connect with a host family, many of them felt

that they missed out on developing contacts with L2 speakers outside of their homes. Similar results have been found in other studies (e.g., Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2008; Wilkinson, 1998), thus supporting the impression that students have difficulties under specific circumstances in establishing contacts with speakers of the L2, causing them to stay within L1-speaking circles and develop changed beliefs about the potentials and the nature of studying abroad.

Yet, not all of these changes in beliefs are of a negative nature. Amuzie and Winke (2009), for example, found in their study that “students came to more strongly believe in the importance of learner autonomy and came to less strongly believe in the importance of the teacher’s role in learning” (p. 374). This reveals that the insight gained by students concerning their responsibilities toward proactively taking advantage of learning opportunities was triggered by the study-abroad environment. In Mendelson’s (2004) study, students pointed out some positive aspects of their sojourn that support Amuzie and Winke’s (2009) finding of increased self-regulation: “emotional/personal changes including increased independence, self-sufficiency, maturity, and willingness to think with an open mind” (Mendelson, 2004, p. 50f.), partly counteracting feelings of frustration due to limited interactions in the L2 and a resulting superficial understanding of the host culture.

Due to experienced difficulties in establishing contact with L2 speakers abroad, Mendelson also found that students came to appreciate the contributions of classroom-based language learning more strongly. While most students valued informal language contact much more highly than formal contact pre-study abroad, their beliefs post-study abroad revealed a more balanced perspective, shaped by their individual experiences. This impression is reflected by two-thirds of the participants reporting that they spoke the most Spanish in the classroom while studying in Spain. This result may possibly question

Amuzie and Winke's (2009) findings above, revealing that even though students may have changed their beliefs about their responsibility in taking advantage of the study-abroad environment, these beliefs may not necessarily translate into corresponding actions. This may explain why Mendelson (2004) found a higher appreciation of and success in classroom-based learning instead of increased out-of-class interactions in the L2.

Whereas the studies reviewed beforehand demonstrated the effects of learner beliefs on the study abroad experience, Mendelson's (2004) and Amuzie and Winke's (2009) studies suggest, reciprocally, that studying abroad can also greatly influence learners' beliefs and expectations about language learning within different learning contexts, as well as attitudes toward their own roles and responsibilities in the learning process. However, both studies also reveal some of the limitations of normative, quantitative research approaches. First, both studies were conducted with a large number of participants, requiring a generalization and classification of data. Mendelson investigated learners studying in Salamanca and Granada and considered her participants exclusively as members of two distinct groups with hardly any reference to individual experiences. Similarly, Amuzie and Winke researched seventy students from various backgrounds studying abroad in the United States. Thus, in explaining differences in behaviour, they could only refer to openly distinct features of these groups, such as the different sojourn lengths. Secondly, comments from individual participants only served as evidence to quantified results and were not researched in their potential to cast doubt onto overall trends of the group. Therefore, these studies provide limited insight to researchers who are interested in understanding individual and therefore always unique beliefs and experiences.

In conclusion, I agree with White's (2008) call for "more longitudinal studies [researching] how beliefs develop in relation to learner perspectives on the affordances and

constraints of a learning context and [investigating] the interplay among those beliefs, learners' actions and their interpretation of experience" (p. 127). To comply with this request, learner belief research requires the application of methodological and theoretical approaches, which investigate learner beliefs and interpretation of experience in their idiosyncrasy and dependence on contextual factors.

#### 4.5 Conclusions

My understanding of learner beliefs is informed by constructivist conceptualizations, conceiving of beliefs as fluid, socially constructed, and intricately linked with learners' identity constructions, learning experience, and behaviour. The research of learner beliefs under such premises thus requires a move away from normative, etic approaches and a shift to contextual, emic research, illuminating the idiosyncrasy and complexity of learner belief systems. The next chapter will respond to these considerations by introducing narrative inquiry as the research approach of the present study.

Even though most studies in the area of learner beliefs, pronunciation, and study abroad have to be read carefully due to a prevalence of etic research designs, they point out trends which speak to my research interests. With regard to pronunciation, learner beliefs often appear to be related to communities of practice, which shape the learning context and the messages conveyed to learners. These in turn cause learner beliefs, particularly in the area of GFL, to be affected by stereotypic notions communicated and possibly maintained through classroom practice, with critical reflection not being a topic of either research or classroom instruction. Considering the close connection between learner beliefs and identity constructions, such preconceived notions may then influence learners'

willingness to engage in learning opportunities, with pronunciation being possibly perceived as an influential factor in the portrayal of desirable identity facets.

With regard to studying abroad, beliefs about language, culture, and learning may relate to learners' investment in gaining access to L2-mediated communities and in taking advantage of learning opportunities. Since living or studying abroad appears to be an experience that noticeably shapes learner beliefs, previous contacts with living and interacting in foreign environments may influence learners' approaches to future sojourns. Whether or not such beliefs translate into actions in the learning process in class or in study-abroad contexts, however, is a different matter because "what we *say* we believe may not always be the factor which influences our actions, and individuals can carry out actions which seem to be inconsistent with what they say their beliefs are" (Woods, 2003, p. 207). Rather than investigating the relationship of learners' beliefs and actions, the present study focuses on beliefs as a tool which learners use to construct meaning and explain experiences, while negotiating identity facets in the same process. Therefore, it is particularly of interest which role learner beliefs about pronunciation play in this respect, constituting a topic which has not yet been addressed in the belief research.

## 5 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework of my study. The first section will situate narrative approaches in SLA research and establish a connection with the study of learner beliefs, as discussed in chapter 4. I will then introduce narrative inquiries more closely by explaining my understanding of narratives, narrative inquiry, and their associated quality criteria. The following section will deal with the data collection process, comprising the case-study design, participants, and data collection instruments. Finally, I will discuss the specific methods of data analysis and interpretation used within my study's approach to narrative inquiry.

### 5.1 Analysing Learner Beliefs

For many decades, research into learner differences attempted to explain why individuals with presumably similar cognitive capacities achieve different outcomes in the L2 learning process (Benson, 2005). The majority of such studies, particularly in the area of oral proficiency and pronunciation, have been based on experimental and survey methods aimed at isolating and scaling factors of difference and statistically correlating them with measures of proficiency such as fluency and segmental accuracy. Yet, with the emergence of a stronger focus on individual learner differences, many scholars are motivated by a different question, involving an understanding of difference and diversity in a more holistic sense. They are interested in researching how individual learners manage their language learning under the influence of certain contextual factors and how their learning shapes their perspectives, their senses of self, and possibly their lives. "The ultimate goal of such research is not to produce generalisations about learners, factors and outcomes – but to understand the experiences of the individuals" (Cotterall, 2008, p. 126).



For gaining access to individual learners' accounts of their experiences and beliefs, the narrative approach appears particularly suitable, as Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) outline: "One of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world is through verbal accounts and stories presented by individual narrators about their lives and their experienced reality" (p. 7). Pursuing a narrative approach in the form of case-centered research thus allows me to explore the complex arrangement of the participants' inner worlds: their experiences of studying overseas, their reflections and beliefs about their language learning and development, as well as the constructions of their identities.

Originally used in literary studies, the 'narrative turn' (Riessman, 2003) has signalled the entrance of narrative analysis into social sciences and, more specifically, applied linguistics and SLA (for a comprehensive overview see Benson, 2005; Pavlenko, 2002; Riessman, 2003). "Researchers acknowledge that narratives elicited from the learners, as well as published language learning autobiographies, are a legitimate source of data in the hermeneutic tradition, complementary to more traditional empirical approaches" (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 213). Specifically, the narrative approach augments our understanding of language learning processes by investigating variables that are normally considered in isolation in a contextualized and interrelated way, developing a "rich description" of each case (Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005). Also, examining learners' experiences from their perspectives facilitates understanding the impact of certain episodes on participants' lives, which is a unique characteristic of narrative analysis. Finally, as research in the area of pronunciation in study-abroad settings has been dominated by quantitative approaches, the pursuit of narrative inquiry as part of qualitative research approaches also allows to "be open to what is new in the material being studied, to the unknown in the apparently familiar" (Flick, von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004, p. 5). In so doing, narrative research pursues a

complex and holistic approach, seeking to investigate learners in their idiosyncrasy, imprecision, and subjectivity.

## 5.2 Narrative Inquiries

### 5.2.1 *What is a Narrative?*

The term “narrative” can signify a variety of meanings, methodological assumptions, and strategies of analysis (Riessman, 2003). Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes mainly between the meaning of “narrative as story” and “narrative as prosaic discourse”. The first understanding is more limited and refers only to a particular type of discourse in which events are organized by means of a plot around a topic, setting, and characters. In this sense a narrative “preserves the complexity of human actions with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7), as witnessed or experienced by the narrator. Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972b), for example, pursue a structuralist analysis of narratives as stories, investigating the common underlying components of stories told by street-gang youngsters in response to specific questions. Edwards (1997), however, criticizes this approach as too rigid and linear, limiting the effects of analysing narratives by overlooking their interactional and emergent structure. Therefore, “narratives should not be seen as a static production, but as a way of understanding the dynamic aspects of our experiences” (Dutra & Mello, 2008, p. 52f.).

In this context, the second meaning represents a wider understanding of narrative, “that is, any text that consists of complete sentences linked into a coherent and integrated statement” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 6). When applied to the realm of qualitative research, narrative inquiries in this sense deal with the naturally situated and extended accounts of

life that individuals develop over the course of several interviews and other forms of written or spoken discourse. Thus, “the discrete story as the unit of analysis of Labov’s and others’ approach gives way to an evolving series of stories that are framed in and through interaction” (Riessman, 2003, p. 334) – as well as the dynamics of our experiences.

My own understanding of narrative therefore draws on both meanings in that I view the sum of accounts I gathered from each participant as a narrative that is subdivided by the occurrence of stories, the analyses of which illuminate experiences, beliefs, and identity constructions. It needs to be noted, however, that the understanding of narrative as prosaic discourse does not exclude the occurrence of non-narrative elements, so that stories can be accompanied by, for example, “questions and answers about demographic facts, listings, chronicles, and other nonnarrative forms of discourse” (Riessman, 2003, p. 334).

### 5.2.2 *What is Narrative Inquiry?*

My understanding and application of narrative inquiry will be informed by a modification of Polkinghorne’s (1995) differentiation between “analysis of narratives” and “narrative analysis”, which is in turn based on Bruner’s (1985) notions of paradigmatic and narrative cognition. Polkinghorne outlines that paradigmatic *analysis of narratives* “gathers stories for its data and uses paradigmatic analytic procedures to produce taxonomies and categories out of the common elements across the database” (p. 5). Paradigmatic procedures allow researchers to develop general knowledge about a collection of stories on the basis of common themes and ideas. Yet, this knowledge “is abstract and formal, and by necessity underplays the unique and particular aspects of each story” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15).

On the other hand, *narrative analysis* concentrates on the special characteristics and particularities of each event, as it “gathers events and happenings as its data and uses

narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5) in order to answer research questions. Instead of generalising from different individual experiences, this approach researches similarities and differences between stories, while also preserving the unique and specific elements of each case and attempting to understand their idiosyncrasy and complexity. Thus, in modifying Polkinghorne’s strict classification, I aim to situate both my data and method of analysis by combining the two approaches of analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. Specifically, I intend to analyse the narratives of my participants by constructing ‘meta-narratives’, avoiding the usage of generalizations that Polkinghorne suggests for the analysis of narratives. In order not to create confusion with Polkinghorne’s terminology though, I will use the term ‘narrative inquiry’ to describe my method of data analysis.

As Pavlenko (2002) and Bell (2002) outline, narrative inquiry aims at an analytic examination eliciting underlying beliefs, insights, and assumptions illustrated by narratives. In so doing, these inquiries go “beyond the use of narrative as rhetorical structure” (Bell, 2002, p. 208) and allow for viewing narratives as complex acts, in which the individual performs certain (preferred) identities (Langellier, 2001). Understanding narratives as a way to perform identities corresponds with poststructuralist approaches, assuming that “informants do not reveal an essential self as much as they perform a preferred one, selected from the multiplicity of selves or persona that individuals switch among as they go about their lives” (Riessman, 2003, p. 337). Narrators can employ a multitude of features that allow them to actively construct certain identities or react on the experienced other-construction of their selves: they can intensify words and phrases as well as enrich segments with narrative detail, reported speech, appeals to the audience, and paralinguistic features (Riessman, 2003). Bell (2002) explains that in so doing,

narrative inquiry involves working with people's consciously told stories, recognizing that these rest on deeper stories of which people are often unaware. Participants construct stories that support their interpretation of themselves, excluding experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim... As such they provide a window into people's beliefs and experiences. (p. 209)

Therefore, narrative inquiry allows for investigating individuals' experiences and (partially subconscious) beliefs holistically, adding insights to research areas that mostly look at outcomes and disregard the impact of experience (Bell, 2002), as in the case of pronunciation research in study-abroad contexts. When conducted longitudinally in particular, narrative inquiries also illuminate the temporal notion of experience, causing changes in people's beliefs and perspectives.

Bell (2002) also outlines some limitations that need to be considered when conducting narrative inquiries. First, the emphasis on individuality and complexity requires a time commitment that makes this approach unsuitable for large-scale investigations. Secondly, this approach requires a close collaboration between researcher and participants, which from my point of view is based on the establishment of trust and respect, as the narrator allows the researcher access to his or her private life and thoughts during the period of the data collection. Thirdly, "narratives are not purely individual productions – they are powerfully shaped by social, cultural, and historical conventions as well as by the relationship between the storyteller and the interlocutor" (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 214). Thus, narrative inquiries also need to be based on the insight that researchers become part of participants' narratives in that they impose interpretation and meaning on their stories. Particularly this limitation raises questions about the criteria that should be used for the evaluation of narrative inquiries.

### 5.2.3 *Quality Criteria for Narrative Inquiries*

Narrative inquiry as a form of qualitative research needs to adhere to quality criteria that are different from those generally assumed for quantitative research, such as objectivity, validity, and reliability (Steinke, 2004). This set of ‘traditional criteria’ has raised discussions in the area of narrative analysis and its commitment to analyze subjective data under preservation of their idiosyncrasy. Riessman (1993, 2003) thus suggests that these criteria are not applicable to narrative research, emphasizing that the common demand to portray ‘the truth’ needs to be replaced by ‘truths’ which different individuals (such as participants, researchers, readers, etc.) construct in order to make sense of life, narratives, and meta-narratives. Narrative analysis is thus informed by the insight that individual ‘truths’ are not meant to be reliable, objective, or valid in the traditional understanding of these notions. Supporting this perspective, Duff (2008) concludes that

therefore, most qualitative researchers, especially poststructuralists, do not see subjectivity as a major issue, as something that can or should be eliminated. Rather, they see it as an inevitable engagement with the world in which meanings and realities are constructed (not just discovered) and in which the researcher is very much present. (p. 56)

Thus, within the realm of this study, my own subjectivity, which is informed by my experiences and interests as a researcher in SLA, former study-abroad student, current German language teacher, etc. have to be considered as an integral part of the entire research process, including steps such as the data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

By collecting many narratives from the same milieu and by extracting factual data from narratives, researchers (Bertaux, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) have argued that narrative inquiries can adhere to other quality criteria such as plausibility and adequa-

cy. Riessman (1993) explains that plausibility is closely linked to the persuasiveness of an account, achievable “when theoretical claims are supported with evidence from informants’ accounts and when alternative interpretations of the data are considered” (p. 65). The adequacy of a narrative analysis can be assessed by two different means. First, whenever possible researchers are encouraged to send their interpretations back to the participants for receiving their comments and possible objections (Murray, 2009; Riessman, 1993). Since external or other circumstances may prevent the researcher from consulting each participant, the quality of a narrative analysis can also be assessed by their ‘thickness’ (see Geertz, 1973, “thick description”), corresponding to the coherence of the interpretation: “Investigators must continuously modify initial hypotheses about speakers’ beliefs and goals (global coherence) in light of the structure of particular narratives (local coherence) and recurrent themes that unify the text (thematic coherence)” (Riessman, 1993, p. 67). In my study, I did not choose the option to send my interpretations to the participants for verification. Besides time constraints, I believe that the notion of subjectivity, which is always involved in the interpretation of learner beliefs, contradicts the possibility of verifying data. Participants confront the researcher’s interpretation with their own points of view, possibly contesting established connections they were unaware of or with which they feel uncomfortable. I therefore prefer to rely on the criterion of coherence.

In this respect, Polkinghorne (1995; based on Dollard, 1935) specifies more closely which thematic aspects need to be taken into account when configuring data elements into an explanatory meta-narrative:

1. Contextual features, referring mainly to the social and cultural environment of each participant.

2. Bodily dimensions (such as age) as well as genetic-given propensities (such as illnesses) that may affect the participants' actions and experiences.
3. Significant other people that influence the subject's actions and goals.
4. The particular goals each participant pursues by means of selected actions, explaining inner struggles, emotional states, and values.
5. The historical continuity of the characters, outlining how past experiences influence present habits and ways of thinking and interpreting experience.
6. The beginning point of the story and the point of denouement, marking the individual's experience as unique in a specific situation.
7. A story line that composes the disparate elements into a plausible and understandable explanation of the subject's experience. The researcher is explicitly encouraged to gather additional data and consult previous work in order to add missing links to the explanatory story of each case.

The last point addresses a common concern about narrative analyses, namely the importance of the researcher moving beyond 'telling a story' in constructing the meta-narrative. In this context, Murray (2009) clarifies that "a story can be research when it is interpreted in view of the literature of a field, and this process yields implications for practice, future research or theory building" (p. 46). This aspect, however, also necessitates that researchers must acknowledge their own roles in the process of conducting a narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995), which I will do as part of the limitations outlined in section 8.3.

The usage of narrative inquiry as the principal way of data analysis informed each step of my data collection, organization, and interpretation, which I will outline and explain in the following.



### 5.3 The Data Collection Process

#### 5.3.1 *Participants and Context of the Case Studies*

The intention to produce meta-narratives of each participant's accounts formed the design of my research project as a multiple-case study, meaning that each participant constitutes a case to be studied. As Duff (2008) outlines, a case study is an exploratory empirical inquiry that is characterized by its "boundedness or singularity, in-depth study, multiple perspectives or triangulation, particularity, contextualization, and interpretation" (p. 23). Thus, central to my case studies are individual learners' narrations of their experiences and views, which I collected by using two different data sources (interviews and e-journals) and analysed by combining different approaches to narrative inquiry (see section 5.4). In this sense, Benson (2005) concludes that the narrative approach to research "naturally lends itself to the production of case studies of individual learning experiences" (p. 2). Within my particular research interest, a qualitative case-study design also enables me to contribute to existing quantitatively-generated insights about pronunciation in study-abroad contexts by creating new insight into the nature of language learning, illuminating as yet neglected factors that may result in different individual developments. Duff (2008) supports this argument by outlining that case studies "can open up new areas for future research, by isolating variables and interactions among factors that have not previously been identified for their possible influence on the behavior under investigation" (p. 44) – as in the case of my research interest.

The participants (n=10) of the present study<sup>7</sup> were all students of German in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. They were enrolled in study-abroad programs for the duration of one or two semesters

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<sup>7</sup> Full ethics clearance was received for this research (ORE #16070).

and attended different German universities.<sup>8</sup> From the day of their arrival, all involved German host universities provided each international student with a “tandem partner,” who is a regular student, helping the sojourners during their first weeks of organizing their lives in the new environment.

At the beginning of the study, an email invitation was sent out to all exchange students in the department. Due to the relatively small number of students going on exchange every year, I included participants from two study-abroad years (2009-2010 and 2010-2011 respectively). From both groups of sojourners I received five positive responses each. From the primary ten participants included in the data collection process, I chose five (Rona, Zora, Lisa, Kris, Alex)<sup>9</sup> for in-depth analyses and interpretation. The initial strategy of convenience sampling, including all available cases without rationalized strategy, was followed by a maximum-variation selection (Duff, 2008), allowing me to investigate a wide spectrum of different learning behaviours and underlying belief structures. The following criteria determined the selection process:

- I intended to include students with different language learning backgrounds and sojourn experiences: Zora has an immigration background and started to learn German as a second language; Rona is of Austrian heritage, started to learn German in high school, and participated in three previous sojourns; Alex is of German heritage, started to learn German at university, and visited Germany once before the sojourn; Lisa is also of German heritage, started to learn German at high school, and had never left the North-American continent before; Kris grew up bilingually

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<sup>8</sup> To preserve the anonymity of participants, all locations are disguised in the analyses of chapter 6.

<sup>9</sup> Each participant was given a pseudonym according to ethical guidelines.

with English and Latvian, started to learn German at high school, and participated in one previous sojourn.

- I was also interested in a wide range of learner beliefs and reported learning behaviours in class and during the study-abroad term, including, for example, the students' abilities and willingness to access German-speaking networks, feelings of success or failure, identity conflicts, conceptualizations of language and pronunciation, as well as learning objectives. Some students were not selected because their accounts did not provide enough information with regard to my research interests or their characteristics appeared as less pronounced than in other cases.<sup>10</sup>
- The reliability of the participant was extremely important to this study, which involved several months of data collection. The selected five participants were active in sending their e-journals to me on time and were available for interview sessions. One participant was excluded on the basis of this criterion.

I was able to interview the first group of sojourners only after they had come back from their exchange, because my data collection started in January 2010. Based on the above criteria, I nevertheless decided to extract two cases from this group, Rona and Zora, for further analysis and interpretation. I met with both students for a two-hour interview session a few weeks after they had returned from Germany.

From the second group of sojourners, I selected three cases, namely Lisa, Kris, and Alex. These participants underwent a more complex data collection process. I first met

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<sup>10</sup> My selection strategy was generally based on deciding *for* certain participants (and not *against* some others). Hence, five participants were not selected for the in-depth study in favour of the five named above. Besides reasons of feasibility (more than five would have gone beyond the scope of this work; less than five might have led to a less comprehensive investigation), I also selected the given five participants because their narrated experiences and behaviours illuminate the nature and effects of learner beliefs about pronunciation from very different angles. This approach allowed me to discuss learning paths, theoretical models, and pedagogical implications (see chapters 7 and 8) in a differentiated, complex, and multifaceted way.

with them for a two-hour interview about two months prior to their departure. Over the duration of their sojourn, I involved them in biweekly e-journal reflections and in two further interviews, one in the middle of their first term and one at the end of their first term. The only exception is Lisa, whom I interviewed twice, namely, pre-study abroad and toward the end of her first semester, due to a different university term schedule. Although all three students stayed in Germany for the duration of the full year, only data collected from the beginning to the end of the first term are included in this dissertation study. The intensive data collection procedures might have otherwise decreased the students' motivation to participate and would have caused unmanageable amounts of data after the full year.

A detailed introduction of each of these five participants will follow in chapter 6. The table below provides an overview over the main demographic information and data collection procedures for each of the five selected participants.

Table 5.3.1 *Demographic information and data collection procedures of the selected participants.*

	<b>Rona</b>	<b>Zora</b>	<b>Lisa</b>	<b>Kris</b>	<b>Alex</b>
Gender	female	female	female	male	male
Native Languages	English	Bosnian	English	English, Latvian	English
Age	24	21	21	20	22
Year and Program of Study	2nd, Master, German	4th, Bachelor, Honour's German	4th, Bachelor, Honour's German	3rd, Bachelor, Honour's Arts	3rd, Bachelor, Honour's Computer Science & German
Sojourn Dates	September – December 2009	August – December 2009	August 2010 – July 2011	August 2010 – June 2011	August 2010 – July 2011
Pre-Study Abroad Interview	---	---	28/06/2010	21/06/2010	16/06/2010

Mid-Study Abroad Interview	---	---	---	26/10/2010	21/10/2010
Post-Study Abroad Interview	05/03/2010	25/01/2010	05/01/2011	03/01/2011	17/12/2010
E-Journals	---	---	08–12/2010	08–12/2010	07–12/2010

### 5.3.2 Interviews

Conducting interviews was a major component of my data collection, taking place at different stages throughout the study, as described above. Whereas Rona’s and Zora’s accounts could be obtained only after they had studied abroad, the other three participants were researched longitudinally, eliciting their experiences and beliefs over time and revealing the influence of studying abroad on the personal and linguistic development of sojourners.

Hence, in designing the interview and question format, I had to keep in mind that I wanted to generate both introspective and retrospective data according to the topic of my project, allowing for (a) enough flexibility and openness to encourage participants to articulate their own thoughts, beliefs, and insights, as well as for (b) a certain degree of thematic structuring, eliciting specific information (see Ehrenreich, 2006). I therefore decided on a semi-structured interview format that would be “based on an interview guide, but at the same time [allow] for narratives to shape the process of the interview” (Ehrenreich, 2006, p. 200). The questions forming the interview guide focused on three main topics:

- Which beliefs and learning objectives do learners have about studying abroad and learning German? How are these views related to their beliefs about pronunciation in comparison to related areas of oral proficiency (such as fluency) and other aspects of language learning (such as vocabulary and grammar)?

- What issues do they face when studying abroad and how are such challenges inter-related with their beliefs about pronunciation and speaking skills?
- How are both study-abroad experiences and beliefs about language learning related to students' senses of self and constructions of specific identities in relation to different social environments?

The complete interview, including the interview guide, was piloted beforehand and changed only slightly. Although I left it up to the participants to choose between English and German, the main language of the interviews was English. Only Zora started the interview speaking German, but also switched to English after the first twenty minutes.

The semi-structured interview format was further informed by elements from Flick's (2000, 2006) descriptions of narrative and episodic interviews. The main characteristic of the narrative interview is a broad, yet topic-specific question that is asked at the beginning of the interview in order to elicit the interviewee's main narrative. Thus, after filling out a background questionnaire (further explained below), I started all interviews with an open introductory question, asking the participants what the study-abroad term meant to them as a person and as a learner of German. The following questions were stimulated by the preceding narrative, allowing for a subject-oriented interview process. Thus, "the model of a 'facilitating' interviewer who asks questions, and a vessel-like 'respondent' who gives answers, is replaced by two active *participants* who jointly construct narrative and meaning" (Riessman, 2008, p. 23), supporting the pursuit of a contextual research approach (Barcelos, 2003b) as outlined in chapter 4. According to narrative interview principles, I also avoided interrupting the participants' narratives and asked open-ended questions whenever possible, in order to develop a dialogic relationship and support communicative equality and reciprocity in the interviews.

Because my interest was directed toward “small-scale situation-based narratives” (Flick, 2000, p. 88) rather than long and extensive life narratives, I also adopted several elements of the episodic interview. This form of interviewing is based on the distinction between episodic and semantic knowledge, both of which are complementary parts of ‘world knowledge’ (Flick, 2000) and can be accessed via narrative incentives and specific questions respectively. “Thus, both narratives or descriptions of events and situations as well as argumentative and more abstract explications of developments and relationships are elicited in the course of an interview” (Ehrenreich, 2006, p. 200). On the one hand, my interviews were preceded by an introduction of the interview principle, in which I encouraged the participants to recount specific situations and elaborate on my questions in detail, an invitation that I repeated frequently during the interview in order to elicit narratives. On the other hand, I also asked questions that required the participants to reflect on more general and abstract questions concerning their perspectives and beliefs.

Furthermore, I added two additional elements that are typically part of the so-called problem-centered interview (Flick, 2006; Witzel, 2000) that aims at researching professional biographies. In the first instance, after introducing the participants to my study and the interview principles in the first interview, I started the recording and presented a questionnaire (see Appendix B) to the participants, eliciting biographical and educational data as well as introductory questions regarding their experiences with learning German. The questionnaire provided an initial insight into individual learning backgrounds and served as an introduction to the topic and interview situation, putting both myself and the participant at ease. Oftentimes, interesting discussions arose at this stage of the interview and made it easy to elicit further narratives after the questionnaire was filled out. The biographical part of the questionnaire was stimulated by Wilkerson (2007) who

investigated accent perception in native and non-native speakers of German. The questionnaire was piloted beforehand. Secondly, I also completed a short postscript after each interview, in which I noted down important contextual information, impressions, and peculiarities of the interview that I felt might become important during the data analysis.

The on-campus interviews took place in different, temporarily unused offices in the Modern Language Building of the University of Waterloo. This way, I could provide for a calm, undisturbed atmosphere and secure the students' anonymity, as no one was able to enter the room. I audio-recorded these interviews with a portable recorder (*EDI-ROL R-09 by Roland*), which was small enough to take students' attention away from the formality of the situation and create a conversation-like interview, in which students were comfortable to talk about personal beliefs and experiences. While the participants were in Germany, I conducted all interviews with the software application *Skype* (Skype Technologies S.A., 2003), which was the most convenient way of interviewing for both me and the participants, who all had *Skype* accounts to maintain contact with their families and friends in Canada. I informed the students at the beginning of each *Skype* interview that I would audio-record their voices, using the software *PowerGramo Basic* (Freebird Team, 2008), which is designed to record *Skype* calls and can be downloaded from the internet.

### 5.3.3 *E-Journals*

As well as conducting interviews, I asked the participants of the second group to write regular e-journals, which I designed in a semi-structured way as well. More precisely, I developed an email correspondence with each learner, consisting of 'trigger questions' from me that encouraged the participants to reflect on various aspects of their everyday lives in Germany. In order not to exert too much pressure on the students, I sent about



three trigger questions every second week. The content of these questions was specifically adjusted to the previous narrations of each individual, but generally focused on:

- Students' social environments and nature of their interactions, comprising the communities and the events they participated in.
- Their university lives, such as their learning objectives, course choices, and evaluations of courses and learning improvements.
- Their use and perceptions of German, comprising, for example, assessments of their own and other speakers' skills, beliefs about different linguistic varieties, and impeding or promoting factors they perceived in speaking German.
- Their beliefs about studying abroad and the study-abroad environment.

In using e-journals, I intended to gain narratives from these learners that would complement and deepen my insights established in interviews. E-journals are based on diary research, which is an integral element of the anthropological research tradition (Long, 1980) and of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), having its origins in ethnography. The participants' notes constitute valuable narratives due to the quality of intro- and retrospection, presenting an alternative to self-reporting and questionnaires. Diaries thus allow for the in-depth understanding of "facets of experience which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to an external observer" (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983, p. 190). Therefore, diaries present an appropriate research tool for the investigation of participants' beliefs and experiences, particularly in research contexts which are not directly observable for the researcher, such as the study-abroad context. Consequently, diary studies have long made their way into the field of SLA (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983), shedding light on various factors of learning and teaching processes.

Besides constituting an account of thoughts and experiences, diaries also present advantages to participants by encouraging their reflection and learning from experience (Pearson-Evans, 2006), possibly increasing their interest and sense of involvement both in their learning processes and in the research study. Therefore, “diaries are now regularly integrated into residence abroad programmes, both as ethnographic research tools and as a way of encouraging students to reflect and learn more from their experiences” (Pearson-Evans, 2006, p. 56). This insight leads Byram (1996) to state that interviews, and I argue diaries as well, may have ‘pedagogical functions’. He claims that the process of oral and written reflection helps the participant to gain a new understanding of the elicited experiences – a phenomenon that I have oftentimes noticed during the data collection, for example when students moved from rather stereotypical answers to more elaborate and reflective perspectives through the process of speaking or writing. This function, however, may also be interpreted as a limitation, as students’ perspectives may be shaped by the research situation (see section 8.3). Yet, as outlined above (see section 5.2.3), narrative analyses do not attempt to eliminate the influence of the researcher and research situation on the participant, but rather investigate how learners create narratives in dependence of such contextual factors.

As regards the format of diaries and e-journals, they may be either unstructured, gathering students’ thoughts and experiences according to their relevance in the emerging text, or structured in various ways, giving participants a certain amount of guidance in choosing topics and aspects to reflect upon. Due to the specific research interest of my study and the insight that in interviews the semi-structured question guide worked well in introducing important topics to the conversation, I decided to semi-structure the participants’ accounts with the help of the already described ‘trigger questions’. Yet, I always

emphasized the open-ended character of these triggers, explicitly encouraging the learners to elaborate from various perspectives and add further aspects that raised their interest or attention while studying abroad. Employing e-journals as opposed to traditional diaries also enabled me to both ‘control’ the frequency of participants’ writing and react to students’ narratives in the development of new trigger questions.

#### 5.4 Methods of Data Organization and Interpretation

The organization of data began with transcribing the interviews in word-processing documents. I transcribed the speech as precisely as possible, including phenomena such as repetitions, incomplete utterances, pauses, and hesitation markers. Due to the fact that I intend to investigate the construction of self in a jointly produced interaction, I transcribed my part of the interview just as precisely as the participants’ parts (Riessman, 2008). The main criteria of the transcription were the clarity and readability of the document; thus I coded conversational phenomena only when supporting these two criteria, mainly using symbols suggested by the CHAT (Codes of the Human Analysis of Transcripts) transcription format (MacWhinney, 2007) (see List of Symbols). During the transcription process, I also included commentaries on the margins of the documents, highlighting connections between topics and interesting facts that I wanted to use for further elaboration in the e-journals. Furthermore, I used colour coding of important passages in interview transcripts and e-journals, marking different thematic areas with specific colours. Both coding and comments were inspired by a review of the relevant literature as well as by learners’ narratives themselves.

In interpreting the data I adopted both a holistic content analysis (see chapter 6) and a categorical content analysis (see chapter 7) (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber,

1998). In order to study the narratives of selected cases in depth ('within-case analysis', Duff, 2008), I started with a holistic content analysis in which the narrative is taken as a whole and sections of the text are interpreted "in light of content that emerges from the rest of the narrative or in the context of the story in its entirety" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 13). Following the approach to holistic content analysis as suggested by Lieblich et al., I first read the material several times before I summarized my global understanding and impressions of the respective student's narratives. This process revealed special themes to me that emerged as important in the student's accounts, either due to their repetitive and extensive nature or due to the scarcity of information available. The decision on specific themes was also informed by my research questions and theoretical interests that I had formed during the study. Subsequently, I created an explanatory meta-narrative of each case, in which I interpreted the meaning of each theme in the participant's frame of experience as well as the relations between different themes, using insights from the study of literature. Riessman (2008), who labels this approach 'thematic analysis', specifies that "data are interpreted in light of thematics developed by the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory, the concrete purpose of an investigation, the data themselves, political commitments, and other factors)" (p. 54). It is important to note that the emic perspective, which shapes the conduct of a holistic content analysis, may evoke the impression that learner narratives and the formed meta-narratives are stable constructs. However, narratives only appear as stable within the moment they are told, whereas their content, structure, and performance may vary depending on different temporal, spatial, and situational factors.

This analysis format does not necessarily include a subsequent 'cross-case analysis' (Duff, 2008), investigating similarities and differences between individual narratives,

which I, however, intended to pursue in order to gain further insights from comparing participants. Therefore, I decided to also conduct a categorical content analysis that denotes what is typically understood as ‘content analysis’. Here, “the narrative materials of the ... stories will be processed analytically, namely, by breaking the text into relatively small units of content and submitting them to either descriptive or statistical treatment” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 112). This type of content analysis has many variations, depending on the purpose of the study and research interests. As regards my study, I used three themes (see chapter 7) emerging from the thematic/holistic content analysis in order to form categories that allow for comparisons between different participants of the study.

In combining holistic and categorical content analysis, I aim to both reveal the depth and individuality of each selected case as well as handle the amount of information and diversity in the gathered data, allowing for a comprehensive narrative inquiry along horizontal and vertical dimensions. The following chapter 6 will present a holistic content analysis of each of the five cases, followed by a categorical content analysis in chapter 7.

## 6 Study Results

In line with the methodological procedures outlined in the previous chapter, I will now turn to the first step of the narrative inquiry, namely, the holistic content analysis. The five selected participants will be analysed consecutively. In reconstructing their beliefs about studying abroad, language learning, and pronunciation, I will explore their individual learner profiles from an emic perspective. Each section is structured differently, following not only my research interests but also the nature of participants' narratives and salient themes, which were established in interviews and e-journals. However, I start each section with an introduction of the language learning background before compiling a meta-narrative for each participant. These meta-narratives are interspersed with several excerpts from interviews and e-journals in order to support my reconstruction of learners' experiences and provide insight into the individual narrations.

### 6.1 Rona

#### 6.1.1 *Language Learning Background*

Rona is a twenty-four year old Master's student of German, who grew up as a descendant of Austrian immigrants in western Canada. Her first experience with learning a foreign language started in kindergarten, when Rona learnt French in an immersion program, which she continued until grade six in elementary school. Despite her Austrian family heritage, Rona did not learn German before grade ten in high school. Even then, she decided on taking German only due to her father's wish to preserve the family heritage. At the time, she would have rather learnt Spanish; hence, she followed her German lessons with only moderate interest. In grade eleven, however, Rona went on her first three-month exchange to Germany, living with a host family in Wiesbaden and attending a *Gymnasium*.

This sojourn, she believes, completely changed her attitude toward learning German, boosting her motivation and giving direction to her program choice at university.

Rona thus enrolled in a Bachelor's program in German and Linguistics, which allowed her to attend a four-week intensive summer course at a university in Berlin and a five-month exchange program with the University of Kassel in Germany. Wishing to pursue an academic career, she then enrolled in the German Master's program at the University of Waterloo in Canada. At the time of the interview, Rona had just returned from her fourth exchange with Germany, taking place at the University of Heidelberg, and had little more than one term left before finishing her Master's degree in German.

In the interview, Rona placed a large emphasis on her last two exchanges in Kassel and Heidelberg, comparing these experiences with regard to her learning goals and success. Her account reveals insight into the relationship between access to communities of practice, language choice, beliefs about pronunciation, and changes in aspects of identity. The analysis of the interview data will therefore concentrate mainly on these two sojourns.

### 6.1.2 *Exchange with Kassel*

When Rona talked about her time in Kassel, her voice alternated between enthusiasm and excitement, on the one hand, and sadness with suppressed tears, on the other hand. Kassel appears to have left a lasting impression on her, as she perceives this sojourn as the most successful one in terms of her linguistic and cultural adjustment to Germany.

#### 6.1.2.1 Main Learning Goals

Rona attributes the success of her stay in Kassel to several factors based on her own approach to studying abroad as well as on supportive external circumstances. She credits the

improvement in her German to her purposeful efforts to integrate into communities of German speakers to improve her language skills. During her previous stays in Wiesbaden and Berlin, she noticed that speaking English and being surrounded by international students who tend to use English as lingua franca are detrimental to her intention to learn German. In retrospect, Rona constructs herself as determined to avoid speaking English during her sojourn and set on establishing intensive contacts with native Germans, as well as with international students who were willing to communicate in German with her:

Rona: and um and so when I went to Kassel um I kind of knew what to expect.

MM: hmm.

Rona: you know if I were to hang out with international students, and so and not that it's bad, like just depends, I think, what you're going for.  
and so I told myself you know, I really wanna go to learn to speak German and so # uh # so I I kind of made an effort and I was really lucky with were I got placed for my residence.

(excerpt R1<sup>11</sup>; ll. 440-5)

Rona's explanations show that she was very motivated to learn German, resulting in her 'investment' (Norton, 2000) in gaining access to German-speaking communities and in staying away from communities of English speakers. Her eagerness to connect with speakers of German was facilitated by the fact that she was placed in a residence with a high proportion of German students. By engaging in joint social activities such as cooking and going to events together, Rona was granted legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the communities of practice of German speakers living on her floor. Thus, her strong belief that connecting with German speakers would improve her language skills formed a disposition that increased her cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991), allowing her to gain legitimacy. Over time, Rona explains, she managed to develop

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<sup>11</sup> To ease the distinction between excerpts from different participants in chapter 7, the excerpts are numbered chronologically and with the first letter of participants' names (e.g., R1 = first excerpt from Rona's case).



long-lasting friendships with other German and international students living on her floor. In turn, she believes that she was successful in realizing her learning goal of becoming a full member of the existing communities, in which “[she] really felt like [she] fit in” (l. 2369) and “had found [her] own space” (l. 2374). Rona thus appears to have adjusted her identity constructions to fit these communities – an aspect, further investigated below.

### 6.1.2.2 Identity Constructions through Language Choice

The perceived successful integration into German-speaking communities is reflected in certain identity facets that Rona constructs in retrospect. When remembering her stay in Kassel, her accounts reveal that she avoided displaying certain markers of identity that may define her as a North-American speaker of English. Rather, in three short narratives, she underlines how she managed to successfully create new aspects of her identity that were mediated by her consistent use of German. In these narratives, Rona shows (a) how her successful integration through language choice was even acknowledged by her German friends (excerpt R2), (b) how she defended her established ‘German’ subject position through consistent use of the German language (excerpt R3), and (c) how difficult it was for her to switch to the use of English with other German-speaking friends (excerpt R4).

In the first of these three narratives, Rona demonstrates her success by telling a story about how her German friends rewarded her efforts of creating new ‘suitable’ identity aspects by positively acknowledging her integration into their circles:

Rona: ... one of the comments that the people made in Kassel, they’re like [...] you know you’re one of the first # exchange students to really integrate yourself in here [...].

MM: oh wow, and who would tell you that?

Rona: it was one of the Germans, like ‘cause I guess most of them, ya and and someone made this comment ‘cause there was this American that had moved in and they- they were like [...] it’s so funny ‘cause we walk into the

kitchen and then you and the American you guys are sitting there and you're eating your porridge [...] &=laugh.

MM: &=laugh.

Rona: [...] and then and then you're speaking in German, like there's like it's so funny because why wouldn't you just speak in English 'cause it's easier [...] &=laugh.

MM: &=laugh ya, but you guys wanted to learn German.

Rona: ya ya #.

(excerpt R2; ll. 532-51)

In Rona's story, her friends were astonished by her ability to unify different cultural and linguistic identity aspects: eating porridge while chatting with an American student identifies her as North American from the assumed perspective of her German friends. At the same time, however, she positions herself as a member of German-speaking communities by demonstrating efforts to engage in their shared practice of using German as language of communication. Thus, through her prior, less successful exchanges Rona learnt which "rules of entry" (Block, 2007) she should follow in order to integrate into German-speaking communities of practice and present herself as a successful exchange student. In so doing, she believes to have succeeded in balancing different aspects of her linguistic and cultural selves, creating an 'ideal persona' that will set the norm against which she measures herself during her following exchange in Heidelberg.<sup>12</sup>

In the interview, Rona also discusses examples that underline her 'story of success' through instances in which she defended her ideal persona against outside challenges. In the following excerpt, she narrates a situation in which the identity she constructed in relation to desirable communities of practice was challenged by another speaker who preferred to speak English over German. Such behaviour, however, threatened her intention

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<sup>12</sup> At this point, I disregard my own influence on Rona's narratives. Since my presence shaped presumably all my participants' accounts, I will discuss this aspect separately in section 8.3.

to improve her language skills by integrating into circles of German speakers, causing her to take defensive measures in order to maintain respective identity aspects:

Rona: ya 'cause I have been very strong about this, you don't know, and I remember one time I was so annoyed, there was this guy and he knocks on my door, and I forget what he wanted, and he starts talking to me in English, and I'd never spoken in English to him before, I'd only spoken German around him ... and he starts talking to me in English, and I was really ticked off &=laugh.

MM: &=laugh really?

Rona: ya I was and so, but I just kept on speaking in German and then he, I don't know, I don't think he ever spoke in English to me again.

(excerpt R3; ll. 552-60)

Rona establishes clear antipodes in this story that allow her to position herself as part of German circles: she never spoke English (only German) around this student, causing her to be “really ticked off” when he spoke in English to her, which he never dared to do again. Through her narration, her constructed identity appears vulnerable, thus requiring her to defend her success in integrating with German speakers against the international student's attack. She therefore attempted to re-establish her identity as a member of the German-speaking group by responding to his, in her understanding, disrespectful threat with a similarly disrespectful ignorance of his attempt to start an English conversation with her.

Furthermore, Rona explains that she made very few exceptions to her policy of speaking German exclusively and always made sure that such exceptions remained secret to her friends in the residence. Even with another friend from her Canadian home university she would only meet under the condition that the conversation would take place in German. Only when her sister came for a visit, Rona had to switch back to English, which she experienced as a strange feeling after having spoken German for such a long time. She elaborates on this aspect in a further episode, in which she describes that she had internal-

ized this new sense of self, which was dependent on the use of German, to such an extent that she was not able to converse in English anymore, even if she wanted to:

Rona: hm ### well I think 'cause when I was in Ka- Kassel you know I'm really able to integrate myself, you know I was able to get kind of into this into this um # you know I was speaking German all the time and ## and it got to the point where it was it felt strange to speak English.

MM: hmm.

Rona: you know and like my friend, I was with my friend Carolin and we only spoke in German together and I knew she was taking Germ- or English and I'm sure her English was really good and at one point you know we were like [...] well let's try to speak in English for the next like half hour [...] something like that, and it was so hard and like all of a sudden we had nothing to say.

MM: ya?

Rona: like we had nothing to say to each other and the conversation just stopped.

MM: hmm.

Rona: and after this awkward silence for like three minutes we just jumped right back into German and then it was fine.

(excerpt R4; ll. 2397-2411)

In this excerpt, Rona reveals how much she believes she had abandoned aspects of her 'English' identity through language choice in order to construct suitable identity facets. By adopting the continuous use of German as a shared practice of her new circle of friends, Rona appears to have constructed identity aspects in relation to this community that were mediated by the use of German. By switching into English, she re-established 'old' identity aspects that fit neither the community's practices nor her new sense of self, causing a communication breakdown that could only be overcome by switching back to German.

### 6.1.2.3 Identity Constructions through Pronunciation

Rona believes that not only did her willingness to integrate and adjust her language choice to the perceived 'rules of entry' form valuable cultural capital in gaining legitimacy, but also that her pronunciation helped her to outwardly portray facets of her identity that corresponded to the communities she sought access to and to her claimed persona. When I

asked her whether her pronunciation ever played an important role while being abroad,

Rona answered as follows:

Rona: ... it involves being able to integrate more.

MM: hmm.

Rona: and ya maybe that has to do with my accent, maybe it has to do with you know just where I was, with being in a dorm, maybe it has to do with my attitude and so it's, it's harder to kind of isolate it.

(excerpt R5; ll. 2593-7)

In this quotation, Rona summarizes the different, hardly separable kinds of capital that she accumulated and that she thinks helped her to connect with German speakers, attributing a significant role to her accent. Indeed, Rona reveals that she generally places a noticeable emphasis on her pronunciation as a tool of constructing certain preferred identity aspects. She believes that especially one feature of her German pronunciation needed to be improved in order to successfully claim a subject position that covered her cultural origin and prevented unfavourable identity ascriptions: the /r/ sound. Whereas her high school teacher tolerated different /r/ allophones except for the English alveolar approximant [ɹ], Rona learnt in the pronunciation course offered at the University of Kassel that she should use the uvular fricative [ʁ] in order to speak standard German. Interestingly, Rona put so much effort into replacing her alveolar trill [r] with [ʁ] that she started to overemphasize the sound. She explains her motivation for trying so hard as follows:

Rona: um # well I guess I guess like for example when I was talking about using the [ʁ] and and doing that too much.

MM: hmm.

Rona: you know 'cause that I'm trying to overemphasize that I'm not an [ɹ] you know.

MM: oh ya ya hmm ya ya.

Rona: so I guess that you know to try to kind of get away from the # ya 'cause when I guess when when I'm saying American you know I probably mean Canada too, you know 'cause it's just with the # the typical North American accent &=laugh.

MM: hmm hmm &=laugh.

Rona: speaking a foreign language.

(excerpt R6; ll. 2246-52)

Similar to excerpt R2, Rona places a strong emphasis on covering the ‘North-American’ part of her identity in her speech – this time by means of manipulating her pronunciation. In consciously attempting to avoid being identified as North American, she overemphasized the standard German [ʁ] sound, using pronunciation as a tool to exert agency over the construction of specific identity aspects that she deemed important for gaining access to communities of German speakers. The strong connection between her sense of self and pronunciation also becomes obvious in structural aspects of the quotation above. She literally equates ‘using’ the sound [ɹ] with ‘being’ American, wishing to avoid that sound in order not to be recognized as such.

This attempt is grounded in Rona’s belief that German speakers may connote negative associations with North Americans that may hinder her integration into their communities. By choosing pronunciation as the tool to re-construct specific identity aspects, Rona seems to believe that her accent reveals her origin most obviously and is the feature that is most likely to hinder her in accessing German-speaking circles. When I asked her whether she deems pronunciation important for her linguistic competence, she hence explains:

Rona: um # ya it is, and I’m not saying that it’s not um it’s it’s not important like # I like that I can I can go # um to a lot of places in Germany and # have them not immediately assume that I’m an Ami [American] or something you know &=laugh.

MM: hmm hmm.

Rona: ‘cause ‘cause there are a lot of negative connotations associated with that and um # that I kind of, I can avoid that # a little bit.

MM: ya.

Rona: fit in a little bit more you know.

(excerpt R7; ll. 1519-28)

Besides the German /r/ sound, Rona is also concerned with the distinction between u and ü and as well as the /l/ sound and notes that she can produce them in isolation but has difficulties hearing and producing them in spontaneous speech. She thus often avoids corresponding minimal pairs in order not to embarrass herself. The ability to reflect upon her pronunciation and its functions in gaining access to communities of practice may be due to Rona's intensive training both in theoretical phonology and phonetics during her Bachelor studies as well as the availability of practical pronunciation training in German as a Foreign Language at Kassel university, evoking her love for phonetics and interest in her own pronunciation skills and the application of phonetic rules.

Hence, she also believes that her success in integrating so well into the residence in Kassel was related to her efforts in increasing the intelligibility of her German pronunciation and its proximity to standard German, which she perceives as a shared practice particularly among German university students. She believes that this effort allowed her to position herself closely to the communicative practices of her German-speaking friends:

- Rona: when you have the right pronunciation you know it can help you be more understandable and I think it can also help you integrate more.  
MM: hmm.  
Rona: you know.  
MM: into the society you mean basically?  
Rona: ya ya #.  
MM: did you experience this yourself #?  
Rona: mmh ### yes maybe um ya I think so, like when I was in Kassel um ### hm ### maybe ### 'cause 'cause ya when I was in Kassel you know again, like all of my friends on my floor they were all German and I'm not saying that they were friends with me because you know I could # pronounce things properly &=laugh but &=laugh I think, I don't know may- maybe it makes me more # I don't wanna say accessible 'cause that sounds weird but # um ## I don't wanna say approachable either ## hm.  
MM: maybe you're more one of them or so, maybe something like that?  
Rona: ya maybe maybe closer ya #.

(excerpt R8; ll. 1617-32)

While reflecting on her Kassel sojourn, Rona thus appears to emphasize pronunciation as a tool to support the construction of an ‘ideal persona’. She believes that her ability to adjust linguistically to her surroundings and fight against challenges supported her integration into desired communities of German speakers. Although it cannot be determined precisely to which extent the construction of her Kassel sojourn is influenced by her subsequent exchange experience in Heidelberg, the idealization of her ‘Kassel self’ sets a high benchmark, against which she measures her success in Heidelberg. The experience of both exchanges thus appears widely interrelated.

#### 6.1.2.4 Identity Conflicts upon Return to Canada

Rona’s perceived successful integration revealed its painful side toward the end of her sojourn. Rona tells that she had such a hard time leaving Kassel after four months that she decided to extend her stay by an additional month. When finally arriving back in Canada, she felt what she labels a “reverse culture shock” (l. 2538). Missing her German friends and environment, she found it difficult to re-adjust not only to the Canadian lifestyle but also to the use of English:

Rona: and then coming back there was this, like coming back to Regina, there was definitely this period of readjustment.

MM: hmm.

Rona: and # and for like the first month, my family they thought I was trying to um put on a show or something because I would be speaking but it would sound strange or I’d be using # I’d always wanted to I I would wanna throw in like German words or.

MM: hmm.

Rona: they’re like [.] you’re talking differently, you’re talking differently, you’re just trying to pretend like you’re European or something [.]

MM: oh &=laugh.

Rona: I’m like [.] no, I’m really not [.] &=laugh.

(excerpt R9; ll. 584-95)



Similar to what Marx (2002) describes in her study, the restructuring of different identity facets during the study-abroad term becomes highly visible through changes in pronunciation and language choice, which outwardly portray changes in one's inner self. Hence, it can be assumed that the identity aspects that Rona constructed consistently in correspondence to the German-speaking communities became such a part of her self that she could not (or did not want to) simply give up these aspects upon returning to Canada. Instead of experiencing a loss of identity when entering Germany, Rona had to deal with a process of 'reverse' self-translation (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000) and the reconstruction of her 'Canadian' identity after her sojourn. She found that changes in her identity in correspondence to German communities of practice were not accepted when she returned to 'old' communities, marking her as a 'stranger'. As Rona shows, returning to one's home country may necessitate reintegrating into the modes of interaction and shared practices that are common in these communities. This explains the remembered reaction of Rona's family, who did not accept her changed way of speaking as part of their shared practices, rejecting her uncommon behaviour by constructing her as an outsider of their group, somebody who "pretends to be European" and "puts on a show" – words that mark Rona's behaviour as an intentional threat to their community's cohesion and/or as an intentional attempt to separate and refuse reintegrating into the family. The ascription of a 'European' identity may also hint at the family's assumption that, due to her sojourn, Rona was attempting to elevate herself as somebody more cultivated and sophisticated than the average North American. According to Rona's account, her family therefore punished her construction of an identity that is noticeably different from theirs with ridicule, non-acceptance, and rejection of her behaviour. In narrating these memories of her difficulties in readjusting to her home, Rona manages to further support the construction of her ideal Kassel persona.

Similar to some participants in Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) study, Rona feels forced to reintegrate by adjusting to the expectations of communities of practice of her home culture, requiring her to restructure her identity again and distance herself from her achievements and experiences abroad. Rona describes this unpleasant inner conflict of finding her changed inner self unaccepted and rejected as a "reverse culture shock". The result of this readjustment and reintegration process is the feeling that "a part of you is missing" (l. 615), namely the part of her identity that she developed in Germany but that was only valid in her Kassel environment. She thus summarizes Kassel as a "life-changing, transforming experience" (ll. 2687-8) even though she had to abandon the outward projection of her inner changes through pronunciation and language choice upon return to home communities.

Through the narration of successful aspects and challenges, Rona creates a persona for herself that represents what she perceives to be the ideal exchange student: someone who gains access to L2 communities of practice by speaking the target language almost exclusively and by adjusting the way to speak (as expressed through pronunciation) to desired communities, which may result in such an intensive integration that returning to the home environment may present major identity conflicts. In this context, her Kassel narratives appear to serve a clear function in the overall interview: they allow Rona to make sense of her subsequent sojourn in Heidelberg. Concomitantly, it appears possible that her Kassel experience also shaped her actual approach to Heidelberg. In this respect, the construction of the ideal 'Kassel' persona caused her to set very high learning goals and to compare her 'Heidelberg' self with this 'Kassel' persona during the sojourn.

### 6.1.3 *Exchange with Heidelberg*

Three and half years after Rona's exchange with Kassel, she embarked on her fourth sojourn, which took place at the University of Heidelberg. Based on the creation of the ideal persona and corresponding learning goals, Rona perceives both exchanges in significantly different ways. Due to her overly positive memories of Kassel as well as her personal and professional development, Rona appears to 'overlook' her position as a learner in Heidelberg and expects herself to act like a native speaker in academic contexts, putting so much pressure on herself that the sojourn in Heidelberg seems to be a disappointment for her.

#### 6.1.3.1 Main Learning Goals

Because she is now a Master's student, Rona sets herself very different learning goals for her four-month stay. Even though during both sojourns Rona focused on improving her German skills, her stay in Heidelberg followed primarily academic purposes, so the desire to integrate with German speakers lost its prominence:

Rona: and then when I was in Heidelberg, it was one of the first times where I actually had to work &=laugh.

MM: &=laugh what do y- what do you mean by that &=laugh?

Rona: &=laugh where it was actually important that I do school work &=laugh.

MM: oh I see &=laugh.

Rona: ya and so it wasn't you know, I wasn't going out as much as I was in Kassel and that kind of thing.

MM: hmm.

Rona: hmm but # and so I was actually, you know, doing my course work and.

MM: ya.

Rona: being responsible, trying to be a good student &=laugh.

(excerpt R10; ll. 519-29)

In retrospect, Rona explains that the main learning goal of this trip was to engage more heavily in academic work than during her previous sojourns and to improve her German language skills, particularly for the purpose of working in academic environments. Hence,

instead of attending German as a Foreign Language courses, Rona attended content courses in Heidelberg that were offered for German students and would count toward her Master's degree in Canada. Rona believes that the different purpose of her sojourn then made all the difference in her ability to integrate into the Heidelberg environment.

The goal she set for herself this time, namely being a 'responsible' and 'good' student also caused her to choose a different living situation. In order to establish a calm working atmosphere, Rona moved in with another Master's student from her Canadian home university, sharing a more mature apartment in the house of a German family in the suburbs of Heidelberg. This living situation indeed provided her with access to very different communities of practice and consequently also different learning opportunities. Specifically, as part of the exchange program, Rona and her roommate worked as teaching assistants for undergraduate exchange students from their home university, who went to Heidelberg at the same time. Thus, instead of seeking access to communities of active German speakers, Rona developed friendships with other Canadian students and spent significant parts of her leisure time with English speakers as well as on the phone with her boyfriend in Canada. Although the group of Canadian exchange students started with the resolution to speak German among themselves at all times, Rona admits that her "resolve this time wasn't as strong as when as when [she] was in Kassel" (ll. 1911-2), so that she gave in when the group of friends gradually switched back to using English after a while. Therefore, Rona not only narrates different learning goals and corresponding circumstances of living, but also the identity facets she constructs retrospectively in her Heidelberg accounts are not as concerned with language choice, as they were in her Kassel accounts.

### 6.1.3.2 Identity Constructions based on Native-Speaker Ideal

Rona's accounts of her two sojourns make it somewhat difficult to distinguish between retrospective interpretations and beliefs that she held before and during the Heidelberg sojourn. On one hand, it seems that her perception of the Kassel sojourn serves retrospectively as a reason to explain the ostensibly less successful Heidelberg sojourn. On the other, it also appears possible that Rona already approached Heidelberg with the romantic idealization of her Kassel sojourn in mind. In this respect, the missing critical distance to her previous experience may have informed learning goals and desired identity facets which drew on the native-speaker like persona, which she believes to have inhabited in Kassel. This in turn caused difficulties in adjusting to the Heidelberg sojourn:

Rona: and ## and and then this last time in Heidelberg I never really found my own space you know, I was visiting all these old # um all like all these old places and all these friends from earlier trips.

MM: ya ya.

Rona: you know I was kind of going there and doing this kind of # going to these previous memories.

MM: hmm.

Rona: you know.

MM: hmm hmm ##.

Rona: and so I never really felt at home when I was in Heidelberg # ya and so it wasn't a bad, so it wasn't a bad experience, not it's not like I was there, thinking the whole time, oh my god, I just want to leave, don't wanna be here anymore, but it was ## but ya like I just had never kind of, I don't know, grounded myself, I don't know if that's the right word.

(excerpt R11; ll. 2378-91)

In visiting old friends and places, Rona revived her memories of her successful integration into German-speaking communities, helping her to construct an idealized image of her Kassel sojourn that could not compare with her Heidelberg sojourn and also served as an explanation for her perceived lack of success. In not being able to fulfil her own expectations as based on her Kassel experience, Rona seems to have developed emotional barriers,

inhibiting her from taking advantage of situations that offer the native-speaker contact she was looking for, as in the case of classroom encounters at university:

Rona: oh man, it was so nerve-wracking, 'cause it's one thing to be speaking um in German with non-native speakers and it's something completely different when you're taking a # a REAL &=laugh German course with native speakers.

MM: ya.

Rona: ya it was very intimidating.

(excerpt R12; ll. 145-9)

In separating her current self in Heidelberg (and at the time of the interview) from both German 'native speakers' and her imagined ideal self in Kassel, Rona develops identity constructions for herself that label her as a 'non-native speaker' whose proficiency is insufficient for meeting assumed native-speaker expectations. These emotional barriers may then have acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy because they prevented Rona from being granted legitimate peripheral participation in communities in which she could have improved her academic German. For example, even though the professor of the content course encouraged Rona to participate in group and class discussions, she felt very overwhelmed about having to use the German language in academic contexts.

Her construction of a native-speaker ideal influenced not only her treatment of academic learning situations but also her general approach to adjusting to the German environment. In the following excerpt, Rona tells about an incident in Heidelberg that reveals a noticeable difference in her approach to judge and mediate between two cultures. Whereas she constructs herself as a successful mediator between her cultural origin and present surroundings in her Kassel accounts, Rona underlines her experienced hardship to adjust to German behavioural practices while being in Heidelberg:

Rona: and then # and then # this time I don't know like I like I definitely had a different attitude when I went to Heidelberg.

MM: hmm.

Rona: and and it's things like things that # I had been fine with before that were different, I just had a harder time # um like # hm 'cause 'cause, you know, let's say you go grocery shopping and you go to Lidl and you know they want you to put your food in your grocery cart and they want you to be super super fast and by the time that they're done scanning in your food, everything's in your grocery cart and you can pay them and move for the next person, 'cause they only have this little Band [conveyor belt] that's you know this big.

MM: hmm hmm.

Rona: with no space and ## and and like this had always been fine before and it's getting, you know, annoyed with things like this, you know.

(excerpt R13; ll. 2449-58)

Rona explains that many things that she easily adjusted to in Kassel started to “annoy” her while being in Heidelberg, seemingly limiting both her language and cultural learning. In this excerpt, Rona distances her Heidelberg self very clearly from her native-speaker like persona in Kassel, the latter of which she believes to have been better adjusted and integrated. In order to overcome her negative self-constructions and perceived failure to meet native-speaker based expectations in academic and non-academic environments, Rona presents herself as loyal to her cultural origin instead:

Rona: and ya things like that ## ya and just being upset by # by a lot of like the attitude, you know it sounds so bad and like hear myself say this, I'm like I can't believe I thought this, I can't believe I'm saying this and especially you know with it being my fourth time, you know like this should have been # &=laugh.

MM: &=laugh you should be German by now &=laugh.

Rona: I know &=laugh and I'm obviously not &=laugh.

MM: ya.

Rona: and it's real- realizing like how # how Canadian I am &=laugh.

(excerpt R14; ll. 2554-61)

As can be seen in this excerpt, Rona finds it difficult to resign from her own expectations and the ideal persona she created and believes to have been part of herself in the past. In showing loyalty to her Canadian background, Rona manages to give her negative self-perception a more positive turn, which may also be interpreted as an attempt to repair her

face (Goffman, 1967) during the interview with me, a native speaker of (academic) German, whom she may perceive as integrated into different German communities.

### 6.1.3.3 Identity Constructions based on Pronunciation

Rona's focus on native speakers and their influence on her self-perception are also reflected by her beliefs about her own pronunciation and her ability to work on this feature of her speech. As described above, when recounting her Kassel sojourn Rona idealizes her pronunciation, which she believes helped her in covering her cultural origin and in gaining access to German-speaking communities. Consequently, in her Heidelberg narratives, Rona evaluates her pronunciation much more critically, supporting her self-perception of being an incompetent speaker of academic German:

Rona: oh for my master's um ## I definitely wanted to brush up on my German.

MM: ya.

Rona: 'cause I c- I can feel that it's um it's not as good as it used to be.

MM: hmm.

Rona: or it wasn't as good as it used to be and and then with the accent, like I would just hear myself speaking German here and just be like [...] oh no this is awful [...] &=laugh.

(excerpt R15; ll. 669-75)

Thus, Rona's beliefs about pronunciation being an important aspect of her identity as a German speaker are still prevalent. Due to her position as a Master's student Rona perceives herself as part of an academic environment, in which she would like to present herself as a scholar and not as a learner of German. Detecting an accent in her speech therefore estranges her from the self-construction as a future academic and as a person who ostensibly used to be very close to fulfilling native-speaker standards during a previous sojourn. The identity conflict that Rona experiences between her learning goals and her abil-



ity to fulfil these expectations, which ignore her status as a language learner, expresses itself very clearly in excerpt R15.

Interestingly, even though Rona appears to be unable to act against this conflict, she recognizes its existence and finds an explanation for it that is based on pronunciation as a tool to outwardly construct specific identities. She describes that her sense of self has changed between the two sojourns, inhibiting her ability to work on her pronunciation:

- Rona: ... when you're still young and # and um ## and and just kind of and not just to say that you know when you're younger you're more capable of learning pronunciation by picking it up, but it's also having the attitude you know and being more willing to.
- MM: hmm.
- Rona: you know make a fool of yourself, you know 'cause I think when you get older it's harder because you wanna look smart you know.
- MM: ya.
- Rona: you wanna look smart, you wanna look successful and in order to do that # you don't wanna do mistakes, right.
- MM: hmm.
- Rona: and so you're a bit more conservative of of certain things you might try out or do and # when you're younger # you have fewer ambitions, I think.
- (excerpt R16; ll. 2753-8)

Although Rona emphasized improving her pronunciation in both exchanges, she explains that she was more willing to actually work on this language skill in Kassel due to lower inhibitions, or in Guiora et al.'s (1975) words, a higher permeability of ego boundaries. As Guiora et al. (see section 3.4) explain, the way we sound is very closely related to our sense of self and the identity we aim to construct for ourselves. Rona believes that with increasing age both positive attitudes and willingness to learn an L2 pronunciation decrease because the older she gets, the less willing she is to expose herself to threats to her identity, which may counteract desired facets of being "smart" and "successful".

Due to her position as a Master's student and possibly future academic, she therefore feels that she cannot afford to lose her face (Goffman, 1967) by making pronunciation

mistakes when engaging in conversations with native speakers in academic environments. So besides ‘natural’ impediments to learn pronunciation at a later age (not being “capable of learning pronunciation by picking it up”), Rona believes that her academic maturation negatively affects her wish to improve her pronunciation because the available (academic) communities of practice may not be accepting toward mistakes. She thus resorts to a ‘conservative’ stance and avoids possible identity threats, which seeking access to these communities may cause due to not being able to observe the perceived ‘rules of entry’ (i.e., a native-like, inconspicuous pronunciation).

#### 6.1.3.4 Perception of Standard and Dialectal German Pronunciation

Since Rona’s identity constructions as a learner and speaker of German are strongly based on her beliefs about her own pronunciation, the question arises regarding what perceptions she may hold concerning other speakers’ German pronunciation in both its standard and dialectal forms as well as in different social contexts.

Her general beliefs about German pronunciation appear to follow her attempt to establish a positive construction of herself as a speaker of German. Although she seems invested in not following negative stereotypes, she cannot entirely liberate herself from such notions:

Rona: but ya ## oh [.] try to describe what German sounds like [.] ### it’s a very ### lots of people have said that German sounds very angry.

MM: hmm.

Rona: you know, that it’s very harsh # but, you know, but then I think, you know, maybe they really think about Dutch ‘cause Dutch has a lot more guttural, you know.

MM: oh maybe hmm #.

Rona: like German never sounded as angry to me.

(excerpt R17; ll. 1207-13)

In this excerpt, Rona tries to avoid answering my question stereotypically, but in her attempt to present a neutral stance toward German pronunciation she uncritically carries the perceived stereotype of harshness over to another language, namely, Dutch. This stance may be interpreted as Rona trying to defend the German pronunciation from negative ascriptions that may cast a negative light on her as a speaker of this language – and possibly also on me, which I might interpret as an offence.

Similarly, Rona also carries non-reflective and generalizing beliefs about the occurrence of standard German in certain environments, when she explains, for example, that “these university students ... they’re all trying to speak closer to High German, I think” (ll. 2622-3). This perception naturally contributes to Rona’s construction of an ideal native-speaker scholar that she is unable to reach, resulting in timidity in conversing with her classmates in the content course at Heidelberg university.

Interestingly enough, despite Rona’s tendency to view German pronunciation and the use of standard German stereotypically, she exhibits a much more neutral stance toward the occurrence of dialects than most other participants:

- MM: how do you feel when you hear speakers with dialect #?  
Rona: um ### hmm um ### it it depends, some dialects are easier to understand than others.  
MM: hmm.  
Rona: um and so for me I don’t know if I, I don’t know if I share the same # ‘cause I ‘cause I know often dialect is, it’s often stigmatized, especially in Germany and I and I don’t # I guess for me it’s it’s really it’s it’s more about understanding and if I can understand them or not.  
(excerpt R18; ll. 1003-9)

Even though she is aware of the common stigmatization of dialects, she explains that she judges dialects only by how well she can understand them, meaning that the feelings evoked by the dialects are not based on stigma but on how easily she can access the corresponding communities of practice. The source of her neutrality and ability to reflect upon

these collective beliefs may be due to multiple first-hand experiences with different dialects in Germany and Austria, which she encountered while visiting family acquaintances and friends in different regions. Also, in the house of her landlord in Heidelberg she occasionally talked to the family's grandmother who lived in the house, as well. Due to the fact, however, that the grandmother spoke a regional variety of German, Rona was often not able to respond appropriately because of her difficulties in understanding that kind of German with its non-standard pronunciation. Nevertheless, Rona engaged in conversations with the old lady despite the chance to have her position as a German speaker threatened due to lacking comprehension, revealing noticeable differences in her treatment of academic and non-academic situations:

Rona: and we would often meet the Oma [grandma] doing laundry 'cause she did laundry for the entire family.

MM: ya.

Rona: ... and # and she would be speaking to me in in the very strong Heidelberg dialect and # you know at first, you know it just felt like oh my goodness, you know she's just talking and talking and talking and I don't know what she's saying, and sometimes I would think I've understand what she's saying, so I'd respond and I obviously didn't understand because of the look on her face, she'd be like # &=laugh.

MM: &=laugh.

Rona: and # uh # ya but it got easier you know once.

MM: really ya?

Rona: uh a little bit you know ... figure a few things out um and just kind of get used to it and so by the end maybe I can understand, you know maybe forty percent, I've you know I've improved &=laugh.

(excerpt R19; ll. 980-99)

This excerpt presents a case in which Rona tells how she did not react 'conservatively' by showing reluctance to communicate with native speakers. Instead, Rona exposed herself to the situation and took the chance of having her identity as a proficient German speaker threatened, perceiving such moments as learning opportunities that may improve her skills. Thus, in non-academic environments in which she does not aim at constructing a corre-

sponding professional identity, she appears more willing to take risks and use learning opportunities by seeking access to German speakers. Also, due to the fact that the grandmother ‘violated’ native-speaker standards herself, Rona may have been more open to communicate with her, feeling that these situations would not require her to achieve native-speaker based learning goals.

### 6.1.3.5 Evaluation of the Heidelberg Exchange

In contrast with the Kassel sojourn, which Rona evaluates as her most successful stay in Germany with great difficulties to reintegrate into the Canadian environment, she constructs her time in Heidelberg as less influential and enjoyable and easier to leave behind:

Rona: ‘cause like when I was, when I was in Heidelberg you know oh it was, you know it was it was the first time that I had actually been homesick.

MM: ya.

Rona: because before like # being in Germany like ya I miss home, you know there are things I miss but I wasn’t you know homesick ... like where I actually wanted to be back and so this was the first time that I had really experienced that.

MM: hmm #.

Rona: and it’s weird, ‘cause ya I think this is the first time I went to Germany and really experienced culture shock, you know.

(excerpt R20; ll. 2521-31)

Hence, for Rona coming back to Canada is associated with feelings of happiness and the overcoming of feelings of homesickness that she felt for the first time on a sojourn. Instead of feeling the “reverse culture shock”, which she experienced after Kassel, this time Rona believes to have gone through a real culture shock while being in Germany. The construction of herself as a future scholar with accompanying learning goals, circumstances of living, and social contacts noticeably prevented Rona from integrating into the German environment in Heidelberg. The missing integration into German-speaking circles

and possibility to practise the language without (psychological) constraints in turn provoked Rona's construction of the sojourn as a failure in light of her learning goals.

Similar to Rona's understanding of why she was not able to work on her pronunciation in Heidelberg (excerpt R16), she is also able to reflect on the reasons for the differences in her linguistic and cultural learning success between her third and fourth sojourn:

Rona: ya well I think um # I think being in Germany as a German language speaker # you know you immerse yourself # um and then you hear all these things, you pick up all these things, and it depends how, it also depends on how observant you are, and how willing you are.

MM: hmm.

Rona: to put yourself in certain situations, and so the times where I have been # um # willing to put myself in uncomfortable or you know where I'm kind of, where I feel out of place, and it's kind of getting used to that, it's getting used to feeling out of place.

MM: hmm.

Rona: and and kind of coming to terms with this and # and that you know it's not necessarily a bad thing and what can I do to um to learn from this.

(excerpt R21; ll. 2167-78)

This quotation shows that Rona understands that taking advantage of the learning opportunities offered by the study-abroad context is dependent on the willingness of learners to expose themselves to uncomfortable situations, in which they may feel out of place. These insights of Rona's can be understood as her partially taking responsibility for her learning behaviour. Rona seems to acknowledge that she did not seek such learning opportunities to the extent she did in Kassel due to identity conflicts. These conflicts were caused by her native-speaker orientation and became obvious, particularly in academic contexts.

#### 6.1.4 *Summary*

Rona's construction of her most recent sojourn in Heidelberg appears to stand in contrast to her beliefs about her previous study-abroad experience in Kassel. In believing to have achieved all her learning goals in Kassel, she creates her past self as a learning ideal,

which she felt she was unable to reach during her Heidelberg sojourn. The memories of both sojourns can be assumed to have influenced one another. Remembering her German friendships and language improvements in Kassel may have caused her to set high expectations in her following exchange. In turn, her perceived inability to live up to these goals may have promoted a further idealization of Kassel as a means to make sense of the currently felt disappointment. In the interpretation of both the ‘success story’ and ‘failure story’, Rona draws on the relationship between desired identity constructions and her German skills, as most notably determined by the perception of her pronunciation. She appears to perceive and employ pronunciation as a tool to construct identity facets in correspondence to the communities she would like to access. Whereas in Kassel she believes to have successfully adjusted her way to speak to her surroundings, in Heidelberg she appeared to be unable to reconcile her desire to fit into academic communities with her speaking skills, in particular her pronunciation. In creating these two different sojourn narratives, Rona performs identities which support her interpretation of herself as a speaker of German (see section 5.2.2), while using pronunciation as a salient identity marker.

## 6.2 Lisa

### 6.2.1 *Language Learning Background*

At the time of the first interview, Lisa was a twenty-one-year-old student of German who was approaching the end of her third year at university, majoring in German in the Honours program. The first foreign language Lisa learnt was French, which she studied from grade one to nine in elementary and high school, fulfilling the requirements of foreign language study in Ontario. Despite having German heritage in her maternal and paternal families, Lisa did not start learning this language before grade ten in high school, when she attended a one-year course. She reports that she was not fond of her German class, mainly because her teacher was not an ‘authentic native speaker’. She nevertheless enjoyed learning the language and studied it on her own through the internet, magazines, and books, which formed a habit that she continued in her later studies. After high school, Lisa enrolled in a Speech Communication program at university. Because of feeling uncomfortable about public speaking, however, Lisa preferred the German classes she attended for her minor, prompting her to switch to a major in German.

Although Lisa is of German descent, her family communicates only in English, with her grandparents being the only active German speakers. Due to a lack of exposure, Lisa explained before her study-abroad term that she could not even understand her grandparents’ German. Nevertheless, her ancestry and the wish to communicate with her family in the heritage language constituted major motivational factors in learning German. Also, her aunt played a role in convincing Lisa to study German because of her own positive experience and her ability to provide Lisa with academic help.

In general, family support networks appear to be a crucial factor that shaped Lisa’s learning experience and the study-abroad term. Before going to Germany, Lisa had always



stayed with her parents, and had left Canada only once on a short trip to the United States. Even though she expected her sojourn to be the first opportunity to fend for herself, Lisa maintained intensive contact with her family in Canada and actively sought help from family members living in Germany from the outset of her sojourn.

After attending an intensive language course during the first month of her sojourn, Lisa studied at the University of Stuttgart for a full academic year, interrupted only by a short break during the Christmas holidays. Her accounts reveal three focal points that prove to be influential toward her learning experience: her understanding of culture and beliefs about Europe, her difficulty engaging in speaking activities based on beliefs about pronunciation, and a perfectionist attitude that results in native-speaker based learning goals.

## 6.2.2 *Pre-Study Abroad Perspectives*

### 6.2.2.1 Conceptualization of Culture and its Influence on Identity Constructions

Lisa's expectations of studying abroad in Germany are strongly influenced by a romantic idealization of Europe as the place where she is destined to spend her future. Because Lisa lived with her parents all her life, this imagination is connected with the wish to establish an independent existence that will signal the start of her adulthood:

Lisa: um ya actually I'm I've been convinced ever since high school that I would be living in Germany or at least Europe ## when I graduated and # like start my REAL life &=laugh.

MM: ya and you imagine that to be in Europe?

Lisa: ya.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: I just think I would get along with Europe very well &=laugh.

(excerpt L1; pre-SA interview, ll. 389-95)

Her image of Europe as the place where she belongs was fostered by Lisa's employment in the university's International Student Office, which brought her in touch with exchange students. This experience opened her eyes to the possibility of studying abroad and activated the desire to become part of these 'European' communities, allowing Lisa access to the cultured, sophisticated, and mature living that she imagines to take place in Europe. Resembling the case of Alice in Kinginger's (2004) study (see section 3.5), Lisa's missing first-hand experience is thus replaced by romantic representations of Europe, her admiration of the Europeans she met, as well as her wish for a change of life, which is connected with the imagination of an elevated 'European' identity:

Lisa: um # every European person I know that just, there's something a little bit different about them.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: something that I really like, I don't know, and of course I've seen pictures and it's so much more beautiful than here and a lot older.

MM: ya ya.

Lisa: buildings and so much more culture # and I just feel like I've been in the same place for far too long and.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: ready for something different #.

(excerpt L2; pre-SA interview, ll. 1338-47)

Lisa's construction of herself as being capable of adjusting to living in Europe is further based on her German family heritage. Even though she considers herself "more Canadian than German" (l. 313), she emphasizes that her upbringing was German-influenced, which she believes allows her to relate to German people. In this context, she identifies family traditions such as ways of cooking and celebrating Christmas as markers of her high adaptability to German culture, revealing a focus on cultural surface phenomena, which is possibly fostered by her missing experience with encountering foreign cultures.

Lisa's conceptualization of foreign cultural phenomena also mirrors in her treatment of culture as represented in German Studies classes and study-abroad seminars. Lisa

underlines that she values factual information, facts about youth culture, and advice based on ‘do’s and don’ts’. Learning about the historical contextualization of cultural objects and complexity of contemporary cultural phenomena appears rather irrelevant to her:

Lisa: um in the higher courses, like I took German through Media and um # I think that was when I learnt what Germany was really like.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: ‘cause we # we we didn’t focus so much on history but more on what’s happening now.

MM: ya.

Lisa: and like what’s happening in theatre, in books, and stuff NOW.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: um whereas in 271, 272 it was like history, that was also really interesting but it’s not relevant anymore &=laugh ... um # but also in the media class we # we did talk about computers and um we had a whole section in our textbook on like love and relationships and that.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: like I find that so much more practical in some ways.

(excerpt L3; pre-SA interview, ll. 1659-73)

When learning about cultural objects and underlying belief and value systems, Lisa’s focus is geared toward ‘practical’ elements of everyday-life, which she may deem relevant particularly for fulfilling her wish to live in Germany. Her imagined ‘European’ identity and high adaptability to foreign surroundings thus seems to be based on the assumption that contemporary surface differences between Canadian and German lifestyle can be singled out, explained, and overcome by merely knowing about them.

As analyzed in the following, this perspective is also reflected in Lisa’s conceptualization of language and in her approach to language learning, as becomes particularly evident in the area of pronunciation.

#### 6.2.2.2 Beliefs about the German Language and Classroom Practice

Aside from her wish to start an independent life in Europe, Lisa’s motivation to study abroad is to overcome her self-consciousness when speaking German and generally to im-

prove both the fluency and accuracy of her speech. The mental barrier that causes her reluctance to speak seems to be largely based on her perceptions of the German language and especially its pronunciation, guiding also her self-assessment as a speaker of German.

Similar to Chavez's (2009) findings (see section 4.3), Lisa holds negative preconceived notions about the sound of German, hinting at a rather narrow conceptualization of the German language. As can be seen in excerpt 4, her perception of German pronunciation in turn supports her beliefs about her own inability to speak the language:

- Lisa: I think it's actually pretty harsh.  
MM: ya #?  
Lisa: um: ### a lot of sounds I can't make, like more the back of the throat sounds &=laugh like the /r/s # I have a hard time # um ### ya it's it like if I say it's harsh, but I also think it sounds ni- well like I don't think it's unpleasant to listen to.  
MM: hmm hmm.  
Lisa: um but it's not as # fluid and romantic as some languages I would say &=laugh ... the way I feel when I have to speak German is that like I have to totally turn # ... that I have to like turn my mouth in a different kind of # put it in a different sort of position ... and it's kind of uncomfortable.  
(excerpt L4; pre-SA interview, ll. 421-45)

Lisa exhibits rather negative beliefs about both German pronunciation and her ability to produce speech, based on typically mentioned fricatives such as /x/ and /r/ that cause the perception of 'harshness'. Although she qualifies her negative judgement to some extent with regard to listening to German, Lisa emphasizes the uncomfortable feelings which she connects with imitating such 'harsh' sounds. Her beliefs in turn influence her sense of self when speaking German, evoking feelings of embarrassment and silliness that contribute to a general reluctance to speak the language – or, in Guiora et al.'s terms (1975), a low permeability of ego boundaries. These beliefs appear to be reinforced by Lisa's recollections of classroom practice (excerpt L5) and the perceived representation of language use in listening activities (excerpt L6).

When Lisa reflects on her experience with speaking training in German classes, she mainly recounts reproductive exercises that were not designed to enable students to transfer their skills to more productive and meaningful contexts. Besides imitating unfamiliar sounds in the class choir, the only other communicative exercise she remembers is connected to regularly *reading* a text out loud in class:

Lisa: [...] do you remember any exercises from your foreign language classes that train fluency, intelligibility, or communicative skills in general? [...] # um ## ya I really like that reading exercise that we did in class where we read a couple of pages out loud from # from the book.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: I mean it was highly embarrassing for me to do, but I also know at the same time that it was helping me.

MM: hmm #.

Lisa: and having everyone listen and # you know it was intimidating but the professor, he was there to say [...] ya you're doing a good job [...] or # correct the word along the way so.

MM: hmm #.

Lisa: that helped with pronunciation I guess um # intelligibility ## I don't know, like I've been saying it's really hard for me to put sentences together and just to START talking #.

(excerpt L5; pre-SA interview, ll. 977-91)

The exercise Lisa recounts focuses on reproduction and imitation, which she appreciates as a way to practice pronunciation. At the same time, she also notices that this kind of reading practice does not enable her to gain communicative intelligibility as well as fluency. Although she appears to criticize the exercise in this respect, she reports elsewhere that she dislikes productive exercises due to her difficulties in constructing spontaneous speech and her fear of embarrassment when making mistakes. In cases, however, in which I asked her to further delve into her fluency problems, she only refers to “the whole speaking thing” (pre-SA interview, l. 727), without reflecting on more specific aspects of producing spontaneous speech and her difficulties with it. It thus appears possible that Lisa's generalizing treatment of her speaking problems prevents her from developing specific learning

goals in order to overcome her anxiety, an aspect which will be further discussed in chapter 7. The relatively specific evaluation of her German pronunciation above (excerpt L4), may thus be caused by the focus of the interview. Apart from pronunciation, Lisa does not report in such a detailed fashion on her beliefs about other areas of language, such as grammar and vocabulary<sup>13</sup>. The resulting general fear to speak German may thus also influence her recollections of classroom practice: whereas it might be possible that she did indeed not experience more productive speaking training, it also appears likely that her anxiety determined her focus on reproductive exercises, deemphasizing the value of (mentioning) more productive training, in which she does not like to engage herself. Hence, the perceived missing transition from reproductive to productive communicative practice, including pronunciation and other areas of language, appears to be interrelated with Lisa's beliefs about her deficient speaking skills.

Besides perceiving only limited speaking training that aimed at imitating a teacher-presented standard, Lisa reports to be unfamiliar with variation within the German language. Even though she made friends with exchange students from different German-speaking countries shortly before she went to Germany herself, she is unable to detect differences in their speech. Her assumption that she encountered only standard German in class and her insecurity in distinguishing between standard and different dialectal varieties may hint at a missing presentation of linguistic variation in her listening training:

Lisa: I have friends from Vienna and friends from Graz and.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: a friend from Heidelberg and they were all in the same room, talking to each other and they were all laughing at each other ... I couldn't hear any

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<sup>13</sup> I did not inform the participants about my specific interest in pronunciation. Although it appears possible that recurrent themes in the interview and e-journal questions may have shaped learners' narratives (see section 8.3), I paid attention to keeping the focus broad in both the interviews and e-journals, in order to investigate learners' perspectives in relation to different aspects of language learning.

difference, the only thing I could hear was that Swabian sound.<sup>14</sup>

MM: hmm.

Lisa: it was like REALLY different, but between the Vienna German and Heidelberg German, it was all, it just all sounds the same to me ...

MM: in your classes, you have not been exposed to different regional accents or things like that?

Lisa: no, the thing I hear they tell us is High German ... I wouldn't know the difference &=laugh they could tell me one thing and I would say [...] okay that's how it is [...] &=laugh.

(excerpt L6; pre-SA interview, ll. 806-29)

Lisa reports that, despite her friends joking about their different regional varieties, she was not able to notice any differences in their speech. Only when searching online video clips about Stuttgart did she recognize the Swabian dialect as a variation from what she was accustomed to hearing. This narrative will be further discussed below (excerpt L10).

Independent of the question of whether or not regional varieties were presented in classes she took prior to the exchange, Lisa reports being unaware of variations within the foreign language, which may have contributed to her orientation toward an omnipresent external norm. The consequences of this orientation on her learning objectives will be outlined in the following.

### 6.2.2.3 Orientation toward Native-Speaker Ideals

As can be seen from her dislike of the non-native German high school teacher, Lisa focuses strongly on the native-speaker ideal, influencing her beliefs about her learning objectives and the quality of language instruction. She appears to believe that only native speakers can help her in achieving acceptable language skills, inviting her to devalue not only the competence of non-native teachers but also learning opportunities in class:

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<sup>14</sup> In this excerpt, Lisa compares the different dialects she had experienced thus far, namely the dialects of her friends (Austrian German of Vienna and Graz as well as Palatinate German [*kurpfälzisch*] spoken in Heidelberg) and the Swabian dialect she encountered in videos about the city of her sojourn, namely, Stuttgart.

- Lisa: well I feel like in class we don't have enough time speaking to each other # or # and really I feel like speaking to another person who is learning German is not very beneficial at all because they don't know if you're saying something wrong.
- MM: ya #.
- Lisa: or they don't know if you're pronouncing something wrong or if you just totally messed up the grammar or the words.
- MM: hmm #.
- Lisa: um and there's really NO opportunity at all in classes to speak to a native German speaker # I mean most of my profs are not even &=laugh native German speakers.

(excerpt L7; pre-SA interview, ll. 480-8)

Lisa's focus on the native speaker causes her to deem any classroom interaction with non-native speakers to lack any benefits toward improving her pronunciation and speaking skills. Even her professors, who by virtue of their positions can be assumed to speak German fluently and accurately, are positioned as non-native speakers due to missing native-speaker characteristics, such as the 'right' birth and socialization (Kramsch, 1998a). Due to this perspective, Lisa undervalues the importance of speaking practice in the classroom and lacks the motivation to engage in German conversations with classmates. She presents this situation as widely beyond her control, allowing her to place responsibility for not achieving her objective of improved speaking skills on these external circumstances, rather than on her devaluation of learning opportunities. Her interpretation of the situation in turn allows her to perceive her self-consciousness and reluctance when having to speak German as an unavoidable consequence, which may only be overcome when more native-speaker interactions are available. She therefore places high hopes on studying abroad:

- Lisa: um I'm afraid of mistakes yes, but I also a lot of the times just don't know how to start a sentence.
- MM: oh hmm.
- Lisa: I ## hum I just don't know how to just start talking to someone.
- MM: hmm.
- Lisa: without having to think about it for a really long time and then I think, oh well maybe that's not even right, I don't know, I better just not say anything &=laugh.



MM: ya ya hmm #.

Lisa: ... I don't know it's really really embarrassing for me # I really don't like # like speaking German, but again I REALLY REALLY wanna focus on that and I wanna get over it.

(excerpt L8; pre-SA interview, ll. 555-68)

Although she believes that her speaking inhibitions are due to classroom practice, Lisa appears to realize that she needs to act upon them in order to overcome the fear of making mistakes. The fear of embarrassing herself with incorrect utterances is related to the interplay between Lisa's sense of self and her perceptions of her spoken German, especially her pronunciation. Because she deems herself unable to attain her learning objective of native-like correctness, Lisa feels inferior when speaking German due to the existence of an accent. This belief can be detected in Lisa's construction of her classmates as not quite knowledgeable due to their accented pronunciation in class:

MM: would you say pronunciation is important for you in general?

Lisa: ya.

MM: ya?

Lisa: because &=laugh I also had, I was listening to other students in the class as well and when they # spoke more of an English, with more of an English accent # they sounded # um like they didn't know as much German, even though they were saying the same things.

(excerpt L9; pre-SA interview, ll. 509-15)

Since Lisa's wish for a sophisticated and 'cultured' self does not agree with being assessed as uneducated or incompetent due to an accent, she refrains from speaking German, not allowing herself to actually improve her speaking skills and support desired identity constructions. Her focus on the native-like correctness thus causes a self-fulfilling prophecy, in that Lisa's productive skills may indeed appear worse than her classmates' due to her reluctance to practice in class. In turn, her self-consciousness toward using the foreign language prompts her to strongly rely on support from others in helping her to overcome learning obstacles, as expressed, for example, in her expectation that proficient speakers of

German will take the initiative in establishing conversations in German with her. Lisa's beliefs about learning German and its pronunciation thus form a strong disposition, impeding her ability to participate in class and the study-abroad environment.

Interestingly, Lisa's acceptance and application of native-speaker standards to her own as well as other classmates' pronunciation disappear in her judgement of non-native speakers of English. When I asked her as a native speaker of English to reflect on her beliefs about Germans speaking English with an accent, she answered:

Lisa: I think sometimes it can make # people more difficult to understand but I don't think it's a huge problem like people usually have a way of getting around it # I know this with like I tutor some German students for English.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: and # sometimes they pronounce things strangely, but I can still tell what they're saying.

MM: ya.

Lisa: so I don't kn-, I don't think that'll be a huge problem with me either ... I think it's really cool if someone has an accent &=laugh.

MM: aha &=laugh.

Lisa: all my friends are telling me [...] oh I have a strong Austrian accent, I wanna get rid of it [...] and I'm like [...] NO it's kind of cute, I like it, you should, you should try to keep it [...] &=laugh.

(excerpt L10; pre-SA interview, ll. 836-52)

Hence, when I asked Lisa to take on a different perspective, her beliefs changed diametrically from a focus on unacceptable, identity-damaging accents to tolerance toward variation. Lisa acknowledges that accents may not always impede intelligibility or cause unfavourable identity ascriptions, but rather offer speakers the opportunities to express their identity and uniqueness as people. This excerpt also suggests that Lisa may not only be tolerant toward accents, but also able to recognize them – at least, in her native language English (cf. excerpt L6). It seems that being able to remember concrete experience with variation decreases Lisa's orientation toward nativeness. The missing experience with variation in German may thus contribute to her native-speaker focus.

In conclusion, Lisa's imaginings of her future life in Europe and her desire to start a mature life there stand in contrast to her reluctance to engage in speaking activities in German, which is based on her beliefs about culture, language, classroom practice, and learning goals. Even though this constellation may provoke conflicts during the study-abroad time, the following part of the analysis will show how Lisa manages to maintain her self-construction as being able to live in Europe, without experiencing an identity crisis or major changes in her belief system due to her sojourn.

### 6.2.3 *Perspectives Resulting from Studying Abroad*

After four months of studying abroad in Germany, Lisa accumulated experience living in a foreign country and dealing with unfamiliar situations on a daily basis for the first time in her life. As can be concluded from her anecdotes and reflections, however, Lisa's beliefs revealed only small changes as a result of her experience abroad and prompted few modifications in her behavioural and affective dispositions.

#### 6.2.3.1 Identity Constructions and Conceptualization of Culture

As the main benefit of studying abroad, Lisa feels that she has succeeded in fulfilling her desire to gain more independence and maturity through living in Europe – an aspect she emphasizes with noticeable pride and confidence. Despite maintaining close contact with her mother for emotional support, she narrates how she takes responsibility for organizing her everyday life, without depending on her family network:

Lisa: um # the biggest thing is probably that I've become more independent.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: I've lived with my parents before I left and now I've lived on my own and I've been travelling and I've been buying my own groceries and doing my own cleaning and everything and it feels good to take care of myself

&=laugh and now that I've been home for a couple of weeks, I really miss it.

MM: ya?

Lisa: and I I like having my mom there to make me supper and but I prefer to be on my own now, I think I've really grown up and it's time to go out on my own.

(excerpt L11; post-SA interview, ll. 8-16)

Since Lisa believes that she was successful in developing a more independent and adult sense of self, she can afford to maintain her initial assumption of belonging to Europe as the place of a mature and sophisticated lifestyle. Similar to her beliefs pre-study abroad, her enthusiasm toward and identification with Europe is still based on *visible* aspects of culture, rather than underlying structures of social life and cultural objects. In comparison to her pre-study abroad conceptualization of 'Europe' as one singular, undifferentiated entity (excerpts L1 and L2), her gained travel experience allows her to begin to perceive Europe as an agglomeration of diverse cultures:

Lisa: the atmosphere makes SUCH a huge difference for me, like the old buildings and like they make such an effort to make their town # their town look nice ... and then I come back here and everything is all modern and muddy and # ... Canada is so multicultural and it's so different to be over there where everyone, it it's not as multicultural, it is a little bit, but not as much as here and it's # kind of interesting because they have a REAL culture and every country I went to, I was like yes I, this is noticeably Germany, this is noticeably Denmark, this is noticeably Sweden, whereas here you, like no one here is Canadian, but the people there they, they're actually German # and Swedish and Danish.

(excerpt L12; post-SA interview, ll. 995-1011)

Lisa's romantic impression to have found her destined place to live is connected with an understanding of culture, which draws on the notion of 'national culture' as a consistent and objectively existing system of traditions, values, and practices (Gogolin, 2003). From her perspective, Canada appears as a confusing mixture of different national cultures, whereas European countries are putatively 'cleaner', possessing distinct differences that

make each culture (or country) unique. Hence, her concept of culture, although more differentiated than pre-study abroad, still supports her stereotyping of European countries.

Corresponding to Lisa's reliance on surface phenomena, she still reveals the initial trust in the value of 'do's and don'ts' recommendations and factual information about contemporary Germany. When I asked her which aspects she found difficult to accustom to, she mentioned grocery shopping, wishing that pre-sojourn meetings would provide lists of basic everyday-life facts that would ease sojourners adjustment to living in the foreign country:

Lisa: so I wish actually that we had some sort of like meeting before we went there, like saying like [...] oh these are the common brands for like bathroom things and these are the common brands for this and deodorant in German is called this and not this and [...] ya so.

(excerpt L13; post-SA interview, ll. 1096-1101)

Lisa's wish for such guidance may be connected to her fear of embarrassing herself in front of native citizens, preventing her from taking risks and exploring the environment. It appears that not taking advantage of intercultural learning experiences serves as a strategy that allows Lisa to maintain and outwardly construct her desired sense of self as a mature, sophisticated person who is apt to live in Europe.

In situations in which the construction of her successful life in Europe is contested, her conceptualization of culture then helps her to fend off such challenges:

Lisa: I feel really foreign.

MM: ya ya?

Lisa: ya and I feel really proud to be Canadian.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: I'm like I've bought a Canadian flag and put it on my door, I want people to know that I'm Canadian # um but even though my family is from Germany, we have a lot of German traditions and stuff I # don't really feel when I'm over there ## um more so though when I'm with my uncle because ... it's my family and we talk about things that are familiar to me, but when I'm living there on my own in my residence and just going about the

town, I feel really foreign like # especially with the language, it's such a barrier #.

(excerpt L14; post-SA interview, ll. 445-58)

Despite the advantage provided by sharing an apartment with mostly German roommates, this excerpt reveals that Lisa faces difficulties in overcoming the feeling of foreignness and in integrating into German-speaking communities. It seems that she uses Canadian symbols that clearly set her apart from the society which she intended to access, in order to compensate for her realization that merely having German traditions in one's family does not guarantee easy integration. Although this excerpt may appear inconsistent with Lisa's wish to belong to Europe and her investment in constructing 'European' identity facets, it also serves the overarching purpose of creating a positive self-image. This way, she believes that generating interest toward her "unique and special" (post-SA interview, ll. 1507f.) Canadian origin possibly identifies her as a suitable member of English-mediated communities. This behaviour may thus help to avoid situations of having to speak German spontaneously.

#### 6.2.3.2 Beliefs about Speaking and Pronunciation Skills

Lisa's treatment of culture, her avoidance of potentially embarrassing moments, and the resulting reluctance to expose herself to the foreign environment also influence her perceptions of her speaking and pronunciation skills.

In her first semester in Stuttgart, Lisa enrolled in a number of language classes, including classes with a strong oral focus (e.g., a so-called "*Quasselkurs*"), which she chose deliberately in order to overcome her mental barriers toward speaking in German. Whereas she perceives clear improvements in her listening and reading comprehension skills, the

level of difficulty that she feels is required to become more fluent and less hesitant when speaking German appears to be insurmountable:

Lisa: no I'm still really ashamed of how, the way I speak &=laugh um even, I don't know I just really can't bring myself to do it a lot of the times.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: I think if someone speaks English and they are gonna speak English with me, I might as well, it's.

MM: ya.

Lisa: it's just easier and a lot of the time I've been so frustrated cause I couldn't say what I wanted to say # and then I just end up saying nothing and walking away, having not expressed myself.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: and it doesn't feel good.

(excerpt L15; post-SA interview, ll. 132-42)

The excerpt above is just one of many instances in which Lisa reports her frustration about the fact that she cannot engage in German conversations to the degree she would like. Only when able to express herself fully will she be willing to use the foreign language. Since this learning goal is still based on the native-speaker ideology that proves to be unrealistic for Lisa's skill level, she mostly refrains from speaking in German altogether and either switches to her native language or does not participate at all. As a result, most of her friends are international students from English-speaking countries. Additionally, the German classes she attends in Stuttgart seem to contribute to her orientation by strictly forbidding the use of the native language in both classroom and private conversations between students whenever an instructor is present. Lisa thus concludes that "that's when it's the most frustrating is when I'm in class and when I KNOW that I'm not allowed to say ANY English word to help to understand me at all" (ll. 157f.).

Yet, in order to prevent herself from facing this blockage and taking responsibility for overcoming it, Lisa develops strategies that allow her to justify her position and assuage her conscience without damaging her educated and mature sense of self. First, at her

sojourn university she has chosen mainly courses that focus on reproductive grammar practice, offering opportunities to speak in a ‘safe’ environment where the chance of making mistakes is low. She favours especially such exercises types that do neither require spontaneous speech nor self-directed learning. As excerpt L16 reveals, however, this strategy causes confusion about the German university system, which expects some degree of autonomy from its students in organizing their work:

- Lisa: I I don’t really know where to get the resources to learn more about German grammar and pronunciation other than # just doing it in real life.  
MM: hmm, so you would wish for a little more guidance in terms of your class um your time outside of the classroom?  
Lisa: ya or even if our teachers gave us something to read, like a short story or a short paper to fill in the blank or just like take home this set of cards and practice like flash cards or something, I don’t know, or practice these specific pronunciations or something, I don’t know.  
MM: hmm hmm # ya.  
Lisa: just something like tangible that you can do once you get home but something that’s also not ## like oh man I have this five-page essay to write.  
(excerpt L16; post-SA interview, ll. 922-38)

Lisa’s expectation of clear guidance thus prevents her from focusing on courses and activities that would promote her speaking skills and foster tolerance toward challenging situations as well as ambiguities and imperfections in her speaking. Consequently, she also refrains from taking any higher-level academic courses that would require her to become more self-dependent.

As a second strategy to avoid speaking activities without feeling guilty, Lisa defines her language skills as appropriate for the courses she attends, and blames students with noticeably more advanced oral skills for deliberately enrolling in courses that are below their own level. Interestingly, whereas she evaluates her own language skills according to the results of the grammar-focused placement test, her judgement of such advanced students’ skills is mainly based on their pronunciation, as the following excerpt clarifies:



Lisa: there's this girl in my German class # who uh, the grammar class, who # she speaks really good German and she has the perfect accent but that also really annoys me 'cause I think [...] oh well you're in a level way too low for you [...].

MM: oh aha.

Lisa: [...] and you're showing all of us up right now and now I feel really inferior because you are here talking fluently with this amazing pronunciation [...] and I get really annoyed at her and I feel I don't really LIKE her now because of that.

MM: &=laugh.

Lisa: because because of her skill in German which is totally not fair.

(excerpt L17; post-SA interview, ll. 802-11)

This statement reveals not only that Lisa's reluctance to engage in speaking activities is due to feelings of inferiority which stand in clear contrast to her wish for a mature and sophisticated identity construction, but also that the intimidating aspect of advanced students' speech is strongly related to their pronunciation. As can be seen in Lisa's accounts pre-study abroad (excerpt L4), her views on pronunciation are a strong factor in determining her reluctance to speak in German, which even the study-abroad experience cannot dispel. Her daily encounter with international students from several countries rather consolidates her beliefs about her own inferior speaking skills as based on her pronunciation and insufficient fluency. In addition to the feeling of inferiority, Lisa also seems to shy away from speaking German because her 'American' accent defeats the construction of a 'European' identity. As reflected through the negative description of her American roommate, Lisa believes her own pronunciation to mirror her North-American origin:

Lisa: um my roommate from San Francisco, her German I would say is not # on the same level as mine, like she's on a lower level 'cause she was beginner when she went there and when I hear her talk, all I can, all I do is like cringe when I hear her make mistakes, it's like [...] oh no, oh really, did you just say that, oh [...] so I think.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: I really judge how other people speak when they speak German.

MM: ya and what exactly is it that you judge?

Lisa: um well the first thing I notice about this girl in particular is that she sounds so American and she doesn't try to to make the right sounds at all # and that's what bugs me the most.

MM: ya.

Lisa: ... and that's how I feel I sound.

(excerpt L18; post-SA interview, ll. 765-82)

Lisa fears when she speaks German that interlocutors may judge her just as negatively as she judges her roommate. The self-perception mediated through pronunciation thus presents a major obstacle in improving her speaking skills and cannot be overcome due to studying abroad. On the contrary, her daily interactions with speakers of German appear to even strengthen her sensitivity and self-consciousness, causing her to interpret any misunderstanding, communicative aids (e.g., foreigner talk [Ellis, 2003]) or friendly teasing as embarrassing proofs of her unintelligible and deficient speech. Lisa thus fears to be perceived not only as foreign but also as unintelligent:

Lisa: Pronunciation is very important to me, and mine is terrible. I think this is one of the main reasons why I'm embarrassed to speak German. I don't sound German – I sound foreign. When I speak German, I often hear people around me say, "Oh look, another American." I'm not American! At first I thought it would be interesting to sound exotic, but now I think I come across as unintelligent.

(excerpt L19; e-journal, 08/11/2010)

Lisa believes that speaking German with an 'American' accent inhibits both her attempt to create a 'European' identity as well as her wish to be recognized as Canadian instead of American – which appears to be an identity ascription that many Canadian participants of this study try to avoid. From the excerpt above, it is difficult to determine what exactly she believes causes the impression of being "unintelligent", her accented German in general or an association with Americans. In order to counteract such identity-threatening moments as much as possible, Lisa resorts to speaking English, which she further fosters by marking herself noticeably as *Canadian* (excerpt L14). This way, she tries to maintain the im-

age of the “exotic” Canadian English speaker who belongs to Europe despite her ‘imperfect’ speaking skills in German. Yet, despite her efforts, she still appears to be mistaken for ‘American’ – an interpretation that dramatically undermines Lisa’s intentions.

### 6.2.3.3 Beliefs about the Importance of Native-Speaker Standards

Although Lisa’s learning goal of producing perfect speech in German and her unbroken fear of making mistakes did not vanish as a result of studying abroad, her beliefs have altered in some respects due to certain experiences she had during the sojourn. The following analysis shows, however, that changes in learners’ belief systems do not necessarily affect their learning behaviour, but may rather strengthen existing stances.

First, due to contact with speakers of German, Lisa came to know their perception of non-native speech, which is often more tolerant and less judgemental than she expects. In several instances, her friends praised Lisa’s speaking skills, emphasizing that deviations are acceptable and also part of native speech. Although these perspectives confirm Lisa’s own experience (example L10), she remains skeptical and hesitant to speak German:

Lisa: ya and it’s always that adjective endings that I have problems with, then I think oh I don’t wanna use the wrong gender or the wrong the wrong case or something, and they’ll think I’m stupid &=laugh.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: but I found that a lot of times &=laugh they know what you’re saying anyways.

MM: ya hmm.

Lisa: and # some people try to make me feel better, they say [...] oh as Germans, we don’t even know which case to use a lot of the time [...] and that makes me feel better but I don’t know, is it enough to make me want to just break out in a conversation in German?

(example L20; post-SA interview, ll. 221-32)

It thus seems that Lisa has developed such a strong fear of making mistakes and being perceived as unintelligent when deviating from what she believes to be native German,

that she has lost her willingness to take risks and experiment with language as part of the learning process. Excerpt L20, along with excerpt L7, reveals that Lisa's fear of making mistakes is geared toward structural elements of language, encompassing grammatical features as much as segmental elements of pronunciation (excerpts L7 and L18). Instead of constructing language more holistically as a tool to convey meaning through communicative actions, she tends to isolate and focus on structural details of her utterances, evoking the impression of constantly producing mistakes and embarrassment. With regard to her identity, Lisa thus believes that the impression she creates as a speaker is largely determined by the degree of correctness of her speech, placing the responsibility for her acceptance as a speaker of German on potential native-speaker interlocutors' evaluations.

It appears that her orientation toward standard speech also influences how Lisa judges dialectal variation in German. Being confronted with dialects during her sojourn, Lisa reacts deprecatingly and draws again on notions of low education, which seem to be clearly connected with 'imperfect', accented speech in her mind:

Lisa: I find it an ugly language now # especially when I hear like Swiss German and Swäbisch [Swabian] uh like especially, they're they're kind of unpleasant, I mean they sound funny, but it's not what I want to hear all the time &=laugh.

MM: hmm hmm #.

Lisa: I'm a lot more comfortable with the High German.

MM: ya hmm.

Lisa: just 'cause it sounds, I don't know like more classy or something.

MM: hmm.

Lisa: like more educated, I don't know, like when I hear Swäbisch [Swabian] I think of like hillbillies and uneducated people &=laugh I I don't know why but ya #.

(excerpt L21; post-SA interview, ll. 669-79)

In addition to such negative associations, Lisa explains that she feels that the presence of the Swabian dialect impedes her ability to learn German because she is unable to understand dialectal speech. She therefore distances herself from these speakers, deliberately

ignoring their attempts to converse with her. Lisa possibly fears that their ‘imperfect’ German negatively influences her ability to learn ‘proper’ German, defeating her wish to be perceived as educated. Thus, her focus on native-speaker standards in addition to her self-consciousness when speaking German prevent her from accessing German-speaking communities. Despite her first-hand experience with tolerance toward mistakes and deviations from standard German among native speakers, studying abroad appears to even reinforce her beliefs in native-speaker based learning goals and the impossibility to overcome her anxiety when speaking German.

At the same time, her nativeness orientation seems to lead her to dismiss not only speaking practice with non-standard speakers, but also with such speakers who adhere to the standards of High German. Whereas she clearly favoured native speakers as instructors in high school and at the Canadian university, her experience with taking classes in Stuttgart causes a change in this belief:

Lisa: it’s nice having # a professor that you know this is what they speak all the time, they know all the little nuances of the language that even someone who speaks great German as a second language might not # pick up on all the time # so it’s nice knowing that if you have a question they’ll know the exact answer.

MM: hmm #.

Lisa: um I’m not too worried about that here # anymore # ‘cause I find that there is not a huge difference &=laugh.

MM: ya ya.

Lisa: ya # but I know before I thought it would be nicer to have professors whose first language is German and it is nice, but it’s not as important to me anymore.

(excerpt L22; post-SA interview, ll. 1370-9)

Lisa’s understanding of non-native teachers being just as qualified and effective as native teachers may be interpreted as another strategy allowing her to avoid her anxiety – and to blame others for it again. As she explains later on, her main reason for accepting non-native teachers is grounded in her experience that they are more tolerant toward the use of

English among students and resort more easily to this lingua franca in cases of non-comprehension. This change of belief does therefore not result in an overcoming of native-speaker ideals, but rather supports Lisa's determination to prevent threats to her identity by creating a 'safe' environment without challenges and embarrassment.

Her beliefs in native-speaker ideals appear to be just as inconsistent as her construction of identity facets (European vs. Canadian), her evaluation of variation in speech (acceptable vs. unacceptable), and her assessment of speaking practice (a wish for more speaking opportunities vs. reluctance to engage in L2 conversations). It is important to recognize, however, that the inconsistencies between single stories serve a superordinate goal, namely, the coherence of the entire narrative, in which she aims to position herself in a favourable light. Her narrations are constructed to confirm her beliefs and perspectives, allowing her to perform desirable identities (Bell, 2002; Riessman, 2003; see section 5.2.2). This goal makes it necessary to shift the blame and responsibility for her perceived anxiety to speak German on others, allowing her to maintain identity facets that underline her success in becoming a mature student. Her shifting interpretation of nativeness thus appears to be both a cause for her anxiety and an excuse for not acting against it.

#### 6.2.4 *Summary*

Overall, studying abroad in Germany is perceived as a success by Lisa when it comes to her increased independence, because she manages to live and organize her daily life self-dependently and far away from family. The improvement of language and overcoming of her anxiety may possibly be of second priority to her, which she would like to work on theoretically, but does not focus on practically. For fear of violating her identity construction as a matured and educated adult, Lisa refrains from linguistic and cultural challenges

in the sojourn environment, believing that deviations from native-speaker standards may have detrimental effects on identity ascriptions. She therefore protects her reluctance with several strategies, marking her position as ostensibly unavoidable and beyond her control. The beliefs which learners bring to the sojourn thus appear to form a very powerful factor in shaping their interpretations of new experiences.

## 6.3 Alex

### 6.3.1 *Language Learning Background*

At the outset of the study, Alex was a twenty-two-year-old student in his third year at university, studying both Computer Science and German as majors in their respective Honours programs. Similar to Lisa, Alex grew up as an English speaker in Ontario and learnt French as his first foreign language until grade nine in high school, yet without considering himself able to speak this language. It was not until university that Alex started to learn German, which he first pursued by merely taking language courses, before switching to the minor's program, the joint Honours program, and the double degree option.

His motivation for taking German is based mainly on his German ancestry on his father's side of the family and was further fostered by a three-month stay in Bremen when he was seventeen years old. While visiting his relatives, Alex was exposed to German for the first time in his life and developed a strong interest in German culture, music, and film, evoking the wish to study German at university and thus become fluent in a language other than English. Since then, he has tried to make use of the rare opportunities to speak German with his grandmother and is proud of the praise he receives from her. Yet, despite his desire to learn German, he strives for a career in computer science upon completion of his degrees and hence pursues his study of German for personal interest only.

Nevertheless, Alex decided to participate in the university's exchange program and spent his fourth year of studies in Germany at the University of Mainz. He hoped that studying abroad would give him more options in choosing courses and improve his language skills through an everyday immersion context. He hence planned to take all courses needed for completing his German degree at Mainz university, before returning to Canada and finishing the missing computer science courses.



Researching Alex's accounts over the first five months of his sojourn reveals that he feels very satisfied with his learning experience and has managed to become part of a German-speaking group of friends. The following analysis will therefore explore the factors that contributed to Alex's construction of his study-abroad term as successful, focusing particularly on his beliefs about the German language and its pronunciation, his expectations about studying abroad, as well as his construction of specific identity aspects in relation to the learning process.

### 6.3.2 *Pre-Study Abroad Perspectives*

#### 6.3.2.1 Beliefs about Learning the German Language

Before studying abroad in Germany, Alex already feels very confident of his language skills and perceives himself as a successful learner of German. This confidence appears to be based on his beliefs about the nature of the German language, which positively influence his motivation to learn and are closely connected to his sense of self as a computer scientist. As Alex reveals, he has been attracted to this language because of its supposedly logical, structured, and rule-governed nature, which he had sensed since the moment of his first contact with German as a teenager in Bremen:

Alex: and uh when I went over there to visit family, I was exposed to the language a lot and I really, I found it really good, interesting like how it sounds and how how you speak it and everything, it's a very uh structured and logical language, which also is good for me as a computer scientist, because that's all very structured and logical as well.

(excerpt A1; pre-SA interview, ll. 138-42)

Portraying himself as a logically thinking computer scientist, he attributes his motivation to learn German to his belief that the nature of this language suits his mathematical talents particularly well. Even though this perspective appears to rely on the acceptance of stereo-

types, it allows Alex to believe in his success and to remain motivated over three years of language learning. As will be shown below, even counterevidence (e.g., ‘non-logical’ elements of German) is interpreted to suit his ‘success story’.

In line with his beliefs about the nature of the German language and his talents, Alex identifies as especially easy to learn those language aspects that he perceives as rule-governed. He feels that German grammar, which he believes can simply be learnt by “memorizing rules” (pre-SA interview, l. 315), constitutes the main strength in his language studies:

Alex: well uh actually I guess, grammar, grammar would be probably the part I’m the best at.

MM: ya.

Alex: because uh I think it’s # um German grammar is very straightforward, I mean there is certain areas like adjective endings and noun genders that are a little more tricky, but if you know the basic rules of word order # and uh the tenses and the moods then you can form some pretty good sentences.

(excerpt A2; pre-SA interview, ll. 393-9)

As can be seen, his optimistic perceptions support his self-efficacy, guiding his focus to those areas he feels particularly confident with, such as word order, and reducing attention on difficulties and insecurities. In fact, the only aspect of German that Alex does not believe to be logically structured is its vocabulary, which he therefore defines as his main weakness and obstacle in becoming a fluent speaker. He explains that both his comprehension as well as his production of German speech is often inhibited by single words that he is unfamiliar with and that require all his attention. Nevertheless, the strong belief in his natural aptitude to learn German allows him to view vocabulary simply as an area in need of improvement, without questioning his self-portrayal as a successful learner.

Possibly due to his confidence and motivation, he reports to have received very positive feedback to his learning progress in the German courses he took at his Canadian

home university. He takes pride in his high grades and believes this evaluation to be indicative of his potential success as a study-abroad student in Germany. Based on his experience with classroom communication, he thus believes to be well prepared for using his language skills in real-life conversations in German-speaking environments:

Alex: hmm I think I'll be able to to get by, I mean I think I have enough right now to be able to have a good start.

MM: ya hmm.

Alex: uh we had in German 204 last term, we had a speaking test.

MM: hmm.

Alex: with uh with the prof and I did, I did pretty good on it, I mean I didn't really have any trouble, we just had a conversation back and forth and I was fine with that, so I think I'm in a good position for when I go over there to have a solid base to start with and improve from there.

(excerpt A3; pre-SA interview, ll. 533-41)

Alex's actual success in classroom contexts appears to further support his confidence by agreeing with the belief in his talent to learn German due to understanding its rules. Nevertheless, he does not take his success entirely for granted, but ascribes his progress also to the additional work he pursues self-directedly in his leisure time, such as listening to his favourite German rock bands, reading *Harry Potter* books in German, and listening to various audio books, including *The Neverending Story*. He thus feels ahead of several of his classmates, further supporting the confidence in his skills:

Alex: um ## well I mean I I do a lot of stuff in my own personal time for studying German as well.

MM: hmm.

Alex: which I think gives me another advantage over other students, who have only done the course work, like for example Bree, we've done mostly the same courses minus German 303 # but I I'd say that I'm at a higher level than her, just because I study on my own time.

(excerpt A4; pre-SA interview, ll. 1311-7)

Alex's inventiveness in discovering 'fun' learning activities reveals his high level of intrinsic motivation that is hardly based on extrinsic pressure, but rather on personal interest, as he stated at the beginning of the study. It therefore appears that his initial beliefs about

the nature of German and his aptitude to learn this language constitute very important factors in creating motivation and a successful learning experience.

### 6.3.2.2 Beliefs about Learning German Pronunciation

Similar to his perception of the German language and its grammar, Alex also believes pronunciation to be a rule-governed aspect that is easy for him to understand in its logic. Based on this belief and the reinforcing feedback from professors, he also displays high confidence in his pronunciation skills:

Alex: um # I've always been told from my professors that I have a good accent.

MM: hmm.

Alex: so I'm not worried about that, I mean, I've never had a problem with pronunciation in German # I mean it's all pretty straight forward, once you got used to it.

(excerpt A5; pre-SA interview, ll. 545-9)

Pronunciation is therefore an area that does not attract Alex's focus and which he believes to have already mastered to the extent necessary for achieving his learning goals. Interestingly, when asked directly for his opinion about the importance of pronunciation, Alex reveals that his learning goals in this area are based on the communicative need to achieve mutual intelligibility without imposing inhibiting efforts on his interlocutors:

MM: is it, you say uh it's not a problem for you, would you nevertheless think it's important for you?

Alex: oh ya it is, it's important because um if you can't, if you don't have a good pronunciation then when you're speaking, it doesn't sound like German, which makes it even harder for somebody else to understand what you're saying.

MM: hmm #.

Alex: so it it's definitely important but it's just kind of come naturally to me, I guess.

(excerpt A6; pre-SA interview, ll. 583-9)

Alex's orientation to the intelligibility principle is noteworthy, considering that his experience with using German is almost entirely based on classroom contexts. This orientation

may be part of the reason why he does not define pronunciation as a learning obstacle and does not feel pressured to perfect it beyond what he experienced as sufficient for conversations with professors and classmates. In turn, this perspective both feeds on and supports his belief in his natural aptitude for learning German, allowing him to actually practice his skills in class and, later on, during the sojourn with his German friends and other interlocutors.

He consequently trusts that the pronunciation training he has received through classroom practice and his self-directed studies has been sufficient, despite his impression that the German courses did generally offer too little authentic speaking practice. Hence, he believes that his pronunciation skills in German have been mainly trained through receptive listening activities, rather than productive speaking training, and assigns a vital role to the exposure with German music, film, and audio books in his leisure time:

Alex: for the last five years I've been listening to them # you hear hear them singing and you kind of get used to how they pronounce it and just like listening and watching movies, you hear it, and uh just from being exposed to the language you kind of get used to what it sounds like # and uh # I mean the the pronunciation rules in German are pretty straight forward, there's no silent vowels or anything like that.

(excerpt A7; pre-SA interview, ll. 568-72)

Hence, in narrating a lack of authentic speaking practice in classrooms, Alex can further construct himself as a proficient speaker, who learns in a self-directed way. Additionally, it appears possible that the receptive, reproductive training may have positively reinforced his beliefs about the German language, its pronunciation, and his talents. Accordingly, he deems the rather reproductive speaking and pronunciation training in his German classes as helpful in developing his productive skills. When I asked him whether he remembers in-class exercises that trained pronunciation, Alex recalls a regular activity that asked students to read parts of a novel out loud, followed by feedback from the professor:

Alex: well um in German 204, when we were reading this novel, um every class we took ten minutes and read it out loud as a class.

MM: ah hmm.

Alex: and that helped with pronunciation as well.

MM: ya did you receive feedback or did you just read it out?

Alex: uh we received feedback, the professor ... would stop us and be like [...] no, say it like this [...] and make sure everything was being said properly and make sure everything was good in the pronunciation.

(excerpt A8; pre-SA interview, ll. 297-306)

Alex's recollection of pronunciation practice thus resembles Lisa's accounts, which partly concern the same classes. In both cases, the fact that they do not refer to productive training and reflective exercises seems to be in line with their views of learning the German language. Alex's impression that German pronunciation follows logical rules that one can learn through receptive and reproductive activities corresponds to his narrations of classroom practice, which does not focus on complex, authentic speaking activities.

In turn, Alex's learning motivation and confidence appear to benefit from his focus on such exercises because they support his beliefs. He therefore appears to be immune toward the presentation of external norms by his professor's feedback and retains his orientation toward intelligibility, rather than nativeness. As a result, Alex is optimistic about his abilities to communicate with speakers of German during the sojourn and even perceives advantages in being detected as a non-native speaker due to accented speech:

Alex: but I mean I don't think it's gonna be a problem, I'll just be an exchange student in Germany learning the language and # from uh based on my experience with meeting German students, they're usually pretty impressed when they meet a North American that can speak German, because the attitude over here is more [...] oh we can speak English, we don't need to learn another language [...], right?

(excerpt A9; pre-SA interview, ll. 768-72)

Due to the confidence in his communicative skills, Alex can afford to identify with his position as a language learner without aspiring native-speaker qualities. He rather takes

pride in the fact that he has taken the time and effort to learn a foreign language, which he trusts will be honoured by native speakers in the target-language country.

### 6.3.2.3 Expectations about Studying Abroad

Alex's beliefs about learning the German language and its pronunciation allow him to perceive himself as a proficient speaker. He is therefore confident in his ability to create a successful study-abroad experience and to further improve his language skills. Even though he feels a certain amount of nervousness due to his lack of experience with authentic communication in German, he is determined to overcome any speaking anxiety quickly and adjust to the new environment:

Alex: I'm nervous but I don't think I'm any more nervous than the normal expected amount of nervousness for the situation # and it'll be the first time that I'm really, like I've been to Germany before, but I wasn't speaking the language or really trying to learn the language that much 'cause it was only a short stay and I didn't know anything when I went there ## ya so that'll be the first time that I'm really using German every day on a heavy basis # so I'm a little bit worried that I might take a little bit to get used to, but I think that the first-month language course will really help for that and I think it's really all, I have to get used to it and I'll get used to it as fast as possible, I guess.

(excerpt A10; pre-SA interview, ll. 375-83)

Alex thus appears to have rather realistic anticipations of study-abroad challenges, helping him to set goals in correspondence to these difficulties he expects. Instead of declaring to speak German the moment he steps off the plane – a plan that several other participants in this study expressed – Alex seems to have a more informed understanding of what he is capable of doing with his skill and knowledge level as well as what it takes in order to actually improve his German, namely his own initiative and “conscious effort to speak as little English as possible” (pre-SA interview, l. 830). The combination of realistic expectations and confidence to overcome challenges also guides his approach to cultural learning.

Instead of expecting external help and guidance in adjusting to the German university system and everyday life, Alex seems to have gathered information about cultural differences and has developed mental plans about how to avoid failure and frustration. He describes, for example, differences in the Canadian and German university systems, particularly with regard to teaching philosophies and the amount of provided guidance, and appears prepared to adjust to the new environment:

Alex: where here there is a heavy focus on course work and assignments, and over there, there is almost no assignments and it's all just uh like a final exam and that's where you get your mark for the course # so I know that's going to require a lot more uh discipline and making sure that I keep up with everything 'cause here if you have an assignment due every week, then you kind of have to have to do it, otherwise you don't pass the course.  
(excerpt A11; pre-SA interview, ll. 859-64)

Alex has developed clear expectations about what is required in German university courses in order to be successful, and plans to work in a self-disciplined and self-directed fashion to avoid falling behind. His experience with finding additional learning material aside from that provided in courses may have supported his understanding of the importance of discipline and taking responsibility in the learning process. To further support his expectations about dealing with unfamiliar phenomena and differences, he aims to consciously approach such challenges with a sanguine and open-minded attitude:

Alex: I just think that # I I'm not trying to go into it with any sort of expectations # because I'm just going into it with an open mind.  
MM: ya.  
Alex: for the experience # the experience will happen as it happens.  
MM: hmm.  
Alex: and I can't go in there expecting x will happen, but x does not happen and then I'll be disappointed or something like that # um I'm just gonna go over there and live my life, I guess.  
(excerpt A12; pre-SA interview, ll. 1293-1300)

Alex's plan to avoid concrete expectations, which will only result in disappointment, influences his curiosity toward cultural phenomena as well as his openness toward the lin-



guistic varieties of German with which he is unfamiliar. On a cultural level, Alex is “excited to experience the differences and to really see how German culture and how people live over there is different from here” (pre-SA interview, ll. 466f.). Even though his conceptualization of culture is oriented toward the construct of national culture, he appears not to focus on factual information and cultural stereotypes when picturing his sojourn. Rather, he is aware of the potential pitfalls of such notions and consciously tries not to construct any expectations based on them.

Correspondingly, Alex also anticipates unfamiliar varieties of the German language, such as regional dialects and different social registers that might present certain deviations from the standard German he learnt. Even though he had never been exposed to such phenomena in his German classes, he conceptualizes them as natural elements of every language and exhibits open-mindedness and willingness to adjust:

Alex: &=laugh well um # ideally everybody would be speaking Hochdeutsch [High German] but ... I kind of doubt that's gonna happen.

MM: &=laugh I don't know.

Alex: well I'll have to get used to whatever the dialect is there and get used to, I mean I don't, I don't speak proper English with my friends and I'm sure I'll run into a lot of slang and stuff when I'm over there, and I'll have to get used to that too #.

(excerpt A13; pre-SA interview, ll. 446-53)

Altogether, Alex has a confident outlook on his sojourn and his skills in German, based on (a) his beliefs about the connection between his talents and the nature of German, (b) the positive reinforcement of his beliefs through classroom practice and feedback from professors, and (c) his intrinsic motivation to engage in learning opportunities inside and outside of the classroom. His identification as a successful and capable learner of German in turn creates an optimistic and tolerant attitude, allowing Alex to be realistic about possible challenges. He thus recognizes his limited in-depth cultural and linguistic knowledge,

helping him to avoid frustration due to inappropriate preconceptions. Instead, he exhibits openness and a strong willingness to adjust to his environment linguistically and culturally, in order to achieve the goal of improving his language skills.

### 6.3.3 *Perspectives Resulting from Studying Abroad*

Indeed, during his sojourn in Mainz, Alex's beliefs and self-efficacy seem to support the learning process by allowing him to seize opportunities of improving his German skills in an immersion-like setting. In order to research how Alex manages to create this supportive environment and overcome the challenges of studying abroad, the following analysis will investigate how he constructs himself as a proficient speaker of German and which role beliefs about his own and other speakers' pronunciation play in his ability to balance different identity aspects.

#### 6.3.3.1 Construction as a Proficient Speaker of German

Over the duration of five months of studying abroad in Germany, Alex appeared very satisfied with the progress he noticed in his language skills. Despite having a difficult start due to being misplaced during the summer academy course and due to a large English-speaking student population at the University of Mainz, Alex is of the impression that all his language skills have noticeably improved, with speaking being the area of most progress. As an important part of creating a successful sojourn, Alex tried very hard to gain access to German-speaking communities of practice – which proved to be a difficult undertaking in an environment in which international students live and study mostly separately from German students, as Alex explains.

He therefore decided to take the initiative and found two different ways that allowed him to fulfil his goal of creating an immersion-like learning context. First, Alex decided not to take more GFL courses than were mandatory, but rather to enrol in content courses in the area of German Linguistics. This decision was triggered when Alex failed the summer academy course because of being placed in a course too high for his oral skills, which the grammar-focused placement test did not reveal. Yet, Alex turned the frustration he experienced with this course into an even stronger determination to succeed because it “forced [him] to # learn more at the time, as well” (mid-SA interview, ll. 237f.). He concluded that being surrounded by GFL students and talking about everyday-life topics was not a suitable way to improve his language skills and find intellectual stimulation:

Alex: ya um the reason why I didn't take any Deutsch als Fremdsprache [German as a Foreign Language] courses is because I didn't really feel like I was learning anything from the summer academy.

MM: ya.

Alex: and uh the topics that you talk about in a Deutsch als Fremdsprache [German as a Foreign Language] course really aren't interesting at all, either.

MM: hmm.

Alex: ya like the Einführung in die synchrone Sprachwissenschaft [Introduction to Synchronic Linguistics] is a very interesting course, dealing with language from a scientific perspective # and uh I find that very interesting um ... because of, well I guess I'm, I'm in computer science, it's very um # it deals with rules and # theory of # um computer languages and computers and things like that and I find there is a # it's very similar analysing language from a scientific perspective as analysing computer algorithms and things like that.

(excerpt A14; mid-SA interview, ll. 123-131, ll. 173-6)

By enrolling into content courses, Alex was not only exposed to many native speakers and a more challenging language usage, but he could also re-establish the connection he feels exists between his identity as a computer scientist and the study of linguistic rules and theories. In successfully participating in an academic German-speaking community, Alex could thus prove to himself that the experience in the summer academy was not repre-

sentative of his skills, allowing him to re-construct his sense of self as an intelligent, talented, and successful student.

The second strategy Alex used to improve his German by finding access to German-speaking communities was taking advantage of the mentorship program at Mainz university. Although every international student is paired up with a German mentor student at the beginning of the sojourn, Alex appeared to be the only participant of this study to use this opportunity in order to gain access to German-speaking networks. After being frustrated with his widely English-speaking residence life, he made an effort to meet regularly with his mentor and get to know her German circle of friends. As a result of his successful integration into this community, Alex feels that his speaking skills especially have improved tremendously, which he narrates proudly by comparing himself to native speakers as the benchmark of success:

Alex: I mean it's just # for me it's just normal communication and at the point now I'm just as comfortable speaking in German as I am in English, more or less.

MM: oh, are you serious?

Alex: ... ya like sometimes, I can I still like, there's a word that I can't really, that I don't know, then ya I might stumble over a word every now and then, but more or less I can # keep it up the same as I would in English.

MM: hmm, so there are situations in which you feel more comfortable in German then ...?

Alex: ya I mean um well especially if I'm out with real Germans, then I'm definitely, I'm more comfortable speaking German # just because I'm, I don't uh stand out from the group I guess, I'm not like excluded because I'm speaking English and everybody else is speaking German, I can go out with these native Germans and be completely part of the group, speaking German with everybody else.

(excerpt A15; mid-SA interview, ll. 375-90)

As an important part of his construction as a proficient student, Alex appears to proudly identify with the group of what he considers 'native', 'real' German friends through the common use of German. Alex thus perceives himself as an accepted member because of

sharing an important social practice with the community, namely their language. Due to having achieved his goal of integrating with Germans, Alex feels confident about his language skills without aiming at becoming a ‘native speaker’ himself. He is rather invested in being accepted by them. His pre-sojourn learning goals, which were directed at becoming intelligible rather than native-like, appear to further support his assertive nature and belief in his natural talent for learning German.

The perceived successful integration with German students, however, causes certain identity challenges for Alex, who is part of two separate ‘worlds’, comprised of German versus international students, with different social practices. Alex thus needs to balance his identity constructions in relation to both groups. Particularly when spending time with his English-speaking international friends, he develops strategies of justifying his use of English without foregoing his identity as a proficient German speaker. He does so by perceiving himself as “DEFINITELY ... at the top of the scale” (post-SA, l. 242) in comparison to his friends’ abilities to speak German, believing himself to be too proficient to speak German in this group:

Alex: I mean we tried to at the beginning, but then it just becomes too difficult to really communicate how we would like to communicate, so we just end up speaking English.

MM: hmm, so um do you see this development being more on their part, or on everybody’s part?

Alex: um ## ya I guess everybody and I could try and force them to speak more German, but it’s just easier for us to speak in English, I guess ... ‘cause I could speak all the German I want and they wouldn’t understand what I’m saying.

(excerpt A16; mid-SA interview, ll. 682-98)

Alex underlines that his use of English with the international friends is based on their insufficient skills and non-comprehension when he speaks in German to them. This belief

allows Alex to retain identity aspects in relation to the German-speaking communities despite his regular contact to English speakers, further strengthening his self-efficacy.

Since Alex learns German mainly for personal interest, the self-construction as a proficient speaker appears to be an important factor in upholding his intrinsic motivation. Without such high confidence he might lose interest due to frustration and failure during this sojourn, which, with its English-speaking student population and problematic placement test, initially placed Alex in a difficult position. If this had happened, his identification with his German heritage (upon which his wish to become proficient in German is based) would be at stake. Alex's self-construction as a naturally talented learner of German is therefore necessary and, as demonstrated in the following, appears to be strongly supported by his beliefs about pronunciation, which allow him to balance his membership in these separate communities of practice and his identity construction as a North American of German heritage. In this way, Alex can create a positive self-fulfilling prophecy.

#### 6.3.3.2 Balancing Identities as a Bilingual Speaker

Alex's beliefs about the German language and his natural talent for learning structural elements, such as grammar and pronunciation, seem not to have changed during the sojourn. Yet, his accounts reveal that pronunciation especially serves Alex as an important tool in underlining his proficiency, in integrating into German-speaking communities, and in constructing a sense of self that unifies both his Canadian origin and German ancestry.

As analysed above, in order to become proficient, Alex feels that he needs to improve his speaking skills by finding opportunities to practice German on a regular basis. After several months of successfully establishing such interaction with German speakers,

he believes that his pronunciation has contributed significantly to interlocutors' willingness to engage in conversations with him due to its intelligibility:

MM: do you think that your pronunciation, the way it is um has an impact on the quality of your interaction or your relationships?

Alex: ya I think so, I mean # when um # with I guess # bad pronunciation makes speech and communication a lot more awkward and harder to uh harder to do, because I know like um people when they have a really bad English accent, when they speak English, they might have a really strong French accent or something, it makes it a lot harder to understand them, so I think when you can speak in German with a good accent, it's a lot easier to interact with other people, because they can understand you a lot easier.

(excerpt A17; post-SA interview, ll. 305-13)

Alex perceives pronunciation as an element that supports proficient speakers in seeking contact with Germans and in integrating into their networks because of not imposing unreasonable efforts on their interlocutors. His pre-study-abroad belief (excerpt A6) hence remains stable and appears to be validated by his exchange experience.

Integrating with Germans and improving his proficiency in turn helps Alex to “feel a stronger connection to Germany” (mid-SA interview, l. 561) and his German heritage. To further support the effect of his intelligibility, he employs pronunciation to explicitly mark his ancestry by changing the pronunciation and spelling of his last name in order to “make [himself] fit in more” (mid-SA interview, l. 482). Specifically, he re-introduces the umlaut which his grandfather removed when immigrating to Canada, and pronounces both this umlaut as well as the /r/ sound of his last name in a distinctly German way.

Furthermore, he tries to “be consistent and ... to speak the most proper German that [he] can” (post-SA interview, ll. 806f.), rejecting the possibility of speaking with a more non-native accent in certain situations. As a result, Alex reports proudly that his German friends and family members praise his German skills based on his pronunciation:

Alex: ya I was at a party # um Tuesday night and # I was ya I was just talking with people and they thought that I was German.

- MM: ... why do you think or what do you think causes this impression?
- Alex: um I guess it's just my level of speaking ... and um # I've received comments telling me that I have no foreign accent when I speak German, but I speak it just like a normal German person would, I guess.
- MM: ya hmm.
- Alex: so I guess that makes it hard to distinguish me as a foreigner ... # uh for example, a few weeks ago I was in um a place called Lahn where my family is ... and I was just speaking with my cousins and my aunts and uncles and they basically just said that I sounded like a normal German speaker.  
(excerpt A18; mid-SA interview, ll. 421-38)

This excerpt is very striking in that it reveals that Alex uses pronunciation deliberately in order to be perceived as a proficient German speaker, which in turn allows him to connect with his German roots. The fact that even his family labels him a 'normal German speaker' allows him to feel more integrated. His pride thus appears to be strongly based on an orientation to nativeness, as he seeks acceptance by native speakers.

However, although Alex is proud of his pronunciation skills due to integrating with German speakers and establishing a connection with his German heritage, he appears not to strive for native-speaker qualities entirely. In this context, the pronunciation of his name plays a prominent role again: Whereas he adjusts his last name both visibly and audibly to its German origin, he does not do the same to his first name, even if the English pronunciation uncovers his Canadian background in conversations:

- Alex: uh I usually find it interesting to see how long it takes for someone to tell that I'm not a native speaker, so I sort of test myself in how well I'm doing to see if I can sort of, I guess trick them into thinking that I'm a native speaker ...
- MM: when do they notice that you're not a native speaker?
- Alex: ... ya I, it usually happens when I say my name, 'cause I don't quite know.
- MM: oh ya.
- Alex: how to say my name in German but ... I used to say my name in English and # when you're, I guess when you're um saying German words, you know the proper way to say a German word and you don't say them in English, so you don't really get mixed up like that, but since I'm used to saying my name in English, it's a little bit harder to say it in German.  
(excerpt A19; post-SA interview, ll. 693-710)



Alex experiences difficulties in changing the pronunciation of his first name to suit its German equivalent. Therefore, the adjustment of his last name may be understood as his attempt to compensate for pronouncing his first name in English, allowing him to construct himself as part of both English-speaking and German-speaking communities.

The fact that he does not go out of his way to pronounce his first name in German in these conversations with native speakers also shows that he does not mind being ‘detected’ as a non-native speaker, as long as his proficiency leaves no doubt in his intelligence and great interest in learning German due to his heritage. In fact, Alex actually believes that speaking with a certain amount of accentedness even helps him to gain recognition for these two language identities:

Alex: well usually if I’m meeting a German person, and I speak in German and then they find out that I’m foreign, they say [...] wow, how can you speak German so well? [...], and they’re usually pretty amazed that somebody foreign can speak such good German, and then they say [...] why would you learn German? [...] and I say [...] well because my family is German [...].  
(excerpt A20; mid-SA interview, ll. 569-73)

This excerpt shows clearly that being perceived as a non-native speaker actually helps Alex to both appear proficient and create an opportunity to openly portray German identity aspects. The achievement of nativeness, which guides some other participants’ learning objectives, would thus rather inhibit Alex’s identity constructions, as native speakers might neither ask about his origin nor be as impressed with his skill level. In fact, Alex does not just find an advantage in being perceived as a foreigner, but more specifically he believes that revealing his North American background results in even greater amazement about his proficiency, which may in turn promote his access to German native-speaker communities who he believes agree on the strength of his skills:

Alex: I guess um # by # speaking German I guess that shows that I’m more intelligent or something, because I was able to actually pick it up as a North

American, when it's very uncommon for North Americans to be able to do that, and I think that people have picked up on that and people have made remarks about that, saying [...] I've never met an American that can speak so good of German [...] and things like that.

(excerpt A21; post-SA interview, ll. 812-7)

Alex strives to balance his pronunciation and its degree of accentedness in a way that appears impressive enough to support his self-perception as an intelligent student, but also reveals enough deviation for him to be asked about his origin, which he uses to portray both his heritage and his exceptional abilities. Pronunciation therefore serves him in balancing aspired identity constructions as well as memberships in different linguistic communities. The fact that he believes that pronunciation is not of concern to him is thus just another aspect of this balancing act.

### 6.3.3.3 Perception of Other Speakers' Pronunciation

The learning objective of achieving intelligible (albeit accented) pronunciation also guides Alex's perception of other native and non-native speakers' speech. He generally appears very tolerant toward deviations from linguistic standards and judges them by their intelligibility, as, for example, in the case of dialects he encounters in German-speaking countries. When I asked him how he feels when talking to German speakers with dialect, he answers:

Alex: I don't think there's anything wrong with speaking dialect, it's just # how it is, you can't really do anything about it, that's how you learnt to speak # it's like I've, it's no different than I learnt to speak English and they learnt to speak German, it's just how it turned out.

(excerpt A22; post-SA interview, ll. 532-5)

It appears that Alex's neutrality may partly be due to his own accented speech in German as well as the fact that he focuses mainly on whether he is proficient enough in German to even understand regional varieties. Therefore, also his focus on intelligibility serves his

self-construction as a proficient speaker. Additionally, this excerpt indicates not only that Alex's initial openness toward unfamiliar phenomena persisted during his sojourn (excerpt A13), but also that he tends to relate his cultural and linguistic experiences in his native environment with those encountered abroad. By comparing dialect use in English to the situation in German, he recognizes dialects as acceptable linguistic phenomena.

For his own speech, however, he explains that he follows the High German standard – for two different reasons, with only one of them being supra-regional intelligibility. The other reason is related to his perception of standard German as being spoken by the student population, evoking connections between education and speech:

Alex: I find um within the student population, most students don't really speak dialect, it's more people on the street, maybe I don't know, I guess the less educated people would speak more dialect # or # like um for example my, I don't, my aunt or second cousin aunt or I don't know what to really call it, my dad's cousin's wife she speaks a Hessian dialect.

(excerpt A23; post-SA interview, ll. 515-9)

Thus, even though he constructs himself as tolerant toward speakers with dialect, he associates these varieties with low education, and therefore declares to aim at speaking standard German. His determination to integrate with the German-speaking student population and wish to be perceived as an intelligent scientist may guide this orientation. Similar to other stereotypical perspectives that Alex adopts, this belief appears not to present an obstacle for his learning or integration, but can rather be interpreted as part of his learning strategies and overarching positive self-portrayal during the interview and the sojourn.

#### 6.3.4 *Summary*

Alex manages to continue his successful classroom experience with learning German during his sojourn in Germany. He adheres to a range of different beliefs that allow him to

construct, portray, and confirm his sense of self as an intelligent student with a natural aptitude for learning German. These beliefs therefore constitute a powerful learning strategy, which he employs as a means to take responsibility for his learning progress. In so doing, he is able to fend off even negative experiences and obstacles by actively seeking opportunities to achieve his learning goals. Although he is oriented toward the nativeness principle to some extent, he is able to become part of German-speaking communities of practice, improve his German skills, and perceive his sojourn as a satisfying experience. Through his investment in maintaining confidence in his abilities, Alex appears to create a spiral of self-efficacy, willingness to practice the language, and encouraging feedback from professors and German friends, forming a self-fulfilling prophecy of positive learning experiences.

## 6.4 Kris

### 6.4.1 *Language Learning Background*

Kris, a twenty-year-old learner of German, grew up in Ontario, Canada, in a Latvian-speaking household with close-knit family ties encompassing up to four generations. In kindergarten, he started to learn English and was concomitantly enrolled in a French immersion program, which he continued until grade six in elementary school, followed by the core program until grade twelve. In order to maintain the family heritage, Kris also attended a Latvian school each Friday night from kindergarten until the end of high school and got involved both in the Latvian community of his hometown and in a Latvian fraternity based in Riga that organizes exchanges between Canada and Latvia.

Having grown up with Latvian, English, and French, Kris feels a great affinity for learning languages and understanding foreign cultures. He therefore developed an intense curiosity toward German when his grandmother, who is Prussian by heritage, introduced him to German proverbs. Not being satisfied with mere literal translations, Kris wished for a deeper understanding of the foreign mindset behind these sayings and thus decided to take German in high school. He then admired his German teacher and her way of teaching the foreign language so much that he followed her advice to participate in a three-month high school exchange with a *Gymnasium* in Hamburg during grade eleven. Up until the end of this study, Kris recounted enthusiastically his experience in Hamburg, believing that he managed to improve his language to the point of fitting into German society as a resident, overcoming the alleged tourist status.

Returning to Canada three months later, he decided to continue his study of German at university. He thus enrolled in the German major's program at the University of Waterloo and started with second-year German courses due to his prior knowledge. At

university, he then discovered that his interests were geared not only toward language and cultural learning, but also toward the field of linguistics. His enthusiasm for topics of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and SLA then prompted him to add psychology as a second major by the end of this study.

Believing that language classes can only provide the basic tools for communication, but no authentic linguistic and cultural experience, Kris decided to spend his third university year at the University of Ulm in Germany. His accounts about his language learning and study-abroad experience often reveal reflective stances. The following analysis of Kris' pre-study abroad perspectives will focus especially on his beliefs about the first exchange with Hamburg, his views on learning the German language and its pronunciation in particular, as well as his self-construction as a person and university student.

#### 6.4.2 *Pre-Study Abroad Perspectives*

##### 6.4.2.1 Beliefs about the Hamburg Exchange

In order to understand Kris' beliefs about German and about himself as a learner of the language, his extensive experience with learning foreign languages and becoming part of communities of practice with different shared languages plays an important role. In this respect, his high school exchange in Hamburg appears to have strongly shaped his pre-study abroad perspectives.

Kris' exchange with Germany was actually his first major trip outside of North America. Even though his family cultivated friendships with Latvians, Kris had never been to Europe himself and his experience with foreign languages and cultures was mainly based on activities in the Latvian community and different classroom contexts. Going to Germany at the age of seventeen therefore presented multiple challenges on a cultural,

linguistic, and personal level, which Kris refers to as his first “culture shock” (pre-SA interview; l. 325). On a cultural level, he recounts many everyday-life examples that differed from what he was accustomed to, such as the ostensible North American desire to expand, which he could not find in Germany to the same extent. He concludes:

Kris: it just it was unsettling to have to have all those things that are just # common place that you would assume that you have no problem with.

MM: hmm.

Kris: suddenly become # very difficult # tasks, very difficult obstacles to overcome.

(excerpt K1; pre-SA interview, ll. 377-80)

Kris believes that especially elements of daily life that he used to take for granted may noticeably differ between cultures and present major obstacles in the adjustment to new environments. Yet, he does not conceptualize such cultural surface phenomena as insurmountable, but rather seems to put their importance into perspective and recounts that he eventually managed to overcome the unsettling feeling of the first weeks.

On a linguistic level, Kris experienced further challenges when he noticed that his wish to communicate fluently in the target language exceeded his actual skill level. Especially the difference between his receptive and productive skills frustrated Kris, as he tells during the interview, because of limiting his participation in German-speaking communities to the role of the listener:

Kris: I wanted to be better, I wanted to communicate, I was starting to understand a lot more ... in terms of just having an ear for the language, basic sentence structure and things like that, um where it's # in some cases it was just a question of vocabulary, not a question of grammar, I'd kind of picked up quote-unquote by osmosis, um Konjunktiv [subjunctive] and stuff like that.

MM: hmm.

Kris: where I couldn't form it myself, but I understood when people were using it um, but the fact that I couldn't form it myself, led to a lot of frustration, I really started missing home, and towards the end of month one actually is when I hit my first real # deep kind of # funk, homesickness, depression, whatever you wanna call it.

(excerpt K2; pre-SA interview, ll. 494-510)

In order to overcome this period of severe frustration, Kris recalls a number of strategies that he developed to help relieve his homesickness and become part of German-speaking communities. As a first step, he met with the other Canadian exchange students on a weekly basis to vent his anger within a circle of like-minded people, providing him with emotional support and the insight that his reactions were fairly common. As on the cultural level, Kris explains how he effectively put his feelings into perspective, realizing that it takes initiative to overcome such challenges. He therefore tried hard to speak German at school, spent his leisure time with German students – and developed a romantic relationship with his exchange partner, with whose family he lived in Hamburg. Eventually, Kris felt himself to be a legitimate member of German-speaking communities, successfully shedding the impression of being a tourist, a peripheral participant in these communities:

Kris: um by the end of this exchange I was laughing at all these stupid tourists who couldn't figure out how to get around Hamburg.

MM: hmm.

Kris: um by the end of month three, I was hitting my stride # REALLY, I think somewhere during the third month actually, towards the beginning, really got over everything, everything started going a lot better, I was much more confident um and it was actually somewhat difficult for me to transition back into English when I got back.

(excerpt K3; pre-SA interview, ll. 458-65)

Kris' perceived successful integration into German-speaking communities and his identification as a resident of Hamburg allowed him to overcome cultural and linguistic challenges to the extent that returning to Canada required a process of re-adjustment. Interestingly, Kris constructs the process of adjusting and re-adjusting to his cultural environment as mediated through language. He hence believes that his progress in German led to increased confidence and integration with Germans, causing challenges with the use of Eng-



lish upon his return to Canada. The confidence in his language skills as based on this positive experience thus constitutes an important factor when approaching his second sojourn.

More specifically, Kris appears to have used particularly his pronunciation of German as a tool to support the construction of identity facets that would suit the surrounding communities to which he sought access. Yet, as opposed to other learners in this study as well as Marx's (2002) account, he did not orient himself toward standard pronunciation, but rather tried to emulate the local dialect he heard in Hamburg in order to be perceived as an ordinary citizen and thus abandon the ascription of a tourist status:

Kris: I came back after three months, and my German teacher commented that I had a Hamburgish accent ... but ya actually one thing I really tried to do actually was emulate the German that I heard around me and so.

MM: hmm, why did you do that?

Kris: to fit in.

MM: to fit in, hmm.

Kris: um you know you walk into a store or something and you, all you want is something simple, right # and you spit it out in horrible German, right with a really English accent on it, um people immediately know you're a tourist and they treat you differently.

(excerpt K4; pre-SA interview, ll. 538-58)

Not only did his German teacher at high school reward Kris' efforts by recognizing his local accent upon returning to Canada, but also were German interlocutors in Hamburg less inclined to switch to English as soon as they heard Kris speaking German. Additionally, Kris' impression that the "key to emulating a Hamburg accent was to speed everything up and cut off all the endings" (pre-SA interview, ll. 605f.) allowed him to deemphasize his difficulties with German grammar that initially frustrated him (excerpt K2).

Adopting a more local pronunciation thus fulfilled multiple functions: it apparently helped Kris to confidently sustain German conversations by concealing his English-speaking background, which in turn seemed to improve his speaking skills due to increased practice. Concomitantly, he achieved a positive self-construction as a learner, be-

lieving that troublesome structural features of the language can be deemphasized. Consequently, he feels he was able to legitimately construct the identity as a resident of Hamburg and successfully integrate with desirable communities of practice, boosting his confidence as a speaker of German. His belief that adopting a local pronunciation supports integration thus created a positive learning spiral, contributing to Kris' 'story of success'.

#### 6.4.2.2 Beliefs about Learning the German Language

Kris' exchange experience in Hamburg is one of the factors that created a lasting influence on his beliefs about learning German as well as on the definition of learning goals. His first sojourn allowed him to form and maintain supportive beliefs about the German language and take on a very positive outlook on his perceived learning aptitude.

One of those supportive beliefs is his impression of linguistic similarities between German and his native language Latvian. Kris' interest in German was sparked by his grandmother and after years of learning German, he still attributes a high importance to aspects that create a personal link between him and the German language. Strongly identifying with his Latvian heritage, he believes to be attracted to German due to similarities with Latvian in its phoneme-grapheme relationships and certain syntactic phenomena:

Kris: that's one of my theories, is Latvian has been a huge influence on language for me because it's a phonetic language.

MM: hmm.

Kris: and I think that's part of why I was drawn to German much more than to French, because German is also very similar in that in that sense of being phonetic, of um having # cases um, and of, there are some structural similarities between German and Latvian um much more so than there are between French and Latvian.

MM: ya, so you called it a phonetic language?

Kris: ya so # you know with Latvian and German, where it's you pronounce every letter individually.

(excerpt K5; pre-SA interview, ll. 219-29)

Reinforced by his positive learning experiences, Kris focuses on similarities, rather than differences between his native language and German, allowing him to maintain his attraction to the foreign language. He adopts an optimistic stance toward his learning process, believing that his knowledge of Latvian creates an advantageous basis for learning German – a belief that appears to encompass even areas in which he reports difficulties, such as case endings. Kris’ intensive encounters with several languages and cultures thus allow him to reflect and draw comparisons between distinct characteristics, which he interprets in accordance with his investment to portray himself as a successful learner. Since his reflections are based on positive learning experiences, Kris feels confident of his language skills, despite being aware of their deviations from standard German:

Kris: um # but you know I’m very confident with my German.

MM: hmm.

Kris: um # I # in some situations, I guess, I would get nervous about speaking, if I was in a room full of German professors, I would definitely um definitely be very nervous, but uh if you drop me in the middle of Germany somewhere, I wouldn’t have any problem approaching a local and asking them for directions in German.

MM: hmm.

Kris: ... I need to grow my vocabulary and I have some grammatical errors that I make consistently ... but you know I’m not # afraid to speak German, I think I probably do have an accent, but I like to think it’s okay um and # ya no I mean, day-to-day life, fairly basic conversations are no problem at all.

(excerpt K6; pre-SA interview, ll. 819-38)

Kris’ confident stance helps him to assess his German skills rather independent of a ‘universal’ native-speaker ideal. Instead, he focuses on communicative contexts, admitting that he would be nervous speaking German in rather unfamiliar academic contexts, but trusts his skills on an everyday-life basis. His first-hand experience with communicating in German in Hamburg may support his optimistic self-assessment, leading to a possibly realistic evaluation of his skills and confidence in his achievements. He thus adopts a tolerant view toward his perceived deficiencies, revealing his orientation toward intelligibil-

ity as a learning goal. He defines his skill level and deviations from linguistic standards as sufficient for achieving mutual intelligibility within familiar communicative contexts.

Not only toward his own deviations does Kris appear to be tolerant, but also when judging other non-native speakers' speech does he focus on whether or not intelligibility can be achieved without imposing major efforts on the interlocutor. When I asked him how he feels about accented speech in general, Kris holistically conceptualizes pronunciation as part of a person's overall speaking skills and reflects on multiple first-hand experiences with accented speech in his family and his summer job at an international airport:

Kris: and so with mild accents or whatever, I have to deal with that every day at the airport.

MM: ya, of course.

Kris: and I always had to deal with, you know, my grandparents speaking English at the store or whatever um, you know, when I went along for a shopping trip or whatever the case, their accents have always been there.

MM: hmm.

Kris: and so ## you know it's, I don't ## I notice them, is the only thing and I can't say that it's for better or for worse, it's just part of ## it's part of the big picture I guess.

(excerpt K7; pre-SA interview, ll. 931-38)

Kris holds tolerant beliefs about accented speech, which may have also helped him to embrace the local accent in Hamburg, instead of rejecting non-standard speech based on negative images. He believes that pronunciation is just one part that shapes the general perception of a speaker, a belief that may in turn influence the tolerant perception of his own accent. Interestingly, most of Kris' reflections are based on authentic experiences outside of the classroom, drawing on his exchange in Hamburg and on everyday-life examples he gathered in Canada due to his encounters with several languages and inclusion in different speech communities. His awareness of such incidents and ability to reflect upon them forms a major difference between him and some other learners of this study, who grew up monolingually and viewed German as the first L2 they pursued seriously.

Despite his tolerance toward accented speech, Kris seems not to adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude and intends to further improve his skills, including pronunciation, during his second sojourn in Ulm. Based on his experience with learning German in Hamburg, he emphasizes the importance of “blend[ing] into the scenery” (pre-SA interview, ll. 1486f.), which he believes he can do best by modifying his pronunciation again. The communities of practice Kris finds desirable to access, however, are groups of university students, with whom he expects to use a more standard-like pronunciation:

Kris: what I do know is that I’m going to try to pay more attention to what the, how the students speak and less attention to how the locals speak.

MM: in order to?

Kris: right um because um, you know, you’ve got little dialects all over everywhere and I’m not sure what # the local dialect will sound like in Ulm and it might be something, and I’m not sure what the social connotations of that dialect are to be honest with you ... I would imagine that the level of language that you would encounter on a university campus is slightly more, it’s at a slightly higher level, slightly more academic and slightly # it will be accented, but I don’t think it will be um # like a local dialect per se, right you have students hopefully coming from all over and there’s some sort of happy median between all of them, right.

(excerpt K8; pre-SA interview, ll. 1491-1503)

Even though Kris develops the learning goal of following a more standard-like pronunciation in Ulm, his views are less guided by nativeness per se, but rather by his belief that university cities accumulate speakers from various places and therefore exhibit a type of pronunciation that is widely intelligible. As other learners of this study, he also considers the perception of standard speech as a sign of higher education and as practice in academic communities. Although he seems not to judge speakers negatively based on their accents (excerpt K7), he is concerned with the other-perception; i.e., the social connotations of dialects and the outward image he portrays when using such speech, worrying that he may violate the “rules of entry” (Block, 2007) of student communities. His learning goal thus is guided not by his own prejudices toward accented speech, but by a reflection on collective

beliefs and their effects on the sociocultural construction of speakers' identities. His orientation toward nativeness is related to his wish to integrate into specific communities.

#### 6.4.2.3 Self-Construction as a Learner and Person

The beliefs Kris reveals about learning German are also reflected in his self-construction as a learner. The positive experience he perceived throughout his study of German and other foreign and second languages allows him to identify as a successful learner who has a high aptitude for acquiring languages:

Kris: I like to think I have somewhat of an affinity for languages over say mathematics.

MM: hmm.

Kris: um that really is uh academically at least, languages have been # a bit of a strong point for me, especially in the oral dimension, I, my written language, as any of my professors here at Waterloo can attest, can be atrocious.

MM: okay &=laugh.

Kris: um I won't say it's always uh because I have # pulled out some half decent pieces of writing but generally speaking, like the ideas that I put forth on a piece of paper will be pretty good but # grammar kills me.

(excerpt K9; pre-SA interview, ll. 293-302)

His orientation toward intelligibility allows Kris to maintain his interest in the language and confidence in his skills despite his partially negative self-assessment. He believes that grammar is his weak point, but does not criticize his oral communication as much, corresponding with his belief that grammar can be deemphasized when speaking 'local' German. In line with this belief, Kris reports to value a feel for language much more than merely knowing structural rules, because "anyone can # force themselves into learning a language and kind of # you know break it down, bit by bit, translate the words, learn the grammar rules inside out and backwards" (pre-SA interview, ll. 1007-9). This feel for language rather becomes visible by not strictly obeying the rules imposed on the learner by an external norm that is not even followed by native speakers at all times, but rather by

using the language creatively, as Kris did when adjusting his pronunciation to the “slurred” (pre-SA interview, l. 608) Hamburg dialect. He therefore interprets his perceived strengths and weaknesses in such a way that he is able to construct himself as a very talented learner who uses the foreign language more authentically than other learners, who simply internalize given rules without making the language part of their emotions.

Besides identifying as a talented learner, Kris also believes to have matured noticeably since his last sojourn in Hamburg. He explains that he became a more diligent student over the past years, realizing that he is not a high school student anymore who just learns German superficially, but a university student who actually studies this language in a more comprehensive manner. Consequently, he believes to approach his sojourn in Ulm under more advantageous circumstances:

Kris: I think I'll actually have a much better experience this time around.

MM: hmm.

Kris: for two reasons # first of, I've done it before, I know a little bit more what to expect, um I've had some time to # mature and grow as a person and, you know, I'm twenty years old, I'm, you know, I'm not a minor anymore, my self-confidence is way up, um and it's, you know, I've lived on my own now for the last couple of years here at university, you know, I still live with my parents in the summer, but # I've had independence already.

MM: hmm.

Kris: so I'm not somebody cut loose in a foreign city for the very first time, going [...] oh my god, you know, I can order beer and wine legally, and I look eighteen, so I can order liquor most of the time too, this is amazing [...].

(excerpt K10; pre-SA interview, ll. 621-32)

Whereas Kris describes his time in Hamburg as influenced by his desire to sample the freedom of being away from his parents and Canadian law for the first time, he believes that his experience as an adult university student has given him enough independence and freedom, so that he can better focus on his studies in Ulm. In contrasting his memories of Hamburg with his expectations toward Ulm, he portrays himself as a mature and confident student who knows that his academic studies should be given priority.

However, Kris' accounts of studying German at his Canadian home university and preparing for the sojourn in Ulm reveal a partially different picture. Kris generally appears to give higher priority to the maintenance of interpersonal relationships, especially with his family, friends, and girlfriend, than to his study of German, so that he chooses not to take advantage of all learning opportunities. He narrates, for example, instances of accepting grade deductions and missing interesting lectures due to a family ski trip. Similarly, he explains to have missed parts of the exchange orientation sessions for his Ulm sojourn because of attending a family celebration. His narratives thus suggest that his language learning goals are secondary to his emphasis of interpersonal aspects, which may also influence his approach to studying abroad. When I asked Kris about his living situation in Germany, for example, he answers:

Kris: absolutely no idea, like I said I'm jumping into this one head first, I have no idea quite what to expect um # I have the luxury of having a single room and really # and that's one thing, if I have my computer I'm good to go, um computer, internet and I'm good to go, I can chat with my girlfriend, I can send an email to my parents, I can play video games with my friends.

MM: so you actually intend to keep close contact with Canada during that time?

Kris: yes it will keep me sane.

MM: ah okay.

Kris: uh ## here's again, things I've learnt from Hamburg, not to try and totally tough it out, and I have the added dimension of a girlfriend now, which I did not have at the time and like I've said, we've been dating for three years, this is a fairly serious long-term relationship and it's actually the only serious concern I have going in, is how much it's going to suck that I'm not going to be able to see her for at least four months.

(excerpt K11; pre-SA interview, ll. 1182-93)

Kris' focus appears to be on maintaining close contact with his family, friends, and girlfriend, all of whose relationships he identifies as part of his adult sense of self. He will not try to act like a teenager anymore, breaking his ties with Canada over the sojourn, but rather plans to handle his contacts more maturely. These criteria and values in turn influence his sojourn in Ulm, where he appears as invested in balancing his intentions to both im-



prove his German skills and to devote enough time to interpersonal relationships in his immediate surroundings and in Canada. Managing this balancing act serves Kris as the benchmark for measuring his success in constructing himself as a mature adult as opposed to a teenager, and his confidence in his language learning skills proves to be a helpful aspect in this process.

#### 6.4.3 *Post-Study Abroad Perspectives*

Kris' accounts of his sojourn in Ulm stand in stark contrast to his accounts of Hamburg. Whereas he recounts his success in mediating between different communities of practice by adopting a local pronunciation and engaging actively in learning opportunities in Hamburg, his Ulm sojourn does not reveal such a story of learning success – mainly as a result of not being able to associate with German-speaking communities as much as he believed to have done in Hamburg. He nevertheless constructs this sojourn as a 'story of success' as well, based on perceiving a further grown maturity.

##### 6.4.3.1 Approaches to German-Speaking Communities of Practice

Due to his experience with growing up bilingually and travelling on exchange to Hamburg, Kris' approach to learning a foreign language is strongly geared toward finding communities of practice outside of the classroom. He believes that classroom practice familiarizes learners with the basic tools necessary for communicating in the L2, but is unable to offer authentic contexts in which the knowledge of rules and structures as well as skills can be applied and automatized:

Kris: I think that the real language is outside the classroom, and where I would gain the biggest benefit is personal interaction outside the classroom, that's always been my experience with languages ... this is just my view, that in-

class study kind of gives you the tools to go out and really learn the language, but you have to get outside of the classroom to make the most of those tools ... but # if you have to think too much ... it takes too long ... but verbal speech is much faster, is more fluent and you have to be able to # to # feel it more than think it.

(excerpt K12; post-SA interview, ll. 978-93)

Kris does not devalue his German classes, but rather reflects on both their benefits and limitations. He deems it vital for his learning progress to create and use opportunities to speak German outside of class while being on exchange in Ulm. However, similar to Alex, he faces the problem of living in a residence with a very high proportion of international students, who use English as their lingua franca. Yet, unlike Alex, Kris does not manage to break out of these groups of English speakers, despite possessing access to a number of German-speaking communities of practice. In the following, his reflection on opportunities to speak German and reasons for holding him back are to be analyzed.

From the beginning of this sojourn, Kris is offered support from a mentor who is also a student at Ulm University. His expectations of such a mentor, however, are limited to receiving help in dealing with German bureaucracy during the first days of living in the foreign environment. Since his mentor was not available when Kris arrived, he is rather disappointed by this service and concludes that he has “no use for her” (e-journal, 26/09/2010) anymore. The reason for his rejection of maintaining contact with his mentor beyond receiving start-up help, he explains as follows:

Kris: As for my buddy, there [sic] were largely useless. VISUM<sup>[15]</sup> specifically arranges buddies so that they will be paired male-female. They also run many of the parties and events for international students. The result is a very singles-friendly atmosphere that encourages (surprise!) drinking and meeting people, specifically people of the opposite sex. Being someone with a steady girlfriend who doesn't feel like drinking three times a week, this does nothing for me.

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<sup>15</sup> VISUM is the name of the Society of International Student Partnerships at Kris' exchange university, organising the mentor program and several social events for incoming exchange students.

(excerpt K13; e-journal, 26/09/2010)

This excerpt illuminates one of the driving forces that prevent Kris from socializing with students outside of his immediate vicinity, namely the fear of jeopardizing his relationship with his girlfriend in Canada. In particular, he deliberately avoids intensive contact with the opposite sex and disregards the opportunity to develop a friendship with his mentor in order to get acquainted with her group of German friends. He rather decides to devote major parts of his leisure time to maintaining a good rapport with his girlfriend, family, and friends in Canada, leaving only a limited amount of time for finding access to German-speaking communities in Ulm.

In turn, he relinquishes not only his German mentor as a promising opportunity to speak German but also two other potential sources of practice. First, Kris is involved in a martial art club in which he regularly meets Germans outside of the university. Yet, this activity does also not lead to notable speaking practice or integration into German networks. He realizes that it is not only the nature of the sport class that does not allow for much conversation, but also his own reluctance to make new friends beyond the existing ones because of perceiving an imbalanced “cost-benefit scale” (mid-SA interview, l. 819):

Kris: it would be child’s play, really I mean it’s, I um do Krav Maga three times a week, I know people from there, it would be, no it wouldn’t be that hard to just instead of um getting changed and heading for the streetcar, it wouldn’t be that hard to, you know, take my time getting changed, hit the showers or something, and socialize, get to know people like [...] hey, what are you doing this weekend? [...] um.

MM: is this such a one-way street, don’t you think this is somehow combinable, you know, being part of more than one group, for example?

Kris: uh it is but # at the same time um # it it really is a question of how much effort # I’m willing to put in and whose toes I’m willing to step on a little bit.

(excerpt K14; mid-SA interview, ll. 788-97)

Due to the limited amount of leisure time that Kris reportedly allows himself to have outside of school and residence life, he believes that his existing social contacts are inevitably

put at risk when he spends more time with people at the sport club. Excerpt K14 hence clarifies that Kris' difficulties in accessing German-speaking communities are neither a matter of unavailability of German contacts nor unawareness of how to access such groups, but rather of setting priorities. He prefers to remain true to his pre-sojourn objective of maintaining existing relationships in Canada, because devoting time to finding German-speaking friends may require a reorganization of his leisure time. His apprehension of hurting others' feelings is used as a reason to justify his approach. From Kris' point of view, it thus seems that the benefit of potentially improving his German skills does not offset the costs that accessing new communities may cause. In narrating his stance as a matter of rational consideration, he may avoid the conclusion that the perceived shortage of learning opportunities violates his self-construction as a successful student. In this way, Kris can afford to maintain his beliefs and avoid taking more responsibility for his learning.

Secondly, due to his interest in Applied Linguistics, Kris decides to take a course on bilingualism in primary and secondary schools,<sup>16</sup> which is taught in German and attended mainly by regular students of *Germanistik*. Kris reports to be fascinated by this course, as it allows him to reflect on his own experience with growing up in a multilingual environment from a research-oriented perspective. Within the context of classroom discussions, he feels able to participate reasonably well in this academic community of practice because of contributing first-hand insights, which increase his cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) and legitimate his access despite some limitations in his language skills:

Kris: um well I participate as best I can # uh depending on the subject matter, can be better and can be worse, for instance, when we're talking about bilingualism ... then that's, you know, plays right into # into my experiences

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<sup>16</sup> The course title in German is "*Mehrsprachigkeit und Schule*".

and I'm able to contribute a little bit more and also, you know, talk just, you know, quickly comparing how multiculturalism is in Germany to how it is in Canada ... so # um I can participate # reasonably well.

(excerpt K15; mid-SA interview, ll. 138-54)

Despite his perceived success in participating in classroom discussions in a meaningful way, Kris appears not to manage to create personal contact with his German classmates. Even when being paired up with another student to prepare and deliver a presentation, he only cultivates sporadic conversations once the presentation work is finished. His main reason for not developing more intensive friendships with his classmates appears to be Kris' disappointment about their habit to "usually start off speaking in English ... if they know that I am not a native German speaker, they will, they are more likely to initiate the conversation in English" (mid-SA interview, ll. 225-31). Hence, besides obstacles related to gender and time constraints, Kris' access to German-speaking communities seems to be further inhibited by a general hesitancy to initiate conversations in German, leaving the choice of language up to his more active interlocutors. His accounts of Ulm thus differ greatly from the ones in Hamburg, where Kris constructed himself much more as a devoted learner who takes measures to prevent speakers from switching to English by, for example, adjusting his pronunciation.

In Ulm, however, he presents these obstacles as insurmountable, giving reason to him spending his available leisure time mostly with his roommates, who are English native speakers by the majority and create a virtually English-speaking living and socializing situation. His intermittent attempts to establish German as the language of communication usually fail due to group members with little to no knowledge of German, requiring the group to maintain communication in English as a matter of politeness. In line with his reluctance to find German-speaking friends, Kris perceives these friendships as advanta-

geous due to their less time-consuming and challenging nature, not requiring his constant initiative in creating German conversations. Additionally, they appear rather innocuous because of not contesting the fidelity to his girlfriend. Yet, he realizes that limiting his social life to these friends contradicts his learning goal of finding opportunities to speak German in authentic contexts:

Kris: as much as in terms of homesickness and having people from a similar culture and um you know an opportunity to speak your native language um # from all those standpoints, ya it's great that I have all these international students to talk with, that there are all these events organized for international students ... that I live with five, with four other people who are from, who are native English speakers, ya that's all fine and dandy, but it doesn't help me learn German and that doesn't get me immersed into # German culture and I'd say that that is # a very very large point of frustration for me.  
(excerpt K16; mid-SA interview, ll. 345-53)

Although he understands the negative effects, the analysis of his accounts above shows that Kris perceives his situation as mostly unchangeable due to several external obstacles. Because of protecting his stance with his priority on cultivating existing contacts in Canada and in his residence, his ability to reflect on the reasons of his frustration and possible solutions does not help him in creating a more beneficial learning situation. He is consequently unable to construct himself as he did when recounting his Hamburg experience, namely as a member of both Canadian and German communities of practice, providing both the comfort of like-minded friends as well as learning opportunities.

Yet, in order to prevent these frustrations from causing inner struggles between his learning aspirations and actual behaviour, he continues to justify his emphasis on spending time with existing contacts as part of his mature sense of self.

#### 6.4.3.2 Identity Construction as Mature Person and Learner

Based on his success in maintaining a stable relationship and frequent contact with his girlfriend and family, Kris feels that going on exchange to Ulm has further contributed to his “personal growth” (post-SA interview, l. 25). He is confident that his decision-making skills and independence have improved, helping him to approach both his social life and his language learning in a more prudential way:

Kris: um as a person, I feel I’ve changed pretty immensely # um having to deal with the extended separation from family, friends, and uh girlfriend has # had a, has forced me to be significantly more independent and more mature.

MM: hmm.

Kris: um # and I definitely feel that my approach to uh everything including learning # uh has become just that, more independent, more mature, uh I find myself ## kind of uh checking my impulses much more, thinking a bit more before I speak and before I act.

MM: hmm.

Kris: well and making better decisions overall.

(excerpt K17; post-SA interview, ll. 10-20)

As already suggested by his pre-study abroad accounts, the frequent statements of his grown maturity in interviews and the e-journal reveal some discrepancies with the reported actions he takes in Ulm. Interestingly, he reports that in order to support his self-portrayal as being an adult, he also purposefully dresses more maturely, in order to “look a bit more uh like an upper-year student and a bit less like a like a freshman” (post-SA interview, ll. 339f.). Underneath the surface of self-constructions, however, Kris reveals activities that actually resemble the accounts of his teenage behaviour in Hamburg (excerpt K10), when reporting, for example, enthusiastically on the lower prices for alcohol, drinking games at parties, or his likes and dislikes for certain alcoholic beverages in Germany. On a personal level, it thus seems that Kris’ self-construction as a mature man helps him to endure and make sense of the limitations that having a steady girlfriend poses to his desire to socialize with friends on parties and other outings.

Also in terms of language learning, his sense of self as a mature student who wishes to use his sojourn to improve his German skills is contradicted not only by his reluctance to use available learning opportunities, but also by his approach to in-class study. Due to his complaints about the non-communicative grammar course he attended in Ulm, I asked him if the university offered any courses focusing on oral skills, and he answered:

Kris: there was Mündliche Kommunikation [Oral Communication], but that was uh that was at a really awkward time, uh essentially is what happened there uh # I mean there were a couple of courses that would have been fairly good for me to take, but it, and now actually thinking back, it might not have been a bad idea for me to spread out my schedule a bit more um over more days, this would put me um in the city more often, on campus more often, among Germans more often um but # I was still in the mindset that I had in Waterloo, which is minimize the days that I'm on campus, so I only have two days of class.

MM: oh I see.

Kris: so ya I have class on Mondays and on Wednesdays.

MM: and then you have a long weekend to travel?

Kris: yup, that's the idea, so I'm hoping to be able to do that again in the next semester, so we'll see # actually if I can cram it into a Monday Tuesday next semester that would be ideal.

(excerpt K18; mid-SA interview, ll. 893-906)

This excerpt stands in contrast to Kris' intention to improve his German skills both inside and outside of the classroom. Similar to other incidents, Kris admits that these actions might be "childish" (post-SA interview, l. 490) and have negative effects on his learning, but this insight seems not to lead to a change of mind or behaviour. On the contrary, he plans to tighten his schedule even more for the benefit of travelling, once his girlfriend studies in Belgium during the second sojourn semester. His approach to learning German inside of class (i.e., his scheduling skills) and outside of class (i.e., his willingness to take risks in gaining access to German-speaking communities) thus reflects the above described struggle to balance various priorities, with interpersonal relationships ultimately gaining the upper hand over his language learning. In this way, Kris manages to solve this



conflict and create a ‘story of success’ based on his maturity, allowing him to remain confident of his personal development and approach to studying abroad.

#### 6.4.3.3 Beliefs about German Pronunciation

The difficulty of balancing his self-construction as a mature person and reluctance to devote time and effort to his learning progress is mirrored by his stance toward and experience with pronunciation. His pronunciation-based learning objectives appear to be informed by his wish to construct a professional identity, but his insufficient amount of speaking practice causes undesirable identity ascriptions by interlocutors due to his non-native accent.

Kris’ learning goals in the area of pronunciation appear to be strongly directed toward the communities he would like to access. Whereas he previously aimed at becoming part of the community of high school students in Hamburg, he orients himself toward university students in Ulm. Following his pre-study abroad belief of university students’ more standard-like pronunciation, he directs his attention more to Northern German varieties than the Southern German dialect he encounters in Ulm, even though he realizes that his learning goal follows stereotypes that were conveyed by his high school teacher:

Kris: I recognize it, but that doesn’t stop it from being there, there there is at least for me a preference towards Northern accents, uh my high school German teacher uh was from Northern Germany and ... um she was quite frankly the best teacher I have ever had.

MM: hmm.

Kris: ... she’d always give us, you know, [...] this is how you would say this in Northern Germany, you know, someone in the south might say it like this and then &=laugh we’re not even going to talk about how the Swiss might do it [...].

MM: &=laugh.

Kris: um so you know even from # my kind of beginnings in learning German, there there was a preference for Northern German accents, specifically um

bigger cities ... um so that's something that has definitely become ingrained in me, for better or for worse.

(excerpt K19; post-SA interview, ll. 132-48)

As opposed to most participants, Kris appears to be familiar with different German varieties and holds specific beliefs about their relative level of prestige. Due to his reflective stance, he is aware of both his “deep seated bias against Southern German” (mid-SA interview, ll. 557f.) and the disadvantageous effects that adopting these external norms may have, particularly during his sojourn in Ulm. Although he questions his orientation, Kris feels unable to abandon it because of his concerns about the social connotations of his speech and potential societal sanctions (excerpt K8). He presents his stance as a logical decision: since he cultivates his knowledge of German as “a marketable skill” (post-SA interview, l. 788), he aims at a pronunciation which promises access to professional communities of practice in his future career. Due to its proximity to standard German, a Northern pronunciation appears suitable for professional and academic environments from his point of view:

Kris: um if I am going to be using German in any sort of um business environment, for instance, um to speak with a, I at least, personally, I think that to speak with a um kind of clean academic # um standard German would be better than to have, to be speaking with a very uh localized # dialectal German.

MM: ya ya.

Kris: um just the standard, the standard language is, always sounds more professional than something that has a very heavy kind of local accent, and I think that that's true, even in Canada, you know if # &=laugh if I were saying that we're going [...] oot 'n' about, ey [...] then.

MM: &=laugh.

Kris: it it sounds less academic, it sounds less professional.

(excerpt K20; post-SA interview, ll. 159-69)

Besides drawing comparisons to the perception of dialect in his native language, Kris also narrates instances of his bilingualism class, in which effects of both different native dialects as well as non-native accents were discussed. His sojourn experience thus validates

and consolidates his pre-study abroad beliefs and orientation toward Northern German pronunciation as a suitable tool to outwardly portray his sense of self as a mature and advanced student. He therefore refrains from adopting a local accent in Ulm and aims at emulating the standard German that is ostensibly spoken by university students.

However, his wish to construct himself as a mature student and develop a pronunciation in correspondence to this goal is counteracted by his reluctance to associate with German-speaking student communities. As a result, he acknowledges that interlocutors comment on his non-native accent in German, which he believes “marks [him] as a foreigner” (post-SA interview, ll. 119f.) as opposed to resident. His limited German-speaking contacts thus deprive him of learning opportunities that would help to adjust his pronunciation to desirable communities of practice. He believes that, based on his accent, interlocutors are more likely to switch to English and show sympathy with his speaking attempts, which he feels identifies him as an inferior outsider at the periphery of German society. His pre-study abroad tolerance toward his accent is thus reduced to some extent:

Kris: I’ve had people be more sympathetic when I started struggling for words, um I’ve had people offer to switch to English um and um ## um have, display a higher tolerance for uh for mistakes uh on my part, but that’s really been about it, um # I personally I just don’t like the # I guess increased attention um or the the sense of pity that I sometimes get from people.

MM: oh I see, hmm.

Kris: you know it’s # um I don’t know whether this is an accurate assessment on my part, but it sometimes does seem like people, uh you know, uh being like [.] aww, he’s trying to speak German, how cute [.] um.

(excerpt K21; mid-SA interview, ll. 596-604)

Even though Kris perceives certain advantages of being detected as a non-native speaker, the belittling effect, which he attributes to his deviations in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, conflicts with his sense of self as an adult and his learning goal of speaking German in a professional manner. Because of his reflective stance, he realizes that this

effect is at least partly due to his association with English-speaking, instead of German-speaking communities, inhibiting his learning process in pronunciation as well as other aspects of his speaking skills:

Kris: um I know it shouldn't bother me &=laugh but to some degree it does # I'm ## I want to be better and I know I could be better, but because of the # ongoing situation with # you know, how much I associate with people in English # I have not improved nearly as quickly as I would have liked and # I guess frustration is # the most appropriate term for that, is the knowledge that if I were surrounded by people who spoke German.

MM: ya?

Kris: then I would be imitating their pronunciation, I would be speaking German a lot more, I would have more opportunities to # use German and make mistakes and have them corrected, to become more fluent and improve on my accent.

(excerpt K22; mid-SA interview, ll. 540-9)

Although he believes that having an accent is no reason to feel insecure, he is nevertheless disappointed in the limited progress he perceives in his language skills due to insufficient speaking practice. Whereas excerpt K22 may be read as a partial confession of guilt, he complains in other incidents about the university's living and socializing arrangements, which "segregate the international students from the university population at large" (e-journal, 26/09/2010). He believes that a higher proportion of German speakers in his immediate surroundings would have created a regular learning situation without requiring much effort and initiative on his behalf. With regard to learning German, Kris thus appears to be in a constant struggle between his aspirations and willingness to initiate the necessary steps – on the level of pronunciation and beyond.

#### 6.4.4 *Summary*

Kris' narrations about his previous sojourn stand in contrast to his experiences during the following one. Whereas he believes to have successfully integrated into German-speaking

communities and improved his language skills to the extent of incorporating local features during the Hamburg exchange, he is rather frustrated about his limited opportunities to speak German and socialize with corresponding speakers in Ulm. Although he realizes partially that the situation is due to his reluctant stance to find friends outside of his residence and circle of Canadian contacts, he counteracts his frustrations on the level of language learning with the creation of a different ‘success story’. Kris resorts to emphasizing his increased maturity and personal development in his narratives about Ulm, which he constructs in such a way that it covers his perceived learning weaknesses. In interpreting even negative experiences as indicators for his matured sense of self, he is able to maintain his confidence in himself as a person and learner of German. The analysis of his narratives thus indicates again that learners’ performances of specific identity facets are the driving forces in their interpretation of learning experience (Bell, 2002; Riessman, 2003).

## 6.5 Zora

### 6.5.1 *Language Learning Background*

Zora is a twenty-one-year-old student of German, who was born as a Bosnian in former Yugoslavia. When she was five years old, her family migrated to Germany as refugees to escape the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She subsequently spent about seven years of her childhood in Germany, going to kindergarten and elementary school in a city in Lower Saxony. During this time, Zora learnt to speak German in both informal and formal contexts. When she was twelve years old, her parents decided to leave Germany and establish a new life in Canada, where Zora has been living since.

At the beginning of the interview, Zora emphasizes that she is a native speaker of Bosnian and a non-native speaker of English, which she started to learn only after moving to Canada. Since her Canadian elementary and high school offered only French and Spanish as foreign languages, Zora's contact with German was completely interrupted from grade six to twelve. Instead, she started taking French and developed a strong interest in foreign languages due to her experience with learning different languages at such young age. At university, Zora decided to resume studying German and was placed in a second-year language course because of her previous language learning experience.

Her motivation to continue studying German was two-fold. On the one hand, she needed German for future career plans in international relations with the option to live in Europe or even Germany later on. On the other hand, she was drawn by her love for German literature and its literary language, which she perceives as very dense and complex. Yet, Zora emphasizes that, in continuing to learn German, she did not attempt to revive parts of her childhood, hinting at potentially contradictory identity constructions that will be analysed below.

At the beginning of her fourth year of university, Zora decided to participate in the study-abroad program with the University of Heidelberg for five months. Collecting course credits toward her Honours degree in German abroad was necessary because Zora had difficulties in finding enough courses for her degree due to skipping all of the first-year German courses offered at her home university. At the time of the interview, Zora had just returned from her sojourn and finished the fourth year of her Bachelor's degree, aiming at a specialization in either Business German or Applied Linguistics and waiting for her acceptance into a Master's program in German.

#### 6.5.2 *Learning Goals and Experiences during the Sojourn*

Zora's exchange in Heidelberg started with a one-month intensive German course over the summer, followed by a four-month semester during which she attended courses in German as a Foreign Language, Business German, as well as one class taught in English about the European Union.

Zora reports that, from the beginning of her stay, she was determined to use her sojourn in Germany as much as possible and seek access to other speakers of German. In comparison to most other participants of this study, she enjoyed the learning atmosphere during the summer course, emphasizing that her classmates took the course very seriously and more people appeared to speak German during this time than during the actual semester. Since it was Zora's goal to be surrounded by the German language again after many years of disconnection, she says she intentionally avoided other learners who used English as *lingua franca* consistently. Instead, she made friends with groups of learners from various European countries and Canada, thus allowing her to speak German and participate in the kind of intellectual activities she was looking for:

Zora: we would speak German, we would watch um # wh- what's that one movie um ## we would watch movies that you know had # it like Contact, that were serious movies.

MM: hmm.

Zora: that were in German, we would discuss them, we would # uh we would have drinks, you know, but it was # it was more ### you know like it was # more intellect than, you know.

MM: ya.

Zora: um trying to # um ## just have a good time.

MM: hmm.

Zora: because I can have a good time in Canada, okay?

(excerpt Z1; ll. 1234-44)

Zora appears to value the education that is available to her while being in Germany and prefers to socialize with learners that support her self-image of being an educated student. As will be shown later in the analysis, this image is very important for her to gain capital and construct preferred identity facets. Furthermore, she believes that the language practice offered by these groups of friends helped her to regain confidence and fluency in German, decreasing the focus on accuracy and offering the oral practice that she thought her courses in Heidelberg were mainly lacking. She claims that her courses helped her to clarify grammatical topics and widened both her general and specialized vocabulary, but did not train speaking skills per se.

In retrospect, Zora appreciates her study-abroad term in Germany for the opportunity to improve her German and build independence through living alone in a foreign country. Her narratives thus focus strongly on constructing the sojourn as a successful experience. At the same time, due to having lived in Germany (and later on in Canada) as an immigrant, Zora's accounts of her study-abroad experience reveal identity conflicts rather different from those of other participants. In the following sections, I will illuminate the role which different cultural communities and languages play for her sense of self and how she balances identity conflicts raised in her sojourn narratives.



### 6.5.3 *Identity Constructions based on Different Living Environments*

Her sojourn in Germany seems to have created a situation in which Zora was confronted with different aspects of her past, specifically in regards to her former immigration background, requiring her to give meaning to these elements within her life narrative. Particularly salient are the complex and partly conflictive beliefs that Zora holds about Germany, Canada, Bosnia, the respective languages spoken there, and the roles they have played in her life and toward her sense of self. These views in turn influence the way in which she negotiates different aspects of her identity in her narratives about studying abroad.

#### 6.5.3.1 Construction of Zora's Bosnian Background

Studying abroad in a country in which Zora used to live as a refugee evokes questions of identity. When Zora describes her nationality, she is not able to provide a simple answer. Due to the political conflicts in former Yugoslavia and their aftermath, she appears to have difficulties in establishing and defending her identity as a Bosnian on different levels. When I asked her how she would describe her identity and whether her childhood in Germany influences her sense of self, she explained:

- Zora: you know what I don't # that's the thing I don't associate any # of my identity with Germany, I:  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: um # I would say I associate a lot, like I would say I'm Bosnian.  
MM: ya.  
Zora: um.  
MM: even when somebody in Germany asks you what nationality you are?  
Zora: hmm hmm.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: ya I always say Bosnian.  
MM: ya.  
Zora: um # and it's not you know ## like like I will get ## like I've almost um been kind of like # jaded to say Serbo-Croatian.

(excerpt Z2; ll. 1787-99)

Although Zora has been part of multiple cultural communities throughout her life, she considers neither her childhood in Germany, nor her Canadian citizenship to be elements of her ethnic identity. Instead of presenting a complex answer, she chooses to ignore complicating influences on her identity, in order to strengthen a facet she finds most desirable and most fragile: her native Bosnian identity. One of the reasons for her attempt to emphasize particularly this part of her identity may be found in her impression that it is difficult to achieve acknowledgement as a Bosnian. Zora mentions that she finds herself dealing with people's ignorance of the conflictive region and its ethnicities, which she experiences especially in Canada. In her search for stability in her life narrative, however, she expresses an observation that "the older I get, I find myself saying Bosnian more" (l. 1811-2). In so doing, she may be attempting to reconcile memories of her past as a refugee, migrating from one place to the next, with her current desire for stability and coherence in life.

Zora explains the difficulty of finding others who acknowledge her Bosnian identity, not only in Canada, but also in Bosnia when visiting her family. Their rejection of Zora's efforts to construct herself as a Bosnian is especially hard for her to accept, possibly resulting in the strong emphasis of her Bosnian origin as vital part of her identities:

Zora: you know most of my family is still in Bosnia.

MM: hmm.

Zora: I mean like big family.

MM: ya.

Zora: so most of them are still there and um # you know I always thought if I can, like I always, I don't have a problem communicating with them.

MM: hmm.

Zora: my family there, um # but going there # you know like going back to Bosnia and people looking at you like you're a stranger in your own country.

MM: hmm.

Zora: when your parents, even my parents are looked at as if they're you know uh expatriates, like.

MM: hmm.

Zora: they kind of left and um I mean they had to leave.

(excerpt Z3; ll. 1880-96)

Zora feels that her family in Bosnia constructs her as an outsider and resists her attempts to reintegrate through her visits and self-constructions, although she believes that she still possesses the relevant capital in the form of cultural heritage and ability to speak the Bosnian language. Zora therefore appears to struggle with the conflict between inhabited and ascribed identity aspects (Blommaert, 2005), which she tries to overcome by exercising agency against such identity challenges through, for example, the way she introduces herself and her mother tongue.

Yet, as a result of such conflicts, Zora appears to feel partly insecure in her self-construction as Bosnian. She believes that her ability to speak her native language may not be enough capital to justify her claim to be Bosnian, a belief which is hinted at in the interrupted sentence from the above excerpt Z3: "... you know I always thought if I can ..." (l. 1886). What she may mean is that, if she were also able to read and particularly write in her mother tongue, she might not be looked at as a stranger by her own family:

Zora: when we were in Canada and I hadn't been back to Bosnia # I had this um  
# this always sort of like # pole towards Bosnia.

MM: hmm.

Zora: you know and um ## I just # I kind of # I kind of felt uh sad that I had never um been able to kind of develop my language the way that I wanted to to like uh some sort of um standard that I could actually write texts in it.

MM: hmm.

Zora: because I love to write and you know if you can't write in your mother language the way that you want to.

MM: ya.

Zora: it's you know you feel it's a setback ...

(excerpt Z4; ll. 1868-80)

Zora explains that the Bosnian she is familiar with is based on oral communication within her family. With regard to reading and writing, however, she feels that her missing formal education and thus acquisition of literacy in her native language hinder her in taking part in cultural activities, disadvantaging her in gaining access to respective communities of

practice, which in Zora's case is the part of her family living in Bosnia. She thus appears partly insecure in constructing her Bosnian origin as part of her identity, admitting that she has to justify this claim to herself:

Zora: so I always had this ## you know like I, I almost like convinced myself I I am Bosnian, I needed to be Bosnian.

MM: hmm.

Zora: because um how else am I supposed to like relate to my family.

MM: ya.

Zora: um there.

(excerpt Z5; ll. 1915-20)

Zora seems to be challenged in overcoming these complex conflicts and in establishing a coherent identity that allows her to successfully reveal her ethnic roots and to have others acknowledge her inner sense of self. Her family in Bosnia is the touchstone in her search for acceptance and the successful reconciliation of past and present aspects of her identity. The rejection of German and Canadian aspects as possible facets of her identity hence may be the result of Zora's intensive efforts to underline her Bosnian heritage both inwardly and outwardly, eclipsing the influence of other living environments on her life and identity construction.

### 6.5.3.2 Construction of Zora's Childhood in Germany

In Zora's life narrative her childhood in Germany takes on a special role. Having to leave her Bosnian home behind in the chaos of the war, her family established a temporary home in Germany that Zora thinks helped her considerably in adjusting to Canada later on:

MM: when you go to Germany is this # sort of home too or is this like really no that's that's a different country, that's like living in Canada or?

Zora: no that's the thing um ## I feel uh # I'm so # glad that we had um # we had that we did have these couple years in Germany.

MM: hmm.

Zora: because it brought me closer to sort of a, sort of this European mentality.

(excerpt Z6; ll. 1827-32)

Although Zora rejects the influence of Germany on her identity constructions as well as on her definition of home, she credits these years with a mediating function in her life. In the interview, she describes extensively how her “primary socialization” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) into Bosnian society was interrupted and then resumed in Germany, with Zora going to kindergarten and elementary school. Despite her parents trying to maintain the Bosnian language and certain Muslim traditions at home, Zora became acquainted with Christian and other German traditions through the outside environment, easing the following adjustment to another ‘Western’ society. She therefore believes that her time in Germany “was kind of like the middle point, it was kind of like the glue” (ll. 1929-30) in her transition between her past and primary socialization in Bosnia and her present life as well as “secondary”/“tertiary socialization” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Byram, 1990) in Canada. Even though Zora presents her motivation to learn German and study abroad in Germany as unrelated to her childhood, it may nevertheless be part of her wish to move closer to her origins and reconnect with her heritage.

Besides familiarizing Zora with cultural differences between Eastern and Western Europe, her childhood in Germany also prepared her for what she believes is the core of Canadian identity, namely being bilingual. She says that “in Germany um ## um # I ## kind of uh acquired something that would help me here # um because I’m interested in languages” (ll. 1935-6). Her chance to acquire a second language during her childhood thus helped her to associate herself with what it means for her to be Canadian, easing her adjustment to the third place of residence. When she then migrated to Canada, she had already developed what she believes is necessary to adjust to this place: experience with learning languages in both formal and informal contexts. Besides having to learn English quickly, she also approached her French lessons with great interest:

Zora: und dann hatte ich auch eine Interesse f- für für Französisch oder vielleicht ich wollte irgendwie # ehm wissen # eh wie es ist, so kanadisch zu sein.

MM: hmm.

Zora: und auch zwei Sprachen zu sprechen.

(excerpt Z7; ll. 149-52)<sup>17</sup>

In the interview, she is proud to say that she did better in her French classes than many of her Canadian classmates, who seemed to be less motivated to learn the foreign language. This experience may serve as evidence for Zora that her adjustment to Canada was successful since she feels that she has met expectations better than ‘real’ Canadians. Yet, she believes that the basis for her adjustment can be found in her childhood in Germany.

Despite easing Zora’s cultural and linguistic adjustments acquired during the process of migrating from East to West, spending time in Germany and learning German also fulfill a further function: whereas Zora suffers from a lack of literacy skills in her mother tongue Bosnian, she enthusiastically constructs German as the language that she loves for its literature and literary characteristics, forming an important reason for seeking improvement of her German via study abroad. Comparing the German and English translations of the Brazilian author Paulo Coelho, Zora describes how she prefers to read literature in German over English:

Zora: ... pertaining to reading.

MM: hmm.

Zora: I think it’s it’s a lot eh it’s a lot more dense and it’s a lot more um # um full of life irgend- [some-] uh irgendwie [somehow] &=laugh.

MM: ya.

Zora: somehow um in German I find um it’s also uh # not as boring # I find.

MM: that’s very interesting hmm, I’ve never thought about it this way ya.

Zora: sometime sometimes in English it’s BLAND.

MM: hmm.

Zora: I find it’s just # it’s just bland, now I’m not um now in Bosnian, if I read something in Bosnian, it’s a lot harder for me # because I never really had um um instructions.

(excerpt Z8; ll. 668-79)

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<sup>17</sup> For English translations of German interview passages see Appendix A.2.

Despite Zora's native-like proficiency in English, she constructs this language rather negatively and rejects its potential as a mediator between her and the literary world she loves to access. Instead, she chooses German as the language that fills the gap caused by her lack of Bosnian literacy. Again, she positions German as a mediating element in her life, forming the bridge between her current life and identities, and the past that she appears to be afraid to lose. Generally, during the interview, Zora often displays a negative perspective toward the English language and Canadian culture. She emphasizes that English is not her native language and therefore not the medium that can touch her and speak to her, as can be seen in the excerpt above. Further references to language and society underline her impressions of simplicity, superficiality, and ignorance. German, on the other hand, fulfills her desire for education and sophistication, although her competence in this language appears to be lower than that in English.

However, returning to Germany while studying abroad, and particularly to the city in Lower Saxony where she used to live, was accompanied not just by positive feelings, but also by possible indicators of an idealization of her childhood in Germany, which she realized did not fully correspond with the reality she encountered:

MM: warst du mal wieder da in Hannover ja, als du jetzt?

Zora: ja und ehm es war ## so klein.

MM: hmm.

Zora: weil ich war so klein und ... ja # es war ehm wie soll ich das sagen, vielleicht auf Englisch ehm ## naja jetzt wollte ich das auf Bosnisch sagen, aber ehm.

MM: &=laugh.

Zora: uh ## it was very nauseating.

MM: hmm # ya.

Zora: so um # you were in the street and everything was very small.

MM: ya.

Zora: and it was just too much, overwhelming # so # ya.

(excerpt Z9; ll. 582-95)

Zora seems to feel negatively confronted with the place in which she spent a significant part of her childhood, affecting even her language usage. She started the interview speaking German because she was happy to have the opportunity to practise the language, as she explained. When recounting her impressions of this town, however, the memories of feeling so overwhelmed may have caused her to mentally dissociate from this unpleasant moment through switching to languages that she is more comfortable with, primarily her mother tongue Bosnian. Zora reports that, in studying abroad in Germany, she attempted to “learn more about # um # what it would be like just # intensely uh you know being surrounded by this language” (ll. 1356-7). In so doing, it can be assumed that Zora tried to find and revive parts of her childhood, in which she was immersed by the German language. Visiting the town where she used to live therefore may be a further step in going back to childhood memories and finding parts of her sense of self, which are buried in the past. The feeling of being overwhelmed may then express Zora’s difficulty with coming to terms with her own past and its association with a partial loss of language and identity.

Altogether, Zora appears to hold conflictive views of the German language and her experiences in Germany. On the one hand, she seems to reject particularly those aspects of German and Germany that are related to her memories of spending time there during her childhood, not acknowledging this segment of her life as an influential factor for her identity formation and motivation to study German at university. As outlined above, this rejection may be related to Zora’s self-construction as primarily Bosnian. On the other hand, she views her childhood in Germany as well as the German language as mediating elements in her life, helping her to reconcile past and present living environments and giving direction to her future plans. The latter aspect also seems to have formed an important reason for Zora to go back to Germany as a sojourner.



### 6.5.3.3 Identity Constructions Based on Canada

As mentioned before, Zora's perspective on Canada is influenced by her impression of ignorance toward her ethnic heritage and her rejection of English as a language of sophisticated communication with which she can identify. When studying abroad in Germany, however, Zora had to decide how to deal with Canada as part of her life, for if she were to introduce herself as Bosnian, then Germans would naturally infer that she still resided in Bosnia. Zora therefore found a compromise that acknowledged Canada but still allowed her not to construct herself as Canadian in an ethnic or cultural sense:

Zora: so uh in the Canadian thing YES I did I did say um # when people would ask where I'm from # I would say # I'm Bosnian but I live in Canada.

MM: hmm #.

Zora: I would always say it that way.

Zora: I wouldn't say I'm Canadian.

(excerpt Z10; ll. 2081-5)

Zora states that she would refer to Canada as her current place of residence but strictly denies its potential influence on her ethnic identity. Particularly while being in Heidelberg, however, Zora experienced certain cases in which she found it more advantageous to define herself as Canadian (or at least as coming from Canada, without identifying herself as Bosnian), namely, in situations in which she sought access to and identification with the community of Canadian or North-American exchange students:

Zora: or actually sometimes I would say I'm Canadian # um.

MM: in which situations would you say that?

Zora: hm # I think um ### um mostly introducing myself maybe to # even in you know classes, if the if the professor would ask us where, where we're from.

MM: hmm.

Zora: um because I kind of associated myself with # with the other Canadian students you know ... like there were Canadian students there and American students ... and I would say [.] ya I'm from Canada [.]

MM: hmm.

Zora: that's where I came that's, I mean there, that's where my home university is, right #?

MM: ya hmm.

Zora: um # but I would say you know if they asked about my name uh I would  
um [...] I'm from like, I was born in Bosnia [...].  
(excerpt Z11; ll. 2087-2105)

In classroom contexts in Germany, Zora's narrative shows that she did not attempt to define herself as Bosnian and even reduced her Bosnian heritage to her birthplace, thus revealing a considerable difference toward how she constructs herself in the rest of the interview. It therefore seems that communities of practice also exert a strong influence on Zora's identity constructions, as she purposefully aims at defining herself as similar to her Canadian fellow exchange students in Heidelberg. Additionally, it is also notable that she justifies her choice to emphasize her Canadian background based on the place of her home university. She possibly views Canadian education and her association with it as more advantageous for accumulating capital and entering desirable communities than an association with an Eastern European country, especially one that has undergone massive destruction and political instability in the recent past and whose people Germans came to know as immigrating refugees and asylum seekers. Thus, in the realm of education, Zora clearly seeks access to Canadian communities and reduces her intention to define herself closely to her ethnic origin despite the possibility of having exchange students from former Yugoslavia in her classes in Heidelberg. Zora, however, may have also expected such students to react, in the same kind of deprecating way as her own family, to her attempt to create a Bosnian identity, causing her to avoid potential identity challenges and stay away from such identity constructions.

As a further attempt to identify herself with Canadian communities, Zora appears to have adopted specific ways of managing her identity constructions, which can typically be found in the narrations of other Canadian participants as well. Even though she finds it

desirable to be accepted as part of the North American community, she refuses strongly to be identified as U.S. American during her sojourn:

Zora: because um I would also um # I would also try to differentiate between um because my English, you know my English proficiency is very good.

MM: hmm.

Zora: so people # people would # assume that I'm from North America.

MM: ya.

Zora: and um # I would al- always make sure that they knew I'm Canadian, not American.

MM: oh I see &=laugh.

Zora: I would definitely al- &=laugh -ways make sure and um.

MM: ya #.

Zora: because I I did find that the Americans were treated um you know in lesser regard # by the Germans.

(excerpt Z12; ll. 2108-19)

Even though Zora justifies her identity construction as based on experience, she does not provide any more concrete examples for her claim of Germans treating Americans poorly. Given the fact that Rona, who socialized regularly with Zora in Heidelberg, uttered similar impressions, it appears possible that this stereotype was communicated and consolidated in this group of exchange students. The adoption of this 'Canadian' reaction to being identified as American may therefore indicate Zora's attempt to construct identify facets in correspondence to the Canadian community of practice. Hence although Zora is able to reflect in depth on her life narrative and the identity challenges that were caused by the uprooting from her home and adjustment to two different cultures, she makes use of stereotypes from her environment, in order to construct herself as a member of Canadian communities while being on exchange in Germany.

Despite rejecting the influence of her Canadian home on the construction of identity during the interview, Zora appears to have taken advantage of opportunities offered by an association with Canada when seeking affiliation with certain exchange communities.

#### 6.5.4 *Identity Conflicts and Pronunciation*

##### 6.5.4.1 General Beliefs about Pronunciation

The identity conflicts and challenges that Zora perceives in her life and during her study-abroad period in Germany appear to be related to her beliefs about her pronunciation and the way in which she employs pronunciation as a medium to construct specific identity aspects, particularly while studying in Heidelberg. The basis for such identity negotiations via pronunciation constitutes Zora's belief that she has such a high level of proficiency when speaking German that it is difficult for other speakers, even Germans, to determine she is not a native German speaker:

Zora: the people I found um ## the people that I met through um it was this uh # uh through the university that were sort of uh # um there to help the students as well um ...

MM: hmm.

Zora: and they were just a student organization ... and they would speak to me and they'd be like [...] wow your German is so good [...] you know or they would uh they would say that they didn't know that you know I'm, German isn't my first language or something.

(excerpt Z13; ll. 1136-48)

Zora's way of recounting such compliments, which distinguished her from other exchange students, clearly reveals the pride she takes in them. According to Zora, this kind of misjudgement is mainly due to a feature of her speech that she explains to have retained from her childhood in Germany, namely a native-like pronunciation when speaking German. When I asked her which aspects of her speech she thinks contributed most to such compliments, Zora states that the content of her speech including vocabulary were not as influential in covering her *English* language background as her pronunciation in German:

Zora: I think I think it's the pronunciation.

MM: ya.

Zora: I wouldn't say it's um # maybe exactly the context like what I said.

MM: aha.

Zora: um because sometimes # sometimes I # I g-, it wouldn't wa- uh matter if I used maybe the wrong # the wrong term for what I'm uh saying um, I really think it's the pronunciation.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: because I would # you know the TONE in my voice # would kind of project to them that I don't have this um you know anglicised slu:r you know.  
MM: hmm hmm.  
Zora: it's like [.] wha wha wha [.]

(excerpt Z14; ll. 1504-15)

This excerpt shows clearly which identity ascriptions Zora tries to avoid through pronunciation. It is not her Bosnian heritage that she seeks to cover but rather an association with North Americans when conversing with Germans, an attempt that is possibly related to Zora's adoption of a stereotypical perspective (excerpt Z12). Hence, she believes that the avoidance of identity constructions as a Canadian/American is possible not only through the way she introduces herself but also through the pronunciation of her speech, without requiring much effort. This belief appears to be based on a rather vague conceptualization of pronunciation and features of accented speech as can be seen in this excerpt as well as in further explanations during the interview. This conceptualization of pronunciation is also reflected in the way she describes the English pronunciation with its "slur", supporting her negative constructions of the language and its speakers as superficial and careless. In underlining that this "slur" is not part of her German pronunciation, she creates an image of herself that clearly sets her apart from her own negative associations with English culture, language, and speakers, and that construction helps her to identify more closely with a language and culture that she perceives as more sophisticated. Zora therefore appears to view her pronunciation as a tool that eases access to German-speaking communities and enables her to identify with the desirable aspect of education with which she credits these communities.

Yet, due to her experience with living in Germany as both an immigrant and a study-abroad student, Zora perceives problems with the ambiguous effects of her pronunciation on the identity aspects she wants to create for herself. She views her pronunciation as both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, she employs this feature of speech consciously as capital, allowing her to integrate into German society by taking on the prestige of an educated exchange student as opposed to an unwanted immigrant. On the other hand, she believes that her native-like pronunciation creates the outward impression of an effortless process of acquiring the German language during her childhood, not allowing her to gain others' recognition of the traumatic cultural and linguistic uprooting as a young immigrant in Germany. Both aspects will be analysed in depth in the following sections.

#### 6.5.4.2 Pronunciation and Ability to Integrate

Zora's perspective on pronunciation – as a medium that influences one's ability to integrate into German society – reveals noticeable traces from her experience as a refugee in Germany. Her descriptions often refer to some of the difficulties experienced by immigrants who are integrating into a society that she perceives as unwilling to accept diversity and foreign influences. Interestingly, Zora gives evidence for this contradiction between the alleged need for immigrants and the concurrent resentment toward them by referring to the German lack of interest in pronouncing foreign names adequately:

Zora: but # like the German mentality is like that you know I mean they # like look how many Turkish people are in Germany # and uh like Italian people, Polish people, it's # like for years they've had to open their doors, like even now they need immigrants to make babies, you know.

MM: hmm &=laugh.

Zora: ... and # s:till you know they, they kind of s- you do sense it that # if you don't have a German last name # you know # people will # kind of pronounce your name anyway they want to and they don't really CARE about you know, asking you how you pronounce it.

MM: hmm.  
Zora: now here you know in Canada, sometimes they will ask you um especially with my name.  
(excerpt Z15; ll. 1681-93)

In opposing the perceived attitudes of Canadians toward immigrants to those held by Germans, Zora implies through the example of pronunciation that Germans assume that immigrants will adjust to their expectations without being willing to accept as part of their society the foreign influences brought by immigrants. Even though Zora appears to criticize the perceived lack of empathy, she nevertheless reports to have attended to such expectations during her sojourn in order to ease the process of integrating into German society. Accordingly, she uses the pronunciation of her own name, which is without doubt strongly connected to her sense of self, to adjust to the German speakers she encountered while studying abroad:

Zora: and uh in German it was always # uh it was uh # because the z uh the zee in my first name um # nobody would ever call me [tso: ʁa]<sup>18</sup>.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: they would kind of um # like soften it.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: and make it [s]- uh [so:ʁa].  
MM: ya that's probably what I would say or what I did say &=laugh.  
Zora: hmm ya it would be [so:ʁa].  
MM: ya aha.  
Zora: so I would introduce myself as [so:ʁa].  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: uh or if the other person I knew they were speaking English I would say [.] uh mein name is um [zɔɪa] [.]  
(excerpt Z16; ll. 1711-23)

This excerpt is very interesting, as it shows how Zora mediates between different speech communities by changing the pronunciation of her first name. According to Byram's (1997, 2008) definition of an intercultural speaker, this excerpt may demonstrate students'

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<sup>18</sup> This excerpt attempts to show the changes that Zora makes in her real first name. Even though the changes appear more authentic in the actual interview, I chose the name Zora because of some identical sounds that would allow me to give an impression of the changes she performs.

abilities to act as such intercultural speakers – albeit in dependence on specific situations and social contexts. Although Zora does not exhibit intercultural-speaker qualities as a consistent feature (see chapter 7), in the above extract she clearly shows how she is able to recognize the expectations of different linguistic and cultural communities and to mediate between such different expectations in order to fulfil her own desire of becoming a member of the respective groups.

The role of a mediator, however, also requires that learners renounce the outward projection of certain identity aspects that would violate their ability to mediate between different communities. As Zora thus recognizes, this mediating role appeared possible for her to take on, as she stayed in Germany on the temporary study-abroad basis only. In the case of long-term immigration, however, she perceives difficulties that can be encountered when one combines the wish to integrate into society with the difficulty of giving up “unwanted” or “unsuitable” identity aspects:

Zora: but um # no I did try to um # I mean, I think if you if you, they see that you're trying to make an effort.

MM: ya.

Zora: um they'll be a little more tolerant, now if you go in there and you're speaking English # obviously they're gonna have something to say against that because # you know even like the Turkish people who speak # German but # you know infuse their Turkish ## you know.

MM: hmm.

Zora: words and I guess they have their own uh accent now too.

MM: ya.

Zora: um ## you know they're kind of # they're um establishing an identity for themselves within a country.

MM: hmm.

Zora: that also you know has a history of very you know, very large nationalism.  
(excerpt Z17; ll. 1737-50)

Zora is able to view this dilemma from both perspectives. She understands that Germans seek coherence within their country and are less tolerant toward open ignorance of their language and customs. On the other hand, she also recognizes the hardships that immi-



grants undergo in finding identity constructions that are both accepted by the environment and suitable for portraying their senses of self. The analogy that Zora draws with the help of immigrants living in Germany also hints at her own identity conflicts that she still experiences. When studying abroad in Heidelberg, she apparently tried to avoid further conflicts by adjusting herself to perceived expectations as well as by consciously constructing herself as an exchange student in order to prevent herself from 'returning' to the position of an immigrant:

Zora: so I think they [Germans] kind of see it as a threat.

MM: hmm.

Zora: but um and they don't know, they don't know if you're an immigrant that is living in Germany.

MM: hmm.

Zora: and uh wants this identity for yourself # like against the German nationality or if you're a student.

MM: ya.

Zora: so often I did mention that I was a student.

MM: aha.

Zora: so I would say you know ... [.] I am studying here [.]

(excerpt Z18; ll. 1752-64)

Her belief that Germans see immigrants as threats against their German nationality may seem stereotypical, but can also be grounded on how Zora remembers her position as an immigrant in Germany. She thus sought identity constructions that she believes are more prestigious, less offensive, and helpful in easing integration through adjusting the pronunciation of her name and taking advantage of her pronunciation skills in German. In so doing, she seems to have found a balance between the temporary need to adjust to the study-abroad environment and the wish for desirable identity constructions.

### 6.5.4.3 Pronunciation and Learner Identity

Zora finds that her pronunciation in German not only supports but also hinders desirable identity constructions. She believes that, because of the absence of an obvious foreign accent in her speech, other speakers of German ignore or reject her identity as a learner of the language – a concern that she may have also had during the interview with regard to my perception of her. In so doing, German speakers may not only threaten her attempt to find access to communities of other exchange students, but they may also deny recognition of the traumatic experience she went through as a child who had to learn a foreign language and adjust to a new environment after escaping from war:

Zora: and I never wanted people to kind of # assume that [...] oh you already learnt German when you were little [...].

MM: ah.

Zora: because it wasn't like that.

MM: ya.

Zora: uh it was I came here, I had to learn English, like.

MM: hmm ##.

Zora: um a lot more students, it's sometimes it's easier for students that uh kind of learn the grammar first.

MM: hmm.

Zora: learn uh # how to say things in # in German in that respect, because ### um it's sort of like your mother language um # you don't learn how # you know I mean first language acquisition, you don't learn these um.

MM: no hmm.

Zora: these first terms or whatever and how to use them and put them into place.

MM: ya.

Zora: so um # I mean it wasn't that easy # with German for me either, so I didn't ever wanna be like [...] ya I studied in Germany # ya that was very easy for me so that's why I [...], 'cause I always thought people would like maybe think that.

(excerpt Z19; ll. 2050-70)

It is clearly important for Zora that people acknowledge the hardships of her childhood and the efforts she put into learning German in her disadvantageous position as a refugee. Correspondingly, Zora also views other exchange students who come to Heidelberg without being proficient in German much more positively than most other participants in this

study. For example, she tells the story about her Japanese roommate whom she believes had great difficulties in finding access to other exchange students because of her poor German and English skills. Zora, however, shows sympathy toward her and acknowledges her courage to go to a foreign country to gain education without speaking the language properly. Hence, because of her childhood experience, Zora seems to understand the position of such students, who cling to their native languages or English as lingua franca. Additionally, in acknowledging the difficulties of students in such positions, she can also draw attention to her own case and search for recognition of her efforts.

Although Zora sympathizes with students only beginning to learn German and revealing noticeable accents, she nonetheless despises proficient students who appear careless toward German pronunciation, forcing their native accents on their German speech and refusing to take on a mediating role:

Zora: I don't like when people learn German or they're speaking German and they say, for example uh ['fo:to] and the- they'll say [.] ['fɔdʊ] [..].

MM: oh I see hmm.

Zora: you know, or um.

MM: &=laugh # why don't you like that?

Zora: or um or German students who KNOW better, who know better.

MM: ya.

Zora: saying uh, like instead of saying [bɛɣ'li:n], they'll say [.] [bɜr'lɪn] [..].

MM: &=laugh.

Zora: &=laugh I just wanna like kick them, well no.

MM: why?

Zora: ... I um maybe I'm like # maybe it's one sort of you know like perfectionism ... like just do it the way that you know the Germans intended it to be said.

(excerpt Z20; ll. 2219-39)

Even though Zora declares that her childhood in Germany is not part of her identity, this excerpt suggests that she identifies to a certain extent with Germans and their alleged attitudes toward foreigners. In the same way as she understands that Germans feel offended by foreigners who do not intend to learn their language and do not try to develop mediat-

ing identity constructions, she scorns learners who openly violate the German pronunciation of internationalisms. It seems that from Zora's perspective accent and pronunciation play a very important role in the process of mediating between different communities, as could be seen from the analysis of her own behaviour and most particularly her adoption of different first-name pronunciations. Zora hence identifies with Germans and their language via pronunciation, as one of the most noticeable signals of foreignness. She appears to feel personally offended when other study-abroad learners of German reject integrating into German society by refusing to take on a more German pronunciation.

In identifying with German culture and language, she technically counteracts her own efforts in being recognized as a *learner* of German (as opposed to an '*acquirer*') in the study-abroad environment. Thus, her assumption that other exchange students and German native speakers do not perceive her as a learner may be grounded on the partially subconscious insight that she does not entirely behave and feel like a 'normal' learner but carries traces of her childhood in Germany in her sense of self – at least in certain situational contexts. Hence, her beliefs about her own as well as other learners' pronunciation skills are salient markers of Zora's ongoing struggles with and negotiations of complex identity constructions.

#### 6.5.4.4 Perception of German Pronunciation

As already implied in excerpt Z20, Zora's conflicted views about her own pronunciation also reflect upon her perceptions of standard, dialectal, and accented forms of German pronunciation and the respective functions she attributes to them.

Zora declares that she deems her own pronunciation as relevant to her and defines standard pronunciation as the target she directs herself to:

- MM: is your pronunciation actually important for you, is this something you care about or just something you?
- Zora: um ya I do, I do care about it, um ## I don't I don't, I wouldn't say that I care uh so much # that if I didn't have this sort of pronunciation or I didn't try to make it ## um I guess st- standard # you wanna say.
- MM: hmm do you try to make it standard?
- Zora: um # I think # um I think that's kind of what I'm # what I direct myself to.
- MM: hmm.
- Zora: um # I don't think that um I have a problem with um people knowing that it's not my first language.
- MM: hmm.
- Zora: or my mother language.
- MM: ya.
- Zora: I I don't think # it would affect me uh that you know German people wouldn't like me because um it's not # my mother language.
- (excerpt Z21; ll. 1540-58)

By adopting standard German pronunciation as a target, Zora tries to outwardly create an image that she believes eases her access to German society, as can be seen from her assumption that Germans might not like her if her accent identifies her as a foreigner. Despite these conscious efforts, however, she states that she would not mind being recognized as foreign if her pronunciation revealed an accent. It is very interesting that the structure she uses marks this case as hypothetical, i.e., the possibility of being detected due to an accent does not really apply to her, she believes. This may explain the fact that she nevertheless thinks that exclusion by Germans would not bother her. Her alleged indifference may also be related to her struggles in gaining recognition as a learner of German (i.e., with an accent she may gain access to communities of learners more easily) and to the fact that her stay in Heidelberg was only of a temporary nature, and not a long-term residency, as in the cases of immigrants.

Generally speaking, however, Zora's orientation toward standard German is largely based on her self-construction as a proficient speaker of German. She can therefore not

imagine taking on a native-language (e.g., Bosnian) accent when speaking German, possibly evoking images that would violate the identity she aims to portray:

- MM: did you ever try to um to kind of also # like play with the way you speak in order to show that you're maybe more Canadian, that you're not German or?
- Zora: no no.
- MM: or maybe bring out a Bosnian accent when you speak German or anything?
- Zora: no, oh my lord, um # um # no definitely not, I tried not to um # I tried not to MAKE myself what I wasn't #.
- MM: hmm.
- Zora: um and then again like I I'd probably have a hard time like, sometimes I would uh it would all be in joking # you know I would uh # if # if I knew other people from # um for example # I didn't meet anybody from Bosnia there, I met some people from Croatia.
- MM: ya.
- Zora: and um # there is a certain way that you can speak German in a Croatian accent.
- MM: hmm.
- Zora: ... uh and it would just be in a joke.

(excerpt Z22; ll. 2145-64)

Zora particularly rejects the option to speak German with a Bosnian accent, emphasizing that such a pronunciation would not be in accordance with her own sense of self. When speaking German in Germany Zora is very concerned about the perceptions she evokes. Not only does she choose to underplay her Bosnian heritage in the way she introduces herself, but she also reveals that her orientation to standard German stems from her wish not to regain immigrant status. Only when joking with other people from former Yugoslavia does Zora dare to show her heritage. Thus, the way she perceives her own pronunciation appears to be very closely linked to the identities she aims to construct in relation to different communities of practice.

Yet, her perceptions of other learners' accented speech deviate from her own pronunciation targets. Zora not only empathizes with learners who come to Germany without any knowledge of the language (e.g., her Japanese roommate), but also claims to tolerate noticeable accents in learners who otherwise try hard to speak the language well:

Zora: um if # people with accents are speaking German, uh I've had many conversations with people that are from Fra- uh especially France.  
MM: ya.  
Zora: and also um ## and also um # in you know Scandinavian countries.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: and um # they have an accent but um # you know what we were discussing is # they know uh even though they don't know all the words or sometimes it's very fragmented you know, their structure and their sentences ... so um # you know even though they do have an accent there is- their um ## um their um ## because their performance.  
MM: ya.  
Zora: in that language.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: is ## is a lot more developed.

(excerpt Z23; ll. 1616-40)

Zora's criterion for judging other learners' accented speech appears to be based on education. From her perspective, the status of being an exchange student is automatically connected with high education and capital. Except for cases of open ignorance toward German pronunciation, Zora thus respects learners of German with accented speech, focusing instead on other language skills the learners gained through their studies.

When judging native speakers who deviate from standard pronunciation, however, Zora applies the criterion of education again, but with a different result. Since she directs herself to standard German in order to construct an educated and privileged background, she negatively assesses German native-speakers who do not follow these norms:

Zora: now if if it was a German dialect from a German person.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: um # I would kind of relate it to uh # because that you know the standard is usually taught in schools.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: if you have uh some sort of higher education you would be more inclined to u- maybe use the um # use the standard # or something.  
MM: ya.  
Zora: um but then again I do know that # you know a person can be very highly educated and still have a dialect.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: a German dialect and uh maybe um # you know uh # depending on um # depending on uh # the area uh that they're using their dialect you know at

home or s- # if a lot of their family was uh familiar with this dialect obviously they're going to be very heavy in it um.

MM: hmm.

Zora: so I shouldn't judge it but I do.

(excerpt Z24; ll. 1593-1610)

In general, Zora seems to use education as a benchmark, not only to elevate the position of herself and other exchange students in Germany but also to evaluate the amount of prestige a native speaker is allowed to claim. This perspective may be seen as a defence mechanism against unfavourable identity ascriptions on behalf of Germans. Her alleged ability to pronounce German according to the native-speaker standard reveals her education and student status, positively distinguishing her from supposedly less educated and prestigious dialect-speaking native speakers. In this way, Zora may attempt to further consolidate the construction as a privileged, educated student in Germany. Even though she is aware of her judgemental attitude toward dialects and is able to reflect upon its adequacy, she admits that she cannot free herself from it – showing how necessary it is for her to protect her efforts to construct non-immigrant identities.

#### 6.5.5 *Summary*

Zora's biography as a learner of German as a second language as opposed to foreign language distinguishes her noticeably from other learners of this study. In both her identity negotiations and subsequent beliefs about language learning and herself as a learner of German, her immigrant background plays a prominent role. From Zora's perspective, studying abroad in Germany does not only facilitate improvement in her language skills and increase her confidence, but also evokes identity conflicts based on her childhood in this country. On the one hand, she seeks to cover her past status as immigrant in Germany but, on the other hand, she is not able to completely shed identity aspects related to her



childhood as a refugee. In this context, Zora's beliefs about pronunciation appear to both hinder and promote the wish for reconciliation of past and present identity aspects. Even though her beliefs may appear inconsistent in different respects, they generally follow the goal of creating a coherent life narrative as well as an inwardly and outwardly positive sense of self. In this respect, her sojourn in Germany seems to serve not only her language skills, but also catalyzes the process of her self-(re)discovery, involving multiple aspects of language and identity.

## 7 Discussion of Results

In this chapter, the results of the reconstructed narratives in chapter 6 will be further discussed according to data-driven themes. The analyses of all accounts highlighted that the participants' study-abroad experience, their perceived learning successes, and their abilities to integrate into L2-speaking communities of practice were shaped by three salient factors: the native-speaker orientations, critical language awareness, and intercultural-speaker qualities, all three of which were also interrelated with these learners' identity constructions and learning objectives. The participants will be discussed consecutively and in comparison to one another.

### 7.1 Native-Speaker Orientations

All participant narratives included references to native speakers. However, these references differed in their content and their concomitant effects on the learning process. In the following, the nativeness orientations demonstrated by the study participants are discussed and connected with the influences of such orientations on the definition of learning objectives and students' perceptions of success while studying abroad.

In Rona's case, several instances reveal a strong adherence to the native-speaker ideal: she trusts her Kassel teacher in her recommendation of using the standard /r/ to the extent of overemphasizing it; she believes that having an American accent may be disadvantageous, and she focuses on using the standard German ostensibly spoken by university students. The result of this orientation is a devaluation of her pronunciation after her Heidelberg sojourn. Her behaviour thus confirms pessimistic predictions from researchers such as Canagarajah (1999), who believe that L2 learners may be very persistent in their nativeness orientation – a trend also shown by the other participants of this study.

The main cause of Rona's criticism of her current accent is the idealization of her past self. As Rona recounted, this ideal self, formed through an ostensibly extensive linguistic adjustment, enabled her to become part of native-speaker communities. In this context, aspects such as Rona's overemphasis of the German /r/ sound (excerpt R6) may be interpreted as an investment (Norton, 2000) in her position as an accepted member of German communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In order to be successful, she had to accumulate sufficient assets to increase her cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991), with pronunciation being a significant asset for her. Believing that she succeeded in this endeavour during her Kassel sojourn, Rona approached her stay in Heidelberg with even higher learning goals. There, she aimed at accessing academic communities, which according to her beliefs required native-like pronunciation. This goal, however, proved to be so unrealistic that Rona reduced the investment in her language improvement and withdrew from German-speaking communities.

It can be concluded that Rona's expectations of herself as a near native-speaker ultimately precluded her from recognizing her position as a language learner. Instead of 'allowing' herself to practise her academic German despite its deviations from what she perceives as standard German, she expected herself to act like a native speaker in these unfamiliar contexts. Her 'failure' to fulfil her expectations then caused a timidity that deprived her of taking advantage of available academic learning opportunities. The focus on native-speaker standards thus caused Rona to measure her language abilities against a norm that she perceived as unachievable, threatening the professional identity she wanted to claim and inhibiting her progress and confidence as a speaker of German.

Although Rona appears to be 'well equipped' in terms of her previous sojourn experiences, she did not manage to build realistic expectations, as opposed to some of Mur-

phy-Lejeune's (2002) participants. Rather, she sought refuge in her past self, hence strengthening the belief in her ideal Kassel self – a tendency reflecting participants of other studies who escaped into gendered or nationalistic subject positions (see section 3.5). In so doing, Rona could give meaning to her disappointment in Heidelberg and create a coherent life narrative despite feeling sidelined in the academic 'native-speaker' realm, of which she intended to become an accepted member.

In contrast to this observation, her stance toward pronunciation deviations in perceived non-academic environments was noticeably less influenced by this focus on the native speaker and opened up opportunities to engage in conversations with German speakers and find access to their communities, as in the case of dialect speakers she encountered in Heidelberg. In such instances, she did not judge non-standard pronunciation according to its accentedness, but rather according to the degree of achieved intelligibility (Munro & Derwing, 1995). Her focus on 'high' academic speech and corresponding communities, however, prevented her from transferring the intelligibility orientation to the evaluation of her own speech and pronunciation in particular.

In comparison to Rona, Lisa's case appears as the climax of a native-speaker orientation, possessing tendencies similar to Rona's, but aggravating them to the point of anxiety to speak German both before and during the sojourn. In both cases, the native-speaker ideal is closely linked to desired identity constructions and communities of practice – in the academic realm in Rona's case and in the general 'European' realm in Lisa's case. Establishing their adherence to native-speaker standards as the benchmark of success, however, proved to be unrealistic and endangered both students' senses of self. In order to counteract such identity threats, both of them withdrew from their learning goals of improving their German by actively seeking contact with German-speaking communities.

Due to Lisa's less advanced German skills and general paucity of positive learning experience, her focus on correctness formed a learning barrier and caused repeated experiences of failure. She compensated for these disappointments by elevating nationalistic identity facets (excerpt L14; Block, 2007; Wilkinson, 1998) to create both interest in her person and distance from inaccessible communities.

In both cases, the focus on external ideals is accompanied by a narrow conceptualization of language, which appears to be more drastic in Lisa's case: she is particularly concerned about mistakes in structural details of her speech, guiding her attention to grammatical and phonetic features. In Munro and Derwing's words (1999, p. 286; see section 2.3.1), her resulting inhibitions to speak the foreign language reveal a construction of these deviations as a "language pathology" in need of "eradication." Due to Rona's higher level of language competence, she appeared less concerned about grammatical elements. Her focus on pronunciation, however, persisted, despite her immense learning and sojourn experience. It therefore seems that a native-speaker orientation becomes particularly visible in learners' perceptions of pronunciation, of what they 'sound' like, and thus how they believe to be perceived by others. Both Lisa and Rona focus strongly on these aspects of their speech and self-portrayals.

A major difference between Rona and Lisa can be found in how they explain the causes of their perceived lack of learning. Rona attributed her hesitancy to expose herself to German communities to her decreased willingness to take risks and potentially endanger her sense of self as a mature student. She found *internal* sources, leading to her attempts to bring herself to interact in the German courses she attended and with her landlord's family. Her situation thus appeared to be less desperate. Lisa, however, used the native-speaker ideal to underline her position as a victim of *external* circumstances that

prevent her from improving her language skills. In so doing, she constructed a number of contradictory beliefs. For example, on the one hand, she believed that interacting with non-native speakers would not benefit her learning, thus allowing her to avoid speaking practice in the classroom. On the other hand, when she actually encountered native speakers, as, for example, in the case of her roommates in Stuttgart, she did not interact with them either, for fear of being constructed as unintelligent when making mistakes. The native-speaker orientation thus seems to be both a major source of her speaking reluctance and a useful excuse for not resisting her fears. Lisa appears to be caught in a web of beliefs and excuses that she employs flexibly to avoid dealing with her anxiety of speaking in the foreign language without violating her desirable identity as a ‘mature’ person, one who is apt to live in Europe.

Whereas Rona appears as too strongly invested in her language, and especially pronunciation improvement as a way to accumulate cultural capital, Lisa mostly refrains from considering German as worth any investment on her part. She rather constructs the situation – based on these ‘unfavourable’ native or non-native speaker conditions – as rather hopeless, resigning from the possibility of ever gaining enough capital to position herself as a potential member of German-speaking communities of practice. In avoiding participation, she also rejects taking responsibility for overcoming her anxiety, whereby she creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of negative experiences. As a means of not taking agency for her learning, Lisa even devalues positive experiences, such as friends giving her compliments on her German, allowing her to maintain her beliefs and prevent a conflict between her beliefs and actions.

In comparison to both Lisa and Rona, Alex presents an interesting case, revealing some similarities but mainly striking differences in this conceptualization of nativeness

and its consequences on his learning. Similar to the two women, Alex did also not mention having any experience with pronunciation training beyond reproductive imitation exercises in his German classes. Rather, he referred to the same exercise Lisa remembered, in which an external norm was presented by the professor and imitated by his students. It therefore seems that students tend to focus on such pronunciation exercises that train this element of speech in an isolated way, whereas more holistic speaking exercises are likely not to be viewed as opportunities to train pronunciation. Moreover, Alex also associated standard speech with education and believed that student or academic communities of practice consist predominantly of ‘dialect-free’ speakers. Finally, he also viewed socializing with native speakers and being accepted as an equal member in native-speaker communities as a sign of prestige – a belief similar to the ones held by Rona and Lisa. It can be concluded that Alex is at least partially drawn to the nativeness principle as well. However, the consequences of this orientation on his language learning during the sojourn appear to be fundamentally different.

Alex generally adheres to the nativeness principle as much as he needs to successfully construct himself as an equal member of German-speaking communities and talented learner of German. He appears not to desire to *become* a native speaker, but *be accepted by* native speakers. For example, while he retains the English pronunciation of his first name, he adjusts the spelling and pronunciation of his last name to its German origin. Also, he aims at speaking as well as he can to prevent imposing effort on his interlocutors in conversations. In so doing, his nativeness orientation is interconnected with an intelligibility orientation, allowing him to both confidently claim membership of native-speaker communities and retain a portrayal of ‘Canadian’ identity aspects through, for example, pronunciation. This belief distinguishes Alex strongly from both Rona and Lisa. Especial-

ly Rona seems convinced that she can only gain access to academic communities when strictly adhering to native-speaker ideals. Alex, however, plays with his orientations in relation to desired identity constructions and learning goals. Although he perceives a connection between standard pronunciation and higher education, he does not denounce speakers of dialect the way Lisa does, but rather aims to show neutrality. Similarly, he consciously appreciates some accentedness in his own speech: for example, he does not adjust the pronunciation of his first name to its German equivalent and does generally not mind to be 'detected' as a non-native speaker. He rather plays with accent as a means to receive recognition as a proficient learner of German, which supports his confidence.

Although his self-efficacy is geared toward both grammar and pronunciation because of their ostensibly 'structured' and 'logical' forms, he particularly modifies his pronunciation in order to support his sense of self and to outwardly portray desired identity constructions. In this process, pronunciation appeared to gain importance for Alex throughout his sojourn. Whereas he revealed a somewhat indifferent stance toward pronunciation before studying abroad, his insight into its importance to constructions of identities in correspondence to desirable communities of practice grew as a result of the sojourn experience. In perceiving pronunciation as a tool to portray specific identity constructions, all three learners compared so far coincide. Yet, Alex is the one who employs it strategically to create positive self-fulfilling prophecies during the sojourn, whereas Lisa and Rona fail to do the same, due to different degrees of reluctance to take responsibility and unrealistic learning goals based on the native-speaker ideal. Alex therefore appears invested in his language learning, particularly in regards to his later use of a slightly accented form of pronunciation for the explicit purpose of increasing his cultural capital in the sojourn environment.



Kris' conceptualization of native speakers is to some extent similar to Alex's in that he appears not to desire native-speaker status, but instead hopes to be accepted into native communities. Both his Hamburg and Ulm accounts reveal the oppositional positions of 'the tourists' and 'the residents'. Kris constructs tourists as non-integrated 'outsiders' of a society, whose helpless behaviour indicates their lack of participation and learning. He clearly is bothered by being ascribed this position and perceives that his language use and especially his pronunciation indicate his achieved degree of acceptance. In his retrospective accounts of Hamburg, he is convinced that he achieved full membership in native-speaker communities and believes that adjusting his speech to the local Hamburg dialect helped him in successfully claiming 'resident' status. His behaviour is unique in this study, as none of the other participants perceived regional varieties as helpful tools to increase their cultural capital. In Ulm, however, Kris thought that native speakers partially reacted in a belittling way to his attempts to speak German or chose to switch to English. Both of these behaviours counteracted his desire to position himself as a full member of German-mediated communities of practice and additionally posed a threat to his sense of self as a mature and talented student of German.

The contrast between his two sojourns is similar to Rona's perceived differences between her Heidelberg and Kassel exchanges. There are, however, important variations between the two accounts. Rona constructs both an unrealistic and identity-threatening learning objective based on native-speaker ideals and accuses herself of not having the right 'attitude' for exposing herself to the foreign environment, leading to the perception that the sojourn in Heidelberg was relatively disappointing. Kris, on the other hand, is very invested in interpreting his Ulm sojourn as a successful experience despite having difficulties to enter native-speaker communities as well. First, he adopts a less uncompro-

mising nativeness orientation; secondly, he constructs identity aspects that protect his reluctance to socialize with German speakers as a necessary part of being an ‘adult’, and thirdly, he conceptualizes pronunciation differently. Whereas Rona is guided by her studies in phonetics and pronunciation training and perceives her own pronunciation as a very salient identity marker, Kris believes pronunciation to be but *one* part of the overall impression that a speaker leaves on interlocutors. He reveals a more holistic understanding of pronunciation and explicitly considers aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and fluency as further influential factors. This conceptualization contributes to maintaining the confidence in his aptitude to learn German despite his accented speech.

Whereas Kris’ orientation toward accessing native-speaker communities is relatively consistent, he nevertheless oscillates in his beliefs about pronunciation, precisely because of the different requirements he perceives in different communities. His holistic conceptualization of pronunciation is contradicted by aiming at a Northern as opposed to Southern German pronunciation. Although he does not exhibit an anxiety as Lisa does, it appears possible that this learning goal seems difficult to achieve from Kris’ point of view and counteracts his desired self-construction as a professional and mature student. The orientation toward Northern German nativeness may be interrelated with his limited motivation to engage in learning processes and to access the communities available in the Southern German city Ulm. Considering that Kris is very invested in maintaining his Canadian contacts, his rejection of Southern German may serve as an excuse for not taking responsibility for improving his German, but instead spending several hours on the computer in his residence. The specific shape of Kris’ nativeness orientation is thus inconsistent, but always supports his construction as a talented learner of German.

Like the other participants of this study, Zora's beliefs and narrations are influenced by an orientation toward nativeness. The native speaker, however, plays a different role in her case because of her background, first as a refugee and later an immigrant. More specifically, whereas the other learners aspired to native-speaker qualities and/or acceptance by native speakers, Zora believes to have achieved nativeness already, particularly in regard to her pronunciation, which she conceptualizes as the most salient identity marker. In her narratives, it therefore seems that the native-speaker concept influences less her actual learning success or behaviour and more her search for reconciliation of her past and present identity aspects. In this respect, Zora's beliefs and identity work are guided by the communities of practice she would like to access and the corresponding requirements she perceives.

On the one hand, Zora would like to be an accepted member of the learner communities she encounters in Heidelberg. In such communities, she appears to seek dissociation from native-speaker ascriptions, in order to construct identity aspects in relation to other learners of German and, more importantly, in order to gain acknowledgement of her troublesome past and the hardships she underwent in adjusting to new linguistic and cultural environments. In this respect, she seems to perceive her apparently native-like pronunciation as an impediment to emphasizing her learner status and thus establishes different means, such as ways to introduce herself, as indicators of her non-nativeness.

On the other hand, the experience of studying abroad in Germany appears to confront Zora with her past as an immigrant in this country and its associated feelings of being depreciated. Although she reacts with empathy to learners with lower proficiency and noticeable accents, she establishes standard German as a learning goal. This position may appear contradictory as Zora's distinction between her own learning goals (nativeness) and

those she sets up for other learners (intelligibility) undermines her efforts to be perceived as a part of learner communities. A possible reason for this discrepancy may be found in her concern to be perceived as an immigrant: since ‘ordinary’ learners of German “start learning from a clean slate” (I. 2001), they can study abroad in Germany without the fear of being seen as an immigrant, even if they have accented speech. In her own case, however, Zora seems to believe that she carries traces of her past as an immigrant in Germany, forcing her to cover any features of foreignness that may reveal themselves during her interactions with native Germans. Consequently, she adheres to the ‘safe’ way of directing herself to standard German pronunciation in order to emphasize her position as an educated *student* of German and avoid being mistaken as an *immigrant* due to accented speech. As opposed to the other participants in this study, Zora’s perception of standard German pronunciation appears to be not as much based on classroom instruction as on her own memories of being an immigrant in Germany.

Zora’s case adds to the picture created by the other participants the insight that even the believed achievement of nativeness may contribute to identity conflicts. In her case, the perceived nativeness plays both a supportive and inhibiting role in her identity negotiations, underlining the ambivalent effects entailed within the native-speaker ideal – both in the cases of native-like and non-native-like learner speech.

In conclusion, the analysis of various orientations toward nativeness on the parts of the interviewees reveals that most, if not all learners are to some extent directed toward native-speaker ideals. The functions that they assign to this ideal in the learning process and particularly in study-abroad contexts, however, differ widely and may have very different effects on the learners’ abilities to utilize learning opportunities. Despite inconsistencies within and between cases, native-speaker beliefs appear to always serve the same

purpose, namely helping participants to construct themselves as competent learners of German in order to create a coherent and favourable life narrative. In this respect, the comparison between these cases suggests that the beliefs and senses of self, which learners bring to the sojourn, determine largely how they interpret experiences in the new environment and take advantage of learning opportunities. An important reason for the influence of existing beliefs lies in their ‘sturdiness’, because all of these learners appear rather inventive in incorporating even counterevidence into their existing beliefs in order to create a coherent life narrative by avoiding changes in their belief systems and subsequent conflicts between beliefs and behaviour. In some cases, however, the nativeness orientation contributed to learning barriers. Even though learners seemed to negotiate identity facets in such a way that their life narratives and positive senses of self remained intact, it is of interest to investigate how such orientations are related to learners’ CLA and their abilities to achieve intercultural-speaker qualities. These insights may then allow researchers to establish didactic recommendations of how student abilities to utilize learning opportunities in different contexts, whether abroad or at home, can be increased and what type of role pronunciation may play in the teaching of foreign languages (see chapter 8).

## 7.2 Critical Language Awareness

In order to shed light on these participants’ ability to reflect on languages, language learning, and their personal stances, I resort to Train’s (2003) five components of CLA, which were outlined in section 2.3.4, but are provided here as well to ease the reading process. These learners’ CLA will be assessed by discussing their readiness to

- Explore individual and collective beliefs (ideologies, attitudes, biases, prejudices) surrounding language

- Appreciate variation as inherent in language and learning
- Question dominant linguistic and cultural knowledge (e.g., native standard language) and how it is constructed and represented
- Critically reflect on the tension and interplay that exist in language education between creative individual uses of language and conformity to institutionalized norms
- Gain insight into the sociocultural construction of speakers' identities and 'realities' in a multilingual and multicultural world. (Train, 2003)

The idiosyncrasy of each case requires a somewhat flexible application of these five components because not each aspect applies to all participants.

Rona's inability to distance herself from unrealistic learning goals and negative self-perceptions reflects her uncritical acceptance of native-speaker standards, which she incorporates to the extent of creating a native-like, but past ideal of herself. In this respect, Rona appears to explore her own as well as collective beliefs only narrowly, as can be seen, for example, in her evaluation of Dutch as a 'harsh' language. Although she rejects such negative ascriptions in the case of German, her focus on creating a positive image for herself as a speaker of German results in the uncritical shift of stereotypes to another language. This stance is particularly interesting because Rona received a lot more theoretical and practical insight into phonetics and pronunciation than any other participant in this study. The accounts of her Kassel classes, however, show no instance of teacher-initiated reflection upon learner beliefs and questioning of native-speaker norms, but rather an emphasis on standard German, which may have contributed to Rona's narrow conceptualization of pronunciation and impression that the academic environment requires native-like skills.

Her construction of academic communities as a site of nativeness is also reflected in her stance toward variation. In instances that do not refer to academic environments, such as her evaluation of her friends in Innsbruck, Rona shows appreciation for dialectal variation. She is able to expose herself to such encounters and reflect on pronunciation from a neutral perspective that corresponds rather with the ‘intelligibility principle’ than the ‘nativeness principle’ (Levis, 2005), allowing her to position herself as a learner and make use of the learning opportunity. Whenever she aims at constructing a professional identity, however, she does not exhibit the same openness and withdraws from the situation, as in her accounts of classroom experience in Heidelberg.

Therefore, when academic settings and Rona’s self-construction as a future academic are concerned, she does not question her belief of native-speaker standards being the required asset to access respective communities. In turn, she does not allow herself to use language creatively and present herself as a learner, but focuses strictly on adhering to these self-imposed ‘rules of entry’ (Block, 2007). In noticing that her skills do not correspond to such high expectations, she refrains from accessing L2 academic communities. In the realm of academia, her insight into the sociocultural construction of speakers is thus unidirectional, believing that speakers’ ability to adhere to external norms determines their access to prestigious communities. Her knowledge of phonetics and practice in pronunciation appears to support her perspectives in that she focuses on particularly this aspect of her speech, preventing her from a more holistic conceptualization of her linguistic skills and perception as a speaker of German.

Rona’s case thus suggests that a limited critical reflection on perceived norms and collective beliefs inhibits learners’ abilities to engage in learning opportunities due to, for example, the adoption of unrealistic, identity-threatening learning goals. Had Rona been

able to overcome her focus on native-speaker standards and the ideal native-scholar model through the development of CLA, the exchange with Heidelberg might have appeared a lot more successful because she might have recognized her position as a *learner* of German. With more realistic learning goals for her pronunciation and overall speaking skills, Rona might have constructed herself as a confident speaker of German, feeling that investing in participation in academic communities may be profitable and worthwhile.

Even more than Rona, Lisa appears unable to explore both her own and collective beliefs with regard to the German language, its pronunciation, and language learning in general. This can be seen in Lisa's strict adherence to common stereotypes about the sound of German (Chavez, 2009), her resultant uncomfortable feelings when speaking German, and in her solid belief that one's accent will provoke negative evaluations from German interlocutors. Whereas Rona's shift of negative stereotypes to another language promotes her positive outlook on German, Lisa's acceptance of such stereotypes allows her to consolidate her belief in the insurmountable difficulty of speaking German, revealing again the difference between Rona's willingness to improve and Lisa's abandoned investment in learning German. In both cases, their subjective recollections of classroom experience confirmed and further nourished their uncritical acceptance of these beliefs.

Whereas Rona is familiar with variations in the German language and appreciates it in other speakers, Lisa's limited pre-sojourn experience with living outside of her home environment, with variation within the foreign language, and with authentic communicative situations translates into a more negative evaluation of German and its variations before and after her sojourn. At the same time, her denunciation of the Swabian dialect in Stuttgart as 'uneducated' appears to be part of her web of excuses, justifying her reluctance to engage with speakers in her immediate surroundings, since an affiliation with



their communities and a construction of suitable identity facets may counteract her sense of self as mature and intelligent. However, when evaluating variation in English, a language that she does not need to learn, she reveals a much greater tolerance toward deviations in the form of foreign accents, which is diametrically opposed to her evaluation of her own accent in German ('cute' versus 'unintelligent'). Her depreciation of variation in both her own and other speakers' German speech thus serves her construction of unattainable learning goals, goals so unrealistic that it may not be worth the effort to even try to achieve them. Without this sense of reluctance, Lisa possibly may have perceived deviations from a standard in a more tolerant way, drawing on notions of intelligibility rather than nativeness, as in the case of her German friends' English skills.

As a result, Lisa questions her linguistic and cultural knowledge to a lesser extent than Rona, which becomes especially obvious in her idealization of 'European culture'. She clings to surface phenomena selected according to her areas of interest (e.g., love, relationships, landscapes), is disinterested in historical developments and underlying value and belief systems, and generalizes 'culture' as equal to either an entire continent (Europe) or separate nations. She conceptualizes cultures as entities with clear boundaries and distinct artefacts. Her hesitancy in participating in German-mediated communities of practice thus contributes to Lisa's rather uncritical stance in that it deprives her from more profound experiences that may cast doubt on her beliefs. Therefore, the other two CLA criteria Train (2003) mentions, namely, critical reflection on the interplay between creative language use and conformity to norms as well as insight into the sociocultural construction of speakers' identities, is subject to the same narrow focus and inability (or unwillingness) to reflect.

Both Lisa's and Rona's cases demonstrate clearly that studying abroad may not automatically result in CLA, which is dependent on one's willingness to abandon preconceived beliefs and learning behaviours – most notably, the focus on the native-speaker ideal. These beliefs, however, appear to be relatively resistant to change and counterevidence, as they are closely tied to learners' desired identity constructions. As a way to overcome a circle of self-fulfilling prophecies, CLA may allow learners to reflect on their conceptualizations of language and culture, encouraging them to redefine their beliefs, learning goals, and behaviours, thus helping them to take responsibility for their learning and participate in desirable communities of practice.

As Alex's case reveals, however, this suggestion may not work for all learners, as encouraging critical reflection may partially counteract positive, albeit stereotypical beliefs. Despite noticeable differences in his conceptualization of nativeness and learning behaviour, Alex has many aspects of limited CLA in common with Rona and Lisa. Instead of critically exploring individual and collective beliefs, Alex readily accepts and incorporates common stereotypes into his belief system. For example, he is convinced of the 'logical' and 'rule-governed' nature of German grammar and pronunciation; he reiterates the belief that North Americans do not speak any foreign languages, and he also claims that speaking dialect may be an indicator of low education. Alex, however, does not use these stereotypes to support negative images, excuses, and a reluctance to speak, but they instead serve him as cornerstones for his sense of self as a proficient learner of German. Not reflecting on his beliefs can thus be interpreted as part of his learning strategies, helping him to confidently take initiative in accessing German-speaking groups, which share these beliefs and possibly praise him for his 'positive' differentness. These beliefs generally

promote his positive outlook on learning German and appear not to have inhibiting effects as in Rona's and Lisa's cases.

Also, when judging native and non-native variation in German, Alex aims systematically at holding neutral stances. He explains to view such variation as a natural phenomenon of any language and exhibits a partial intelligibility orientation. In comparison to Rona, who appreciates variation only apart from the academic realm and her own accented speech, Alex even perceives advantages in revealing some amount of accentedness, purposefully aiming at being recognized as a non-native, but again, very talented speaker of the foreign language. Through his tolerant attitude toward his own and other speakers' deviations, Alex thus exhibits elements of CLA.

As can be seen from his association of dialect with low education, as well as his stereotypical perception of the German language, Alex integrates these notions into his belief system without critically reflecting on their sources, validity, and consequences. He therefore does not openly question dominant linguistic knowledge and its construction or critically reflect on tensions between his use of language and his possible conformity to norms. Nevertheless, he appears not to suffer from negative effects. Although he might not consciously reflect on it, Alex appears to fulfil Train's (2003) fifth criterion of CLA, in that he has gained some insight into the sociocultural construction of speakers' identities in the multilingual environments in which he acts. Whereas Rona and Lisa perceive this construction process narrowly as inhibited by speakers' deviations from standard German, Alex reveals a somewhat more differentiated view by appreciating variation as natural and potentially advantageous for speakers' identities.

Overall, Alex's stance is only to some extent critically reflective, but due to the positive effect of his stereotypical beliefs, his partly neutral outlook on different language

phenomena, and his non-inhibiting conceptualization of nativeness, his limited CLA helps to maintain his confidence as an accepted speaker of German, serving him well during his study-abroad year. Although Alex's beliefs appear just as sturdy as Lisa's and Rona's, his case casts doubt on the general benefits of encouraging students to become aware and critically reflect on the validity of their beliefs. This thought will be further discussed in the next section with regard to its implications for establishing intercultural-speaker qualities as a general learning goal.

Kris' accounts of his sojourn in Heidelberg add further insight to the picture created by the other participants of this study by revealing that the existence of CLA may not necessarily translate into actions and guarantee a successful learning experience. Despite some limitations, Kris exhibits traces of each CLA component outlined by Train (2003). For example, he shows instances of exploring both his own as well as other speakers' beliefs about language and especially pronunciation. He reflects on his comfort with his grandparents' accented English, the sources and validity of his orientation toward Northern German varieties, and interlocutors' potential interpretations of regional accents. Further, he is familiar with variations within the German language and evaluates accented and dialectal speech as natural features of different speech communities. In the case of his Hamburg exchange, he appreciated the local variety to such an extent that he tried to emulate the features that he perceived as typical. Kris also reflects on the sources of his orientations, stating that his focus toward Northern German is guided by his teacher's portrayals of different German dialects. He realizes that the effects of such orientations may not be entirely positive (excerpt K19), particularly in the Southern German study-abroad environment.

Furthermore, Kris also reflects on the tensions that may exist between conformity to norms and creative language usage in his conceptualization of oral speech. He describes that he values a ‘feel for language’ over ‘mechanical’ correctness, allowing him to perceive his own deviations from native-speaker ideals as non-inhibiting for his self-construction as a proficient speaker. Finally, Kris discusses the effects that different degrees of accentedness or dialect have on the abilities of speakers to construct identity facets in relation to desirable communities of practice. In the case of professional communities, for example, he reflects on interlocutors’ perception of dialect speakers, revealing some insight into the sociocultural construction of speakers’ identities in a multilingual world. His beliefs about the nature of German and the process and objectives of language learning are thus noticeably influenced by a more reflective stance, one that distinguishes Kris from most participants of this study.

These traces of CLA, however, are counteracted by Kris’ focus on spending as much time as possible with family members and his girlfriend in Canada, considerably limiting him from realizing his learning goals. His accounts thus reveal discrepancies between his critical reflections and actual learning behaviour, which he covers by shifting his focus from education to family-oriented values, forming a hardly contestable justification for his apparently relaxed attitude toward studying German. His limited willingness to take responsibility and actions against his frustrations is also mirrored by his inability to overcome his orientation toward Northern German and his hesitancy to socialize with speakers of Southern German. Although he reflects on the sources and validity of this orientation, he sustains his stance for two reasons: (a) because of his belief that professional communities may be more accepting toward standard German, revealing that his reflections do not lead him to realize the potentially increased capital that a non-native speaker

may gain from adjusting to a local variety in the foreign language, and (b) because his focus on Northern German also justifies his reluctance to access communities of German speakers in Ulm.

Although he reveals components of CLA, Kris is therefore not able to transform his partially reflective stance into corresponding actions that may have resulted in a more fruitful sojourn experience. In contrast to Lisa and Rona, he nevertheless manages to maintain his confidence regarding his language and particularly his speaking skills, further evincing the strong degree of investment that learners have in maintaining their belief systems, despite any counter-evidence.

Zora resembles Kris in that she also reveals instances of CLA in her accounts. In her case, however, these insights lead partially to intercultural-speaker qualities, as shown in the next section. She generally appears to be very conscious of the meanings that her spoken languages have for her. The identity conflicts that result from the linguistic and cultural uprooting during her childhood and immigration background in turn influence the extent of her CLA.

Zora's beliefs about German and English appear to be strongly guided by her search for reconciliation of different identity aspects. She constructs the German language in a much more positive light than English, creating a contrast between her perceptions of the literary, dense, and sophisticated German versus the bland, slurred, and unemotional English. Although this perspective does not reveal critical reflection, her impressions appear to be helpful since they correspond to her construction of German as the bridge between her childhood in Bosnia and her current life in Canada. In order to construct German as the door to her otherwise lost childhood, she draws on these stereotypical views. Similarly, when evaluating variations from standard German, Zora's stance again signifies

her desire to resolve identity conflicts. She appreciates variation according to the intelligibility principle in cases of other learners of German, who reveal an honest concern for language learning but are not yet advanced enough to adhere to standard German. Yet, Zora frowns upon non-native speakers, who reveal accents, and native speakers, who speak dialectal German, because of their ostensive ignorance of these norms. Although she partially deems her judgements unjust, she also declares that she cannot act against her perceptions. Her partly reflective stance is thus again counteracted by her need to construct desired identity facets, which were explained in depth in chapter 6.

Whereas it appears difficult to assess her ability to question dominant linguistic and cultural knowledge due to a lack of appropriate instances in the interview, Zora critically reflects on the tensions that non-native speakers of German may experience when adjusting their speech to both L1 and L2 communities. Drawing on her own experience as an immigrant in Germany, she discusses the conflicts between speakers' individual uses of language and their conformity to outward norms, both of which are caused by the constant shift of identity aspects through language and especially pronunciation. It is particularly notable that she considers the stances of both sides: she recognizes that not adjusting to the expectations of native-speaker communities may pose a threat to their cohesion; however, she also acknowledges that the adjustment to such expectations may cause identity conflicts in non-native speakers – particularly if the stay is not of a temporary nature as in the case of immigrants, who may have difficulties in adjusting their accents to express both their loyalty to heritage groups as well as to gain acceptance from groups of the dominant culture (see Gatbonton et al., 2005, section 3.4). In reflecting on the identity constructions and conflicts caused by using language (and more specifically pronunciation) as

a tool to mediate between different speech communities, Zora also reveals insight into the sociocultural construction of speakers' identities in a multilingual society.

Similar to her ambivalent stance toward nativeness, her ability to critically reflect on her beliefs about language and pronunciation is also influenced by her aspired identity constructions. In comparison to Kris, who showed several CLA components but did not manage to become part of German-speaking communities, Zora's accounts suggest that she was successful in speaking German regularly among her group of friends. As will be shown below, her ability to critically reflect on language and language use helped her to mediate between different communities and their respective expectations. This particular learning behaviour partially resembles Alex's, although his ability to reflect critically on his own stances appears to be more limited.

In line with the finding that nativeness orientations can assume different shapes and influence learners' behaviour in various ways, the concept of CLA also shows that different constellations may be effective in creating the impression of a successful learning experience. Learners may – consciously or unconsciously – refrain from reflecting on their beliefs and learning behaviours in order to protect stances that appear to support their learning and/or their desire to construct positive identity facets. These cases show that both the relative absence and presence of CLA can contribute to seemingly successful and unsuccessful sojourns. The results thus far therefore underline the individuality of learner profiles and learning factors, which may in turn have varying implications for learning processes in study-abroad contexts. As discussed below, learners' CLA influences to some extent their ability to take on intercultural-speaker orientations while studying abroad, which adds further insight to the influence of learner beliefs on the study-abroad experience.



### 7.3 Achieving Intercultural-Speaker Qualities

Whereas chapter 6 already alluded to learners' abilities to mediate between different communities of practice in salient cases, the following analysis will discuss their potential to gain intercultural-speaker qualities in relation to their nativeness orientations and CLA. Although Byram's (1997, 2008) classification of specific "savoirs" (see section 2.3.3) forms the backdrop for the following discussion, I will not refer to each of these criteria in detail. I rather aim to investigate the achievement of intercultural-speaker qualities in more general terms as regards the students' abilities to decenter from their own value and belief systems and to use tools such as pronunciation for the purpose of gaining access to L2-mediated communities.

According to her different learning goals in Kassel and Heidelberg, Rona attributes different levels of success to her ability to interact with German speakers and integrate into the L2 environment. Her 'success story' in Kassel reveals instances in which Rona constructs identity aspects that mediate between her Canadian origins and her desire to access German communities – for example, when she found herself eating porridge with another North American student while speaking German. Against common assumptions of identity struggles in study-abroad settings (see section 3.5; Pavlenko and Lantolf's [2000] concept of "self-translation"), Rona presents herself as an 'ideal learner' who grows into new subject positions without having problems of adjustment because she learnt from past 'mistakes' and understands the necessary 'requirements' related to language choice and self-presentation. In so doing, she appears to be successful in mediating between her past and present identity aspects.

Underlying these positive experiences, however, her Kassel accounts reveal a strong focus on adjusting fully to what she perceives as the requirements of German

communities. Rather than finding a balance between ‘old’ and ‘new’ linguistic and cultural identity aspects, Rona is proud to have managed to suppress her ‘Canadian’ self in order to gain access to German communities. Against Marx’s (2002) suggestion of coming to terms with one’s position as a “multicompetent” (Cook, 1999) speaker, Rona’s limited CLA and subsequent focus on native-speaker ideals does not allow for such ‘compromises’. In her Kassel narrations, this stance is expressed, for example, in her strict refusal to speak English and her apparent difficulties in readjusting to Canadian society upon her return. Thus, Rona’s case also points to a more cautious reading of Isabelli-García’s (2006) research results, which suggest a positive relationship between learners’ successful inclusions into L2 networks and their recognition, minimization, and acceptance of cultural difference. In Rona’s case, such a development leads her to abandon parts of her identity and overemphasize ‘German’ identity aspects, as strongly expressed through pronunciation.

The consequences of Rona’s uncompromising attitude surface especially in her evaluation of her Heidelberg sojourn. Her inability to decenter from beliefs and norms result in a limited participation in German-speaking communities and prevent her from establishing corresponding identity facets as a ‘learning’ peripheral member. Instead, she expects herself to fully participate in academic communities of practice, while continuing the suppression of Canadian identity aspects. In the “third place” (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993), Rona thus redefines her position according to native-speaker standards, preventing her from establishing identity aspects that acknowledge her position as a learner who needs to practice the language (while potentially making mistakes). In so doing, she appears unable to approach the role as intercultural speaker, who can reflect upon similarities and differences between cultures and languages, preventing her effective mediation between different cultural stances, values, and beliefs.

Rona's case shows that limited CLA may inhibit the learner from approaching the role of an intercultural speaker. In non-academic domains, in which Rona seemed less oriented to native-speaker standards, she exhibited traces of CLA by showing appreciation toward variation in the German language. However, when reflecting on the academic environment, her belief in the importance of native-speaker standards and inability to critically distance herself from common stereotypes inhibited the learning progress by excluding her from L2 communities. Rona's case therefore underlines that teaching and evoking student interest in pronunciation may not result in favourable intercultural-speaker qualities if critical reflection is not also promoted. Such critical reflection necessarily entails asking students to question dominant beliefs and liberate themselves from external norms.

Whereas Rona is able to draw on extensive study-abroad experience and previous successful participation in German-speaking communities of practice, Lisa's accounts reveal a lack of encounters and inexperience with foreign cultures and unfamiliar living environments. Her inability to reflect on inhibiting native-speaker ideals due to limited CLA largely prevents her from accessing any German-speaking communities and exposing herself to intercultural learning opportunities. She rather attempts to continue her English-speaking life in Germany, and her success in organizing this type of life independently of her family's help makes her proud, allowing her to maintain her sense of self as a mature and sophisticated 'European'. To some degree it seems that Lisa's lack of intercultural learning and CLA enables her to defend this identity construction, as she would otherwise have to face her excuses and change her learning approach fundamentally. This process, however, might be more painful than abandoning the practice of German, because she would have to realize that her self-construction as a mature individual is contradicted by

her limitations in maturing interculturally and developing critical, reflective perspectives that would allow her to mediate between different cultures and viewpoints.

Against common assumptions and advertisements, Rona's and Lisa's cases thus indicate that studying abroad does not automatically provide learning opportunities that lead to improved linguistic skills and intercultural-speaker qualities. They rather suggest that the success of such exchanges depends on the willingness of learners to take responsibility for their learning, as well as on the ability to recognize and distance themselves from inhibiting preconceived notions. This in turn requires flexibility in redefining aspired identity constructions in correspondence to communities in which situated learning can take place. Vogler (2010) calls this ability "reflexivity of imagination" and argues that it "plays an important role when it comes to the development of cultural identity ... as well as to the enhancement of cooperation in intercultural ... environments" (p. 7). In Lisa's case, it becomes particularly visible that the inability (or unwillingness) to reflect on imaginations of culture and identity constructions in relation to those cultural and linguistic communities prevents her from achieving more realistic aspirations. If she had been able to re-imagine her learning objectives, her beliefs about pronunciation, and her place in 'European' culture, she might have overcome her focus on nativeness and its resulting fear of revealing a non-native, 'uneducated' accent. Consequently, under those circumstances Lisa might have been able to accept her status as a learner of German and to expose herself to learning opportunities, allowing her to grow into the role of intercultural speaker and thus to leave behind the nativeness orientation.

Instead, her non-reflective stance caused her to seek access to English-speaking communities almost exclusively, hardly taking advantage of learning opportunities offered, for example, through living with several German roommates. Her determination to uphold

existing 'European' identity constructions despite her detrimental anxiety then expressed itself through factors such as language choice, her open display of her nationality, and her avoidance of challenging oral communication in class and beyond. These strategies helped her to integrate her study-abroad experience into her existing belief system, ultimately consolidating her inhibiting preconceived notions, rather than questioning them.

Although Rona's case appears to be less drastic than Lisa's, these conclusions also hold true for her learning behaviour. It can thus be concluded that classroom practice should address and uncover such beliefs from the outset of language learning, fostering learners' critical language and cultural awareness in order to prevent learners like Rona from forming unrealistic expectations in the later learning stages, as well as encouraging learners like Lisa to recognize the importance of actively exposing oneself to learning opportunities (for a more specific discussion of these implications see section 8.2). Lisa's case suggests that missing this chance early on may make learners immune to future learning opportunities, even in promising study-abroad contexts. Rona's case underlines that reflective and critical work is necessary even on higher levels of language learning, as previously unnoticed nativeness orientations may not appear until later learning stages, in spite of extensive study-abroad and intercultural learning opportunities.

However, Alex's accounts of his sojourn in Germany are thought provoking with regard to establishing such 'universally appropriate' ways of preparing students for intercultural encounters. Despite his successful integration with German speakers and his construction of identity aspects according to different communities of practice, it is debatable to which extent Alex fulfills the requirements of Byram's (1997, 2008) intercultural-speaker concept. On the one hand, his accounts reveal traces of several respective criteria: he has, for example, accumulated knowledge of different practices in the German versus

Canadian university systems ('savoirs'); he aims to approach his sojourn with openness and curiosity ('savoir être'); he can successfully operate his language skills and knowledge about the necessity of L2 interaction in communicative situations ('savoir faire'), and he is able to understand linguistic phenomena (e.g., dialect) of the L2 and relate them to his L1 experience ('savoir comprendre'). Yet, the criterion of 'savoir s'engager', which refers to speakers' critical cultural awareness, is difficult to detect.

It is therefore possible that Alex's strong will to integrate into German-speaking communities results in an uncritical acceptance of the cultural values and practices of both his German and international groups of friends. Such behaviour, however, characterizes "bicultural" (Byram, 2008) speakers, who "simply live with others through whichever of their cultural identities is appropriate" (p. 68). The aspect of mediating, which distinguishes the bicultural from the intercultural speaker, is difficult to find in Alex's accounts. It rather seems that he switches between different identity aspects and modes of behaviour in correspondence to respective communities, consciously avoiding critical reflection on his position. Alex in fact says: "I don't believe in worrying about things like that, I think that asking, reflecting too much ... I think that just invites too much unnecessary stress" (post-SA interview, ll. 416-9). He appears to consciously avoid the kind of reflection that both the CLA and intercultural-speaker model presuppose, and rather seizes available learning opportunities in a seemingly carefree way.

Therefore, the comparison between Rona, Lisa, and Alex leads one to question the unqualified usefulness of such learning goals. In the two former cases, it is easy to argue that initiating critical reflection upon learners' beliefs about native-like pronunciation might help them to understand their sources and consequences, thus allowing them to possibly overcome their anxiety when speaking German and the resultant inability to integrate

with German speakers. In Alex's case, however, we have to critically ask what the benefits of raising his awareness and initiating reflection on his beliefs would be. His view on pronunciation and language learning supports his integration into target-language communities due to a high level of confidence, allowing him to improve his proficiency and feel more strongly connected with his German heritage and German society.

Kris' case raises further aspects in need of consideration when establishing CLA and intercultural-speaker qualities as learning goals, showing that sojourns can be subjectively perceived as satisfying learning experiences, whether or not these two objectives were fully achieved. Similar to Rona, Kris constructs his first sojourn in Hamburg as very successful based on his inclusion in German-speaking communities of practice. In comparison to Rona, he did not aim at completely abandoning everything Canadian, but instead strived for a role that reveals intercultural-speaker characteristics. His ability to critically reflect, to distance himself from his perceptions, and to put himself in the position of his interlocutors helped him to gradually decenter from his values and to adjust to the different social environments. Concomitantly, he sought regular contact with his Canadian friends who provided him with emotional support and increased understanding of the impact of studying abroad on sojourners' sense of self and language learning through comparison between himself and his friends' experiences. His positive interpretation of his Hamburg experience helps Kris to build the image of the successful student and proficient learner of German.

This self-perception remains stable during the second sojourn in Ulm, although Kris cannot continue his successful integration into German-speaking communities due to a limited willingness to rethink his priorities and learning behaviour. Although he is partly aware of opportunities to interact more strongly with communities outside of his mostly

English-speaking residence, he prefers to socialize with his roommates and contacts in Canada, a practice that defers him from embracing intercultural-speaker qualities. This discrepancy is also mirrored in his orientation toward Northern German standard speech, despite his awareness of speakers' tolerance toward accents. Even though he does not achieve his learning goal of speaking as much German as possible outside of the classroom and improve his language skills to the extent that he can later access professional communities, he does not lose faith in himself and his abilities.

Thus, Kris' case reveals that the existence of a critical and reflective stance toward language and language learning does not necessarily lead to a successful sojourn in terms of mediating between communities with different linguistic and cultural practices. From the perspective of the learner, however, the exchange may still be enjoyable and worthwhile, despite frustrations about one's own learning progress. Kris' pride in maintaining a stable relationship with his girlfriend and his happiness about the good rapport with his roommates compensate for the self-assessed limited progress in improving his German. Like Lisa's, his case shows that learners may develop an overarching favourable self-image, helping them to reinterpret counterevidence and render it harmless to their self-conceptions.

Compared to the other participants in this study, Zora is the only student who narrates instances in which she decenters from her own beliefs and values in order to mediate between herself and interlocutors. As analyzed in section 6.5.4.2, she is able to put herself in the position of both the host culture and non-native speakers, who wish to gain at least some acceptance as residents. In so doing, she criticizes in particular such stances of both sides which do not allow for a successful mediation process. From her perspectives, successful intercultural encounters cannot be achieved if (a) the host culture shows only indif-



ference toward non-native speakers' cultural and linguistic heritage (e.g., as expressed through the pronunciation of their names) and (b) the acceptance-seeking 'newcomer' does not aim to adjust at least partially to the expectations of the host culture. Zora's narration of her own attempt to mediate between different communities through the pronunciation of her first name thus presents an exemplary case in how to both handle identity conflicts and satisfy expectations on behalf of interlocutors. Yet, in comparison to Alex and Rona (in her Kassel accounts), who indicate "bicultural" (Byram, 2008) behaviour, Zora does not entirely adjust to the host culture's expectations. Through her critical reflections discussed in the previous section, she is able to create distance between her adjustments and her own beliefs about the host culture, allowing her to mediate and achieve successful interactions in this specific instance.

Her case therefore suggests that intercultural-speaker qualities may be achieved temporarily in situations in which speakers can fulfil certain self-interests through taking on a mediating role – which in Zora's case would be the desire to integrate and gain acceptance. In such moments, speakers may be said to enter the 'third place' and indeed redefine their relationship to themselves, the involved languages and cultures (see section 3.3). This process of redefining in turn influences learners' senses of self and belief systems, as can be seen in Zora's intensive reflections that draw to a large extent on her childhood memories of being in such 'third places'. In acknowledging the identity challenges accompanying the process of acting as a mediator in different communities, she also refers to the emotionally stressful task involved in the process of mediation. Zora's realisation of intercultural-speaker qualities thus adds further insight into how Byram's theoretical model can be achieved practically and which limitations are perceived by learners.

In this context, it appears necessary for learners in these study-abroad environments to establish access to communities which serve as a refuge, allowing learners to interact with other members on the basis of shared value and belief systems. The cases of Alex and Kris (in his Hamburg accounts) give evidence to Zora's reflections, suggesting that moments of decentering from own beliefs need to be compensated by experiences with like-minded people, adding further insight into the practical realization of the intercultural-speaker model. These cases also reveal that simplifying notions such as "ethnocentrism" versus "ethnorelativism" (Bennett, 1986, used as a theoretical basis in Isabelli-García, 2006) cannot explain the dynamic and multi-faceted process the learners undergo when exposing themselves to intercultural encounters.

With regard to the actual process of mediation, Zora's case also indicates that the cultural level, which dominates Byram's (2008) conceptualization of the intercultural speaker, needs to more strongly stress linguistic features. Zora's narrations refer mainly to pronunciation as a vital element of her mediating activities, allowing her to outwardly construct identity facets in correspondence to the communities she wishes to access. Her orientation toward standard German as analyzed above may be interpreted as part of her investment in her ability to act as a mediator and accepted member of German native-speaker communities – her criticism, however, suggests that this investment requires strength, which she believes can only be raised temporarily.

As a result, it has to be acknowledged that the assumption of achieving CLA and intercultural-speaker qualities in learners as the golden means to a successful learning process needs to be qualified. Zora's case suggests that the ability to mediate depends largely on students' first-hand intensive experiences with intercultural encounters, supporting claims mentioned in section 2.3.3, which cast doubt on whether in-class language instruc-

tion can lead to intercultural-speaker qualities in learners (Kordes, 1991; Meyer, 1991, both cited in Byram, 2008). Considering Rona's and Kris' repeated exchange experiences, it seems that short-term sojourns may not necessarily lead to the ability to become part of L2 communities. Rather, the results of this study suggest that intercultural-speaker qualities are largely dependent on students' conceptualizations of nativeness, their abilities to critically reflect upon their beliefs, as well as their general readiness to take responsibility for their learning. Their abilities to engage successfully in intercultural encounters thus depend on several dynamically evolving factors.

The cases of Rona, Lisa, and Kris, however, indicate that teachers may want to assist students in overcoming learning obstacles caused by inhibiting beliefs. Since such beliefs often appear to occur in the area of pronunciation and are related to students' identities, learning objectives and teaching practices need to be reconsidered with a stronger focus on learners' communicative needs and existing belief systems (see section 8.2). Concomitantly, researchers and teachers should also recognize the power of students who create beliefs that – despite their uncritical and stereotypical nature – in fact support their motivation and willingness to engage in learning opportunities, as can be seen in Alex's case.

#### 7.4 Summary

The analysis and comparison of learners' nativeness orientations, CLA, and intercultural-speaker qualities suggest that learning success in class and during sojourns may take very different forms and may depend on a multitude of factors. It seems that most learners are oriented toward native-speaker ideals, which may have positive effects if learners realize that deviations from external norms are natural and do not automatically contest identity constructions. Native-speaker ideals, however, may also lead to negative effects if learners

incorporate such ideals in their learning objectives without reflecting on their feasibility. In such cases, native-speaker orientations may promote and serve as excuses for not taking responsibility for one's learning process. Whereas areas such as grammar and vocabulary influence learners' nativeness orientations on lower competence levels, the results of this study suggest that pronunciation is the most persistent language element, which even advanced learners use as the benchmark when assessing their own and other speakers' skills.

The concept of CLA in turn appears to be closely related to the nature of learners' nativeness orientations. Learners who use the native speaker to develop unrealistic learning objectives or deprecating self-portrayals tend to reveal limited CLA, as they often do not question their beliefs about normativity, variability, and speaker identities. Conversely, learners who do not aspire to nativeness may be more inclined to reflect critically and hold more differentiated views toward the language-identity relationship. However, the data of this study concomitantly contest such clear-cut conclusions. The results show that learners who are tolerant toward deviations in their own and other speakers' speech may nevertheless show only limited CLA. In this study, such behaviour appears to be a learning strategy, allowing the respective participant to maintain favourable beliefs about his skills and language aptitude. The multitude of possible constellations and learning factors, however, suggests also different learner/learning profiles.

Therefore, whether or not learners achieve intercultural-speaker qualities cannot be determined as a unidirectional result from their nativeness orientations and CLA. It seems that the holistic conceptualization of language, high degrees of tolerance toward variation, and critical reflection may support speakers' (temporary) abilities to decenter from their belief and value systems in order to open themselves up to intercultural encounters. Even in such 'positive' learning processes, however, Byram's (1997, 2008) definition of the in-

tercultural speaker appears to be an ideal that cannot be fully and long-lastingly achieved. It is rather based on dynamic processes of negotiation, always in flux, making the achievement of such qualities dependent on situational and sociopsychological factors. Also, the achievement of 'bicultural' qualities may support learning processes and integration into L2 communities, questioning Byram's model as a 'universal' learning objective. The conclusions and pedagogical implications of these findings will be further discussed in the following chapter.

## **8 Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations**

This final chapter merges and discusses the insights gained in the present study. As a first step, I will conclude the results of the empirical within-case and cross-case analyses in light of the theoretical considerations and existing research findings discussed in previous chapters. These considerations will then lead to a discussion of the pedagogical implications of my work. I will argue that the concept of CLA constitutes a promising approach that may inform teaching practices and I will develop specific suggestions as to how critical reflection can be achieved in language learners. Lastly, I will reflect on the limitations of the present study and outline potential areas of future research.

### **8.1 Conclusions**

In light of an etic research tradition in the area of pronunciation teaching and learning, the present study aimed at researching the concept of pronunciation from an emic, learner-centered perspective. I intended to illuminate the complexity of the learning process by considering two factors, namely, learners' identity constructions and their beliefs about pronunciation. Thus far, these factors had been researched in isolation from one another and also in mostly quantitative, etic research designs. I chose to investigate the interplay between these factors in the context of study abroad because, first, learners would be engaged in an authentic, rich learning environment, and second, research literature suggests that studying abroad confronts learners with identity challenges, requiring a redefinition of their relationship between self, language, and language learning (see sections 3.5 and 3.6). In using narrative inquiry as a methodological approach, I was able to gain insight into the dynamics, idiosyncrasy, and contextuality of learners' belief formations and identity constructions before, during, and after the study-abroad term. The findings of my study shed

light on the importance of learner beliefs about pronunciation, both in the process of constructing identities in response to the unfamiliar learning environment and in retrospect as a factor that helps to make sense of the learning experience.

The narrative inquiry consisted of two steps, namely, a holistic and a categorical content analysis. As a first step, I conducted an in-depth within-case analysis in chapter 6, in which I reconstructed the narratives of each participant. As a result of this analysis, the participants' nativeness orientations, CLA, and signals of intercultural-speaker qualities emerged as vital factors influencing the interaction between learners' beliefs about pronunciation, their identity constructions, and their study-abroad experiences. These inductively developed themes, which were discussed in their relationship in section 2.3, were then used as the basis of the categorical content analysis in chapter 7.

The results from these analyses will be concluded below, responding to the initially posed question of how the interplay between pronunciation, identity, and learner beliefs is shaped in the context of language learning and study abroad.

a) *Pronunciation in the Language Learning Process*

The results indicate that learners perceive pronunciation not only as a salient identity marker but also as a tool that may aid one in adjusting to different communities of practice. Although learners may hold diverse beliefs about pronunciation and conceptualize its interrelationship with other skills and language aspects in individually different ways, their perspectives nonetheless appear to correspond to how they narrate their learning behaviours, to how they perceive and outwardly construct themselves as learners of German, as well as to how they evaluate the success of their sojourns. In applying concepts such as communities of practice, legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991;

Wenger, 1998), investment (Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995), and capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991) (see sections 3.2 and 3.3) to the specific cases, I showed that the degrees to which learners invest in the language learning process is mediated partly through pronunciation. In constructing identity facets in correspondence to communities they intended to access, learners used pronunciation as a tool to increase their cultural capital and gain legitimate peripheral participation. The shape of their nativeness orientation in turn influenced how they conceptualized and employed pronunciation as such a tool. Some learners narrated, for example, that they adjusted their pronunciation to local varieties or academic student communities, that they changed the pronunciation of their names according to their interlocutors, and that they experienced difficulties in readjusting their pronunciation to suit the social milieu upon their returns to Canada.

Hence, learners did not always construct this process as easy, but instead revealed hardships in responding to their communities' needs by redefining their identities and outwardly portraying such changes using tools such as pronunciation. Some learners reacted to these difficulties by withdrawing from the learning situation and by partly constructing identity facets (e.g., nationalistic facets) in opposition to the L2 environment (or at least in correspondence with home communities). In that regard, beliefs about pronunciation appeared to relate to learners' choices of language, to their identity constructions and the ascription of other speakers' identities, to their conceptualization of language and culture, and finally to their readiness to take on critical stances and take responsibility for their learning. The last two factors in particular appear to be crucial in overcoming the challenges of adjusting to the new environment – albeit in different constellations and shapes, as discussed in chapter 7.



The fruitful connection between CLA and learners' ability to take responsibility for their progress as speakers and learners of a foreign language has been established in research literature (Schmenk, in press) and will guide the discussion of pedagogical implications in the following section 8.2. The discussion will aim at preparing students to take on reflective stances toward language learning as a basic requirement for achieving temporary intercultural-speaker qualities (see also section 7.3).

*b) Implications for Pronunciation Research*

Following from the above conclusions, my study indicates that the pronunciation learning process cannot merely be understood as the result of different external, 'objective' factors, which can be measured and analyzed quantitatively. As outlined in sections 2.1 and 2.2, previous studies on the acquisition of pronunciation in study-abroad contexts and beyond focused on the development of students' phonetic skills almost exclusively, leaving unanswered questions about individual differences in learning outcomes.

The results of my study emphasize that the 'objective', measurable outcomes need to be complemented by insight into the dynamics and subjectivities of learners' perceptions of language, learning, and self. Had I measured the pronunciation development gained by learners after studying abroad, I would have been required to classify learners into categories according to their segmental and/or suprasegmental improvements, as has been done in the past (e.g., Díaz-Campos, 2004; Lord, 2000, as cited in Díaz-Campos, 2004; O'Brien, 2003, 2004; Simões, 1996; Stevens, 2000). Learners like Zora and Rona, for example, who have extensive learning and studying/living-abroad experience, might have appeared as successful learners due to their high base level, or not, which I could have only interpreted as a result of external factors, such as plateau-effects due to, again,

their high base level. The intricate mechanisms of their identity conflicts as based on their beliefs about factors such as pronunciation would have remained invisible.

My study therefore indicates that researching pronunciation with regard to ostensibly static learning outcomes does not delve into how and why students engage in or withdraw from learning processes. In this respect, chapter 7 has shown that especially learners' concept of the 'native speaker', as possibly portrayed in classroom and societal discourses, may largely influence their motivations and perceptions when studying abroad, the implications of which will be outlined below.

*c) Learner Beliefs about Pronunciation and Study Abroad*

Not only does research on pronunciation learning often employ etic perspectives, but also does research conducted on learner beliefs about pronunciation and study abroad attempt to provide clear outlines of learners' beliefs as if they were static concepts, separate from other learning and situational factors (see sections 4.3 and 4.4). The in-depth analysis in chapter 6, however, suggests that such beliefs need to be investigated with regard to contextual factors (e.g., social groups, living environments, classroom practice) in both their sources and effects. Whereas existing studies (e.g., Chavez, 2009; Isabelli-García, 2006; Mendelson, 2004; Moyer, 1999; Smit, 2002; Smit & Dalton-Puffer, 1997) tend to draw unidirectional equations between the nature of beliefs (often marked as 'positive' versus 'negative') and the learning outcome, the multitude of beliefs and perceptions of learning success in my study do not allow for formulating such clear-cut results.

Chapters 6 and 7 indicate that learners' beliefs may often seem inconsistent and contradictory if taken separately and at face value. Yet, if interpreted as part of learners' overall narrative and construction of self, inconsistencies and contradictions appear to

serve the overarching purpose of making sense of learning experience without endangering desirable identity facets (see also Bell, 2002; Riessman, 2003). In this respect, some beliefs may appear to be very sturdy, such as Alex's self-perception as a talented learner, apt to acquire the ostensibly rule-governed German language without problems. Even counter-evidence (e.g., Alex failing the intensive language course) may be re-interpreted to suit the existing beliefs and preferred self-portrayal. Other beliefs, however, may change from narrative to narrative or even within narratives (e.g., Lisa's belief that only native-speaker teachers can allow for a fruitful learning experience). In both cases, the belief formations and developments follow the learners' intentions to fit their learning experiences to their senses of self to avoid inner conflicts. Therefore, as a tendency it can carefully be stated that a positive self-perception as a language learner and realistic learning goals may be beneficial for the learning process, as in Alex's case. If positive self-perceptions lead to an idealization of learning objectives based on the native-speaker ideal (e.g., Rona's case) or are combined with a lack of initiative/responsibility in the learning process (e.g., Kris' case), then the above conclusion may not hold true.

Similarly, it seems that the general familiarity with encountering foreign cultures and interacting in multicultural environments may enable learners to approach such encounters more openly when studying abroad (e.g., Zora's and Alex's cases). Although the learner with the least border-crossing experience (Lisa) did indeed reveal the greatest difficulties in adjusting to the L2 context, learners with such experience (Rona and Kris) also formed beliefs which inhibited their integration. In this context, existing research discussed in section 3.5 suggests that differences in language policies may account for learners' varying degrees of openness and adaptability to foreign environments. The findings of this study, however, question such generalizing assumptions and imply that language poli-

cies are but one factor, whose effects largely depend on the interaction with the complex aggregate of other learning factors.

In order to understand such complex interplays, the results of this study strongly underline that poststructuralist-constructivist conceptualizations of factors such as identity (see section 3.2) and learner beliefs (see sections 4.1 and 4.2) lend themselves well to the study of sojourn experience due to the avoidance of unidirectional generalizations. This insight in turn requires a reconceptualization of formerly ‘structural’ language aspects, such as pronunciation, within sojourn and general learning processes. Pronunciation cannot be sufficiently researched if understood as an isolatable, measurable phenomenon. The results of this study rather point to the ‘intertwinedness’ of learners’ perceptions of pronunciation with their self-portrayal, their evaluation of interlocutors and speech communities, as well as other “intake factors” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), such as subjective learning theories, motivational factors, and language policies. Both the nature of these factors and their entanglement is subject to the dynamics and contextuality of learning processes that need to be applied to the concept of pronunciation as well. In this respect, the present study gives evidence to an understanding of pronunciation as a tool, which learners may employ flexibly and in accordance with their belief systems in order to support an overarching portrayal of certain identity facets. Learners employ pronunciation in this sense when retrospectively narrating about their learning experience, which in turn suggests general effects on their belief system and possibly their learning behaviour.

Although the results underline that clear-cut relationships between learner beliefs, identity constructions, and perceived learning successes are not appropriate, they indicate that learners’ abilities to reflect critically on their beliefs and on the consequences of their beliefs for their learning may help them to successfully approach studying abroad and lan-

guage learning. The next section will elaborate on the opportunities of classroom instruction to increase learners' CLA and their ability to take on the role of intercultural speakers.

## 8.2 Pedagogical Implications

The analysis and comparison of the different cases of this study show clearly that language teaching should (a) reconceptualize pronunciation teaching and (b) include a more thorough preparation, monitoring, and debriefing process for sojourns. Both pedagogical implications should aim to initiate desirable learning and reflection processes, to encourage students to take responsibility for using learning opportunities, and to prevent inhibiting developments on the levels of beliefs and behaviour. Current practice, however, reveals noticeable desiderata in both areas, as outlined below.

As a result of the theoretical considerations and case analyses of previous chapters, I will therefore explore in the following sections how the concepts of CLA and intercultural speakers can be incorporated into language curricula. The pedagogical considerations will focus on pronunciation learning in classroom contexts and on the instructional framing of study abroad, to which the results of this study contribute as well.

### *a) Implications for Pronunciation Learning and Teaching*

The present study suggests that learner perceptions of pronunciation need to be more strongly considered in language teaching to make full use of linguistic and cultural learning opportunities in classroom and study-abroad contexts. The beliefs students expressed often appeared to be related to the desiderata of teaching practice outlined in section 2.4. Some participants conceptualized pronunciation as an isolated element of speech with little connection to other aspects such as fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. This perspective

was supported by such participants' recollections of classroom practice. They often referred to exercises that isolated pronunciation, asking students to imitate a teacher-presented standard. Although their retrospective accounts may not cover the full scope of the pronunciation training they experienced in class, their selection nevertheless indicates that the instructions at least promoted a focus on isolated practice and external norms. Accordingly, their classroom-based recollections did not refer to elements of CLA. Those learners whose accounts revealed instances of CLA (e.g., Kris and Zora) showed such components usually when narrating first-hand experiences related to their stays in Germany in study-abroad and/or immigration contexts. The case analyses thus indicate that the sojourn experience does not automatically result in a more integrative understanding of pronunciation, but, on the contrary, appears to be inhibited by learners' conceptualization of pronunciation as an isolatable, structural, and invariant element of speech.

It therefore seems that students are relatively unseasoned in considering *pronunciation-as-language*. With this term, I propose an understanding of pronunciation as a non-isolatable, fluid, and socially contextualized element of language and language use. As such, pronunciation constitutes a vital part of any speaking practice, thus inherently related to speakers' (intercultural) communicative competence and to the overall language learning process. More specifically, pronunciation can thus be framed as an inherent part of the "multilingual subject's" (Kramersch, 2009) competence to use language in order to navigate between different communities of sign users, to resonate to events differently when expressed through different semiotic systems, to position oneself differently in different languages, and to have the means to reflect upon this experience and to cast it into an appropriate symbolic form (based on Kramersch, 2009, p. 201). In surpassing more structural framings, pronunciation becomes *compatible* with poststructuralist discussions of

learner characteristics and learning processes, and *incompatible* with static teaching practices and decontextualized learning objectives.

Current exercise typologies and suggestions (e.g., Chun, 2002; Dieling & Hirschfeld, 2000; Hirschfeld, 2003; Morley, 1991), however, hardly allow for incorporating pronunciation into language instruction under such premises. Despite calling for pronunciation training in meaningful, communicative contexts, such suggestions provide little room for learners' critical reflections on especially the nativeness paradigm, which appeared to be a crucial contributor to inhibiting stances inside and outside of the classroom. In order to overcome the prevalence of the native speaker as target of any form of speaking practice and pronunciation in particular, learners' perspectives need to be expanded to more holistic conceptualizations as proposed above. With regard to pronunciation specifically, learners need to be enabled to critically reflect on their respective beliefs and on how such beliefs affect their language learning. To this end, I will use the components of CLA as suggested by Train (2003) and outline ways of how they can be achieved in learners through teaching practice in order to achieve a view of *pronunciation-as-language* beyond mere articulation practice.

To begin with, the analysis of learner data showed that students often refer to stereotypical notions when judging their own and other speakers' speech, partly inhibiting their willingness to speak the L2 and engage in L2 communities. Students should thus be encouraged to explore their individual as well as collective beliefs surrounding language. Specifically, language instruction should raise awareness toward attitudes and prejudices that learners connect both with their own pronunciation as well as with the pronunciation of native speakers, dialect speakers, and non-native speakers. In order to uncover the formation of excuses and identity-threatening learning objectives, teachers should encourage

students to reflect upon the consequences of such beliefs on communication, learning motivation, and speaker confidence.

To allow learners to qualify impressions of native-speaker based normativity, instruction should trigger their awareness and appreciation of variation as inherent in language and learning. With regard to pronunciation, appreciation should be achieved for both accented speech as well as dialectal speech, requiring teachers to introduce different regional and national varieties of German and discuss their importance in speakers' lives and their various effects on communication. In this way, students may be able to overcome hasty prejudices and acknowledge the functions that different speakers may connect to their individual speech. In terms of accented speech, teachers should raise critical awareness toward the influence of accent on intelligibility (see section 2.3.1, Munro & Derwing, 1995), fostering the ability to evaluate one's own learning progress and potential areas in need of improvement without submitting to native-speaker ideals.

Along with achieving appreciation toward variation, learners should also be encouraged to question dominant linguistic and cultural knowledge as based on native-speaker standards. In recognizing how such knowledge is constructed and represented, they may be able to liberate themselves from the uncritical adoption of stereotypes and form perspectives which support their senses of self as L2 learners (as opposed to deficient L2 speakers). In this context, teachers may discuss native-speaker standards for pronunciation both in their historical development and in their current manifestation in media (e.g., newscasts), instruction (e.g., dictionaries, textbooks), and other areas of public life. In combination with achieving appreciation for variation, learners may develop a more informed perspective on the interplay between external norms and linguistic variation in



specific speech communities, raising their awareness toward the importance of their pronunciation without adopting unrealistic, intolerant expectations.

As research results (e.g., Derwing, 2003; Timmis, 2002; see section 2.3.1) and the analyses of Rona's and Lisa's cases suggest, however, the wish to conform to native-speaker standards is so prevalent in the area of pronunciation that learners' may be hesitant to accept deviating from these norms. At the same time, the results of my study support research (see sections 3.4 and 3.6), which indicates that learners have the need to use pronunciation in order to negotiate aspects of identity in relation to different communities they wish to access or avoid. It is therefore important to discuss and critically reflect "on the tension and interplay that exist in language education between creative individual uses of language and conformity to institutionalized norms" (Train, 2003, p. 17). Zora's case in particular showed that her critical awareness of these tensions contributed strongly to her ability to take on the role as intercultural speaker in specific situations. The process of mediating successfully between varying identity constructions and groups of speakers may thus be handled through the creative use of pronunciation, which may become particularly important for those students who go abroad and need to establish L2-mediated networks. Language instruction should hence encourage students to actively experiment with pronunciation, and reflect on the communicative effects and potentials of such practices in order to overcome stereotypic, possibly identity-threatening beliefs.

Because pronunciation is so closely linked with speakers' identity constructions and ascriptions, learners should also gain insight into the sociocultural construction of speakers' identities and realities in multicultural environments, especially when preparing for study abroad. Although closely related to the aforementioned aspect, this component adds a further dimension, namely the reflection on challenges and opportunities of inter-

acting as intercultural speakers in the “third place” (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993) between various linguistic and cultural worlds. Learners are asked to not only mediate between different inhabited identity constructions but also respond to those ascribed to them by others (see Blommaert, 2005). This component thus responds to the need to redefine and reimagine desired identity constructions (Vogler, 2010), as outlined in chapter 7. In this respect, Zora’s case suggests also that learners’ abilities to reflect upon identity negotiations in intercultural encounters may contribute to their abilities to decenter from their own perspectives and take on mediating roles. With regard to pronunciation specifically, learners may become aware of pronunciation being a part of their communicative actions, helping them not only to articulate intelligibly but also to construct and negotiate their positions as speakers and learners of the L2.

The call for enhancing learners’ CLA also includes implications for language teachers. In order to be able to incorporate critical reflection in language classrooms, it is necessary for beginning and seasoned teachers to explore their own roles in the development of critical pedagogy approaches, including examining their own activities, challenging their beliefs and prejudices, and evaluating their curriculum and lesson planning with regard to explicit and implicit goals (Reagan & Osborn, 2002). As Train (2003) states, CLA constitutes the basis for critical language teaching awareness, which may be achieved by “integrating an applied linguistic and/or sociolinguistic component into TA training and teacher education programs” (p. 20). Reagan and Osborn (2002) value in particular the employment of teaching portfolios and teacher narratives as vehicles that allow teachers to express their reflections, potentially leading to improvements in their teaching practices.

In enabling students to critically reflect on their perspectives toward language and language learning, they may understand the effects of certain beliefs on their self-constructions. This insight, in turn, may help them to understand their own role in the process of language learning, in the construction of learning objectives, and in achieving satisfying learning and sojourn experiences. Therefore, the fostering of critical reflection is applicable not only to language areas such as pronunciation, but also to the wider realm of sojourn preparations, generally encouraging learners to acknowledge and take responsibility for their language learning abroad. In this respect, critical *language* awareness may be complemented by what Byram (1997, 2008) labels “critical *cultural* [italics added] awareness”. A closer discussion of how learners can be prepared for identity-challenging moments and their role as intercultural speakers follows below.

*b) Implications for the Integration of Study Abroad into Language Curricula*

Based on the belief that studying abroad inherently offers learning opportunities superior to the at-home classroom context, researchers have mainly focused on investigating various developments *during* the sojourn and have often neglected the integration of study abroad into the wider language curriculum (Kinging, 2009). The results of this one-sided orientation are outlined by Jackson (2008): “At present, many SA programmes provide a few hours of orientation prior to departure, focusing on logistics ... and a brief introduction to the host culture. Not only is this woefully inadequate, the students are typically positioned as ‘passive vessels’” (p. 222) – the consequences of which became particularly visible in the case of Lisa. The findings of my study thus underscore the importance of integrating sojourns in the language curriculum by encouraging students to critically reflect on their expectations toward and experiences with intercultural encounters.

In line with Byram's (1997, 2008) learning goal of the intercultural speaker, my study indicates that the teaching of 'do's and don't's' recommendations prior to the sojourn is neither sufficient nor appropriate. In order to allow learners to approach the foreign environment with openness and curiosity, it is vital to raise their critical cultural (self-) awareness. Instruction should encourage learners to reflect on their own cultural value and belief systems as well as to explore and compare preconceived notions and stereotypes toward the L1 and L2 cultures (including also language practices). Jackson (2008) suggests, for example, that learners may write their own cultural identity narrative in order to "heighten their awareness of particular dimensions of their language and cultural socialization that might affect their interactions with others" (p. 227). Jackson offers several more practical pedagogical suggestions for accompanying students pre-, during, and post-sojourn, which comprise mainly experiential learning activities, such as case studies, critical incidents, internet searches, and ethnographic explorations. Her suggestions generally emphasize that learner-centered, reflective, and awareness-raising approaches should convey to students that they have a stake in the quality of their exchanges.

Such tasks may be employed in classroom or workshop settings including both future and past sojourners as well as students who do not intend to go abroad. The comparison and discussion of individually different stances may raise learners' awareness of the idiosyncrasy and context-dependence of cultural conceptualizations, helping students to distance themselves from a focus on cultures as stable entities based on surface artefacts. The inclusion of returnees appears particularly beneficial. On the one hand, they have the chance to reflect on their learning progress and the influence of studying abroad on their senses of self, preventing an abrupt end of the sojourn and making the sojourn experience relevant in at-home contexts. On the other hand, less experienced students may benefit

from comparing the first-hand experiences of returnees with their own reflections, promoting more open-minded and informed approaches to intercultural learning situations. The reflection on belief formations about culture can also be encouraged during the sojourn, helping learners to assess the role of their stances in finding access to L2-mediated communities of practice.

In this respect, the construct of communities of practice deserves a closer look. The findings of my study suggest that learners often have difficulties integrating into L2-mediated networks, which appear to be related to their nativeness orientations and corresponding self-constructions. As part of the sojourn preparation and monitoring it is therefore necessary to support students in setting feasible learning objectives and to help them recognize and accept their initial positions as legitimate peripheral *learners* (as opposed to ‘full participants’) in L2-mediated communities. Future sojourners may again benefit from guided discussions with past sojourners, who can give valuable tips and raise realistic expectations. For example, many participants of the present study were unexpectedly confronted with the prevalent use of English as lingua franca during the exchange and found that German native speakers often perceived the Canadian sojourners as sources to improve their own English. In pre-sojourn workshops, students should thus be prepared for such challenges and should establish possible solutions for creating opportunities for practicing the L2 in their sojourn networks without being sidelined. Through increasing learners’ understanding of the sojourn reality and confidence of their own skills, frustrations, identity conflicts, and learning barriers due to unrealistic expectations and learning objectives may be prevented. It may also help to encourage learners to regularly revisit their set goals during the sojourn to evaluate their adequacy and to receive reminders of initial pri-

orities. Thereby, students may break away from self-fulfilling prophecies or excuses and realize that they have to take ownership of their learning process.

Thus, Byram's (1997, 2008) notion of 'critical cultural awareness' needs to be more strongly implemented in the preparation, monitoring, and debriefing of study-abroad terms as well as in the overall language curriculum. The target should be to have students discuss and reflect on their beliefs about language, learning, and studying abroad in order to break the sturdiness of inhibiting beliefs, primarily through recognizing their consequences for learning behaviour. Furthermore, by using returnees as informants, students should build realistic expectations, set achievable learning goals, and become aware of how essential it is to actively expose oneself to learning opportunities during the sojourn. In particular, students should overcome the belief that studying abroad automatically results in language and cultural learning and instead should be prepared to take the active lead in their learning progress. It is also necessary for language instructors to realize that critical perspectives should be fostered from the outset of the learning process and continued even on advanced levels, which means that not only should students going on exchange benefit from the above suggestions, but also those enrolled in general language and culture courses at their home university.

The results of chapter 7, however, also caution that clear-cut cause-and-effect relationships are not feasible. It seems that the existence of a critical perspective may have positive effects on learners. Yet, limitations in this regard do not automatically lead to negative consequences and the existence does not guarantee success (which in itself may be defined very differently). The findings of this study therefore point to the individuality and openness of learning processes, which both teachers and researchers need to acknowledge. In this respect, it also needs to be recognized that the intercultural speaker

only presents an idealization, which may not appear achievable or desirable to all learners in equal measure. As teachers, however, we can help learners approach L2 encounters more openly and responsibly through developing a reflective stance toward language, culture, and self – if they are willing to accept the offer.

### 8.3 Limitations and Future Research

As a typical feature of narrative inquiries and case-study research, the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation are limited by my subjective research interests and viewpoints. Although the subjectivity present in this study is not normally problematic in qualitative research (Duff, 2008; see section 5.2.3), I will consider the impact of my perspective in the following sections in order to delineate the strengths and weaknesses of my study and to outline suggestions for future research projects.

The goal of employing narrative inquiry as a research tool was to gain insight into learners' idiosyncratic constructions of their learning experiences in relation to their identities. Although the results support the suitability of my approach, it has to be noted that learners' perspectives may have been influenced in different ways. First, although I informed the participants only about my general interest in their beliefs about studying abroad, it appears possible that, over time, their narrations were influenced by recurring themes in my questions in interviews and e-journals. In particular, the students of the second group, who I researched longitudinally, may have been affected in their beliefs by the focal themes that guided my study. Additionally, the participants may have had more detailed knowledge about my research interests, as we were all students of the same university department. Through presentations, publications, discussions in courses, etc. they

might have gained insight into my research prior to participating in my study, thus approaching the interviews with specific expectations.

Secondly, when analysing and interpreting these learners' narrations, it has to be considered that my presence may have affected their answers. I am a native speaker of German and a Ph.D. student in German Studies/Applied Linguistics, which may have evoked different associations in my participants. It appears possible that in their evaluations of German, Germans, and Germany they may have been more conscious of offending me. Also, in their self-constructions they may have experienced conflicts in their positions as non-native speakers/learners of German, believing to be in an inferior role, which may possibly have even been aggravated by the difference in academic positions (Ph.D. student/potential course instructor versus Bachelor's/Master's student). In order to protect themselves from negative identity ascriptions on my part, they may have developed strategies to portray themselves in a more positive light, for example by emphasizing their 'success stories'. I tried to compensate for such reactions by leaving the language choice up to my participants, which put me in the non-native speaker position due to their almost exclusive use of English. Additionally, I tried to establish a friendly and cordial atmosphere in interviews and e-mail correspondences, decreasing the impression of hierarchy.

Thirdly, it appears possible that design and wording of my questions, which often initiated reflection in the participants, influenced their answers and learning behaviour. On the one hand, they may have gained greater awareness toward themselves as L2 learners and speakers. On the other hand, the explicit and partly recurrent conversation about certain themes may have also consolidated their beliefs. I tried to reduce such effects by letting my participants guide the thematic structure of the interviews to a large extent and by emphasizing the open nature of e-journal trigger questions.



Besides the inevitable effect of the researcher's presence on participant accounts, my subjectivity and beliefs have also influenced the research process as such, including the questions I posed, the approaches I used to analyse and interpret my data, and the framework I established on a theoretical and methodological level. In this respect, I focused mainly on the participants' accounts of pronunciation and their development in dependence of different learning factors. In order to gain a wider understanding of student perspectives, it appears necessary to include also other areas of language and skills in future research projects, allowing them to contextualize the findings of this study in the wider realm of learning processes. The collected data suggest that beliefs about pronunciation are differently related to other beliefs (particularly about grammar and vocabulary), each with various effects on the conceptualization of speaking and other skills. It appears crucial to investigate the entanglement of such beliefs in order to provide teaching practices with more learner-centered insight.

Furthermore, while the present study focused mainly on pronunciation in the study-abroad context, future research may incorporate in-class learning in the at-home context more strongly. Through classroom observations, researchers may gain an understanding of the sources of the learners' beliefs and their development in dependence of specific teaching practices. Further research in this area may also help to implement the pedagogical suggestions above in language classrooms and assess their effectiveness and feasibility. This way, teaching strategies as well as teaching and learning materials may be developed according to the suggestions above, which thus far focus mainly on the theoretical reframing of pronunciation training in language learning with a focus on language use in L2-mediated contexts. In particular, the proposed concept of *pronunciation-as-language* needs further theoretical and practical investigations, which will result not only

in a more in-depth understanding of the intricateness of pronunciation but will also help us develop teaching materials for classrooms and exchange program preparation.

The shift from normative learning objectives and teaching practices to more liberal, critical stances toward language and language learning also poses questions to assessment methods. As Golombek and Jordan (2005) recognize, assessment processes need to be efficient and streamlined, following clear guidelines of evaluating students' communicative abilities. Additionally, students themselves may wish for clear orientation in what teachers expect them to be able to do and may feel disoriented by discourses promoting the abandonment of the native speaker as the yardstick of assessment. Therefore, it is vital that future research scrutinizes the potential of existing assessment methods to be informed by concepts such as CLA and the intercultural-speaker model, in order to prevent conflicts between teaching practices legitimizing 'multicompetent' (Cook, 1999), critical learners and evaluation methods, which assess learners' performance merely in terms of the accuracy of their linguistic abilities.

Moreover, considering the impact of the CEFR and ACTFL guidelines on teaching practice and materials, it seems necessary to review such guidelines with respect to their potential promotion of native-speaker values. Future research may investigate how narrowly framed constructs such as pronunciation can be incorporated beyond the focus on the acquisition of structural components, explicitly considering critical awareness toward culture *and* language and outlining suggestions as to how such concepts may inform teaching practice from beginners' to advanced levels.

Finally, I hope that the present study gives rise to more investigations in how language instruction can assist students more systematically before, during, and after their sojourns. Learner narratives in this study showed that particularly those students with pre-

vious first-hand experience with living/studying in L2 environments were able to form reflective stances toward studying abroad and language use during sojourns. The suggested harnessing of CLA and the intercultural-speaker model as concepts informing teaching practice may be but one way to allow students approach their exchanges successfully. Further insight is needed, especially with regard to how the sojourn experience can be utilized in subsequent at-home studies for the benefit of both the sojourner as well as students who may not be able to go abroad themselves.

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## Appendix A: English Translations of German Text Passages

### A.1 Translations for Chapter 4

#### *Original Quotation*

“Subjektive Theorien stehen ... in engem Bezug zu der Lebenspraxis, aus der heraus sie rekonstruiert werden, und lassen sich deshalb an diese rückbinden; sie integrieren kognitive, affektive und interaktive Aspekte ...” (Kallenbach, 1996, p. 18)

#### *Translation*

Subjective theories are closely related ... to those practices of everyday life, from which they are reconstructed, and can therefore be reconnected with these practices of everyday life; they integrate cognitive, affective, and interactive aspects ...

#### *Original Quotation*

... “so daß es bei aller Lernerorientierung wesentlich ist, auch die Binnensicht der Lehrer/innen zu erforschen.” (Kallenbach, 1996, p. 42)

#### *Translation*

... so that the orientation toward learners necessitates also the investigation of teachers' subjective perspectives.

#### *Original Quotation*

... “wobei notwendigerweise von den Einzelfällen stark abstrahiert werden muß, um zu möglichst allgemeingültigen Aussagen zu gelangen.” (Kallenbach, 1996, p. 49)

### *Translation*

... whereby the achievement of generally applicable statements strongly presupposes the rigorous abstraction from individual cases.

### *Original Quotation*

“Um ein wirkliches Verständnis des Forschungsgegenstandes Lehren und Lernen von Sprachen zu erreichen, ist sowohl das *Verstehen* von Intentionen und Handlungsgründen aus der *Innenperspektive* als auch eine *kausale Erklärung* der beobachtbaren Handlungen und Verhaltensweisen aus der *Außenperspektive* notwendig.“ (Grotjahn, 2003, p. 497)

### *Translation*

In order to achieve a genuine understanding of the research object ‘teaching and learning of languages’, it is vital to comprehend intentions and motives of actions from the inner perspective [of teachers and learners], as well as to find causal explanations of the observable actions and behaviours from the outer perspective.

## A.2 Translations for Chapter 6

### *Original Quotation*

Zora: und dann hatte ich auch eine Interesse f- für für Französisch oder vielleicht ich wollte irgendwie # ehm wissen # eh wie es ist, so kanadisch zu sein.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: und auch zwei Sprachen zu sprechen.

(excerpt Z7; ll. 149-52)



*Translation*

- Zora: and then I was also interested in F- in in French or maybe I wanted to somehow # um know # uh what it's like to be so Canadian.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: and also to speak two languages.

*Original Quotation*

- MM: warst du mal wieder da in Hannover ja, als du jetzt?  
Zora: ja und ehm es war ## so klein.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: weil ich war so klein und ... ja # es war ehm wie soll ich das sagen, vielleicht auf Englisch ehm ## naja jetzt wollte ich das auf Bosnisch sagen, aber ehm.

**(excerpt Z9; ll. 582-89)**

*Translation*

- MM: did you go back to Hannover ya, when you were?  
Zora: yes and um it was ## so small.  
MM: hmm.  
Zora: because I was so small and ... ya # it was um how shall I say it, maybe in English um ## well, now I wanted to say it in Bosnian, but um.

## Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire

Pseudonym (filled in by researcher): \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions:

1. Gender:     **(a)** Male       **(b)** Female

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I am a native speaker of:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Please add more than one native language, if applicable.)

4. I have learned the following second / foreign languages:

<b>Language</b>	<b>Duration</b> (e.g., 2001-2005)	<b>Institution</b> (e.g., high school in Guelph)
a) _____	_____	_____
b) _____	_____	_____
c) _____	_____	_____
d) _____	_____	_____
e) _____	_____	_____

5. Degree and Year of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which courses have you taken in German at university (including current courses and all language, culture, literature, and/or linguistics courses)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Where and how long will you go abroad? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What is the purpose of your study-abroad term? What are the main objectives you aim to achieve? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Have you spent any time in a German-speaking environment before going abroad? YES  NO

If yes, how much (all occasions combined)? \_\_\_\_\_

Main locations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What motivated you to learn German? Please rank the following options from 1 to 5 with “1”= not important and “5”= very important. Write N/A next to any factor which does not apply.

	1	2	3	4	5
German ancestry					
Interest in German history, culture and/or customs (e.g., music, literature, Oktoberfest)					
Fit into class schedule and/or was the only/best course available to fulfill a requirement					
Friends or family members who also took German as a foreign language					
Friends or other significant persons who were native German speakers					
Needed German for career or future plans (e.g., for business, studying in Germany)					
Needed German for travel plans					
Other:					

11. Please try to describe what German sounds like to you.

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12. Are your German speaking skills important to you? Why or why not?

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13. What do you consider your main fluency problems in German? How can you tell?

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14. Do you remember any exercises from your foreign language classes that trained fluency, intelligibility or communicative skills in general? Please describe.

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