

This is the accepted version of the following article:

Dressler, R., Crossman, K., Kawalilak, C. (2021). Pre-service teachers' learning about language learning and teaching: A nexus analysis. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2021.1938573>

Pre-Service teachers' learning about language learning and teaching:

A nexus analysis of study abroad blogging

Abstract

Learning about another educational context is often a stated institutional goal of pre-service study abroad. However, living abroad is no guarantee that pre-service teachers will reflect upon their language learning and teaching experiences through the lens of future teaching. Drawing from a larger study of reflective practices during study abroad, from preparation to debriefing, we use nexus analysis to focus on how five pre-service teachers living and volunteer-teaching abroad over nine weeks reflected upon their learning and teaching experiences through blogs. We ask: "What study abroad participant learning about language teaching and learning emerges through blogging?" Despite disparate teaching specializations, the participants often found themselves learning firsthand about the opportunities and challenges of language learning. They used blogs to reflect upon knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for language teaching. These results reveal that learning during study abroad can advance the teaching competencies necessary to working with diverse learners in future classrooms.

Keywords: blog, study abroad, pre-service teacher, language learning, language teaching

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

Knowledge about language learning and teaching influences how teachers work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Some teachers bring their own personal funds of knowledge (Reyes, & Moll, 2008) into the classroom, but in Canada and the United States, the cultural and linguistic diversity of pre-service teachers does not necessarily match the diversity found in their future students (Naqvi, et al., 2018). In some universities, study abroad opportunities are offered to students in teacher education programs (pre-service teachers) with the goal of expanding participants' knowledge and understanding to include the opportunities and challenges of language learning, cultural learning, and seeking to belong in an unfamiliar context.

Nonetheless, participating in study abroad is not a guarantee that pre-service teachers will reflect upon their experiences in a meaningful way. Although reflective practices, such as blogging, provide the time and mediational means to engage with the social practices of second language learning and teaching (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017; Authors, forthcoming), little is known about what these participants learn about language learning and teaching while in these situations. As such, an investigation of pre-service teacher blogging about language learning and teaching is timely.

To that end, we highlight how five pre-service teachers from a larger group of 41 students used blogs during a nine-week international volunteer-teaching sojourn. We investigated what the blogs reveal about their *historical body* (what they brought to the experience), *interaction order* (the ways of doing in study abroad), and the *discourses in place* (the ways of thinking about language learning and teaching) (Hult, 2019). These aspects came together in a *nexus of practice* around language learning and teaching which provided insight into their development as practitioners.

Literature

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

Preparing pre-service teachers for diverse classrooms

In diverse societies, teachers can expect to work with students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but they may not share the types of background and experiences that their students bring to the classroom (Egbo, 2019). Some teachers may have learned a second language or specialized in second language teaching, whereas others speak only the language of their home country and/or specialize in other content areas. These different backgrounds and experiences influence the potential personal and professional learning through study abroad.

Pre-service teachers intending to teach a second language are drawn to study abroad programs to increase their second language ability and gain experience living in a country where the language they intend to teach is spoken (see Allen, 2013; Author 1, 2016; Corder, et al., 2018; Plews, 2019). Their study abroad experience may or may not entail formal language learning, but does offer the informal learning provided through residence abroad and immersion into the language and culture, demonstrating the connectedness between the two formal and informal language learning (Mitchell, et al., 2015; Trentman, 2013). Through coursework in preparation for becoming a language teacher, they learn that second language teaching is not just about transmitting the facts about the language, but rather developing a classroom atmosphere of trust and risk-taking (Roskvist, et al., 2017). By developing relationships, they are better able to help their students negotiate the challenges of language learning. Those pre-service teachers with second language specializations experience second language learning and teaching that is directly connected to their future careers with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

However, pre-service teachers who are not studying languages or second language teaching can also benefit in similar ways by putting themselves in situations where they are not a majority language speaker (Vélez-Rendón, 2010). In these situations, they must make sense of

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

new surroundings and ways of communicating. They may experience learning a second language for the first time. Additionally, if English is their first language, they discover the privilege that being an English speaker abroad can bring (Sharma, et al., 2011). In foreign teaching situations, they are more likely to be asked to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and may realize that they do not possess the metalinguistic knowledge that second language teachers are expected to have. Therefore, despite the privilege that they enjoy as native speakers, they may struggle to teach their first language. The opportunities and challenges of learning a second language as well as the metalinguistic awareness required to teach one's native language hold the potential to inform their understanding of working with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Notwithstanding previous second language learning experience and teaching specialization, pre-service teachers can benefit from gaining personal and professional learning about second language learning and teaching; when students are culturally and linguistically diverse, every teacher becomes a language teacher (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). For this reason, some faculties of education offer international teaching experiences, especially to those who may not have had previous opportunities. These experiences can take on the form of group study programs, student teaching in accredited schools, or cultural immersion experiences (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). What varies among these programs is whether students travel individually or in groups (Douglass, 2007), are faculty-accompanied (Gelfuso & Dennis, 2014), or have affiliated coursework or program elements (Douthit, et al., 2015). Most have several aspects in common: residence abroad for weeks or months in an unfamiliar culture, and in some cases also an unfamiliar language. These common aspects allow these sojourners to draw from their personal experience to develop knowledge around language learning, skills in language teaching, and empathy for the experience of their students.

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

Reflection through blogging

Regardless of the nature of the study abroad program, one key element to strengthen pre-service teachers' gains from their experience is through reflection upon their learning. To that end, programs are often designed with embedded reflective practices coupled with opportunities to consider what is being learned and how that learning might impact future teaching (Authors, 2018a). Several reflective practices are common in study abroad: journal writing (Authors, 2018b), classroom-based assignments (Plews, 2015; Stewart, 2010), pre- and post- reflection (Black & Bernardes, 2014), as well as blogging (Bell, 2016; Lee, 2011; Pasterick, 2015). All of these elements provide opportunities for reflection on different aspects of the experience (e.g., critical incidents, ongoing coping, specific topics) using different means.

To build reflection into programs involves choosing the best tools for reflection for each context and embedding them into the program. Blogs are one such tool. While sojourners might engage in a variety of social media while abroad (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter posting) (Author 1 & colleague, 2019), blogging focuses on the written text (unlike Instagram and TikTok) and affords the opportunity write longer (in comparison Twitter and Facebook). Pre-service teachers can be encouraged to blog about their experience through the lens of future teaching. Blog writing helps them to make sense of their experiences of language learning, cultural learning, and seeking to belong in an unfamiliar classroom context and different educational system. [final sentence removed – considered redundant]

Interestingly, in most programs it appears that blogs are implemented within classroom environments, using learning management systems or blogging websites with private settings to maintain a high degree of privacy and contain comments to the classroom community (Lee, 2011, Pasterick, 2014). This communication is then between blogger and instructor (sometimes

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

fellow students), which does not create the same sense of knowledge dissemination as public blogging. Fewer programs provide students the opportunity to blog on open websites, subject to readership on the world wide web (Authors, forthcoming; Elola & Oskoz, 2008). The affordances and constraints of both types of blogging are not be the same, since public blogging gives the reflection a wider, unknown audience, than the safety of blogging for one's teacher or classmates. Since public blogging is much less commonly studied than private blogging, this investigation of pre-service teachers learning about language learning and teaching through public blogs may be one of the first to investigate sojourner learning through blogging.

Research question

In programs in which pre-service teachers blog, their learning about second language teaching and learning holds the potential to show how they grow as future teachers. How participants blog about language learning and teaching, especially if these are both new experiences for the participants, reveals their learning in this area. As with other reflective practices, it is difficult to pinpoint whether this learning occurred prior to or during the act of blogging (Desai Trikotter & Kukar, 2011), it is through blogging that this learning may come to the forefront. The question that guided this research is: What study abroad participant learning about language teaching and learning emerges through blogging?

Methodology

Nexus Analysis

For this study we employ nexus analysis as a conceptual and analytical framework (Hult, 2019). Originally conceptualized as an ethnographic discourse analytic framework (Scollon & Scollon, 2004), nexus analysis has been used more broadly by applied linguists and educational linguists to explore fields such as linguistic landscapes (Hult, 2104); schoolsapes (Author,

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

2015); language policy (Hult & Källkvist, 2015); and language use (Author, 2018; Levine, 2009; 2014; Pietikäinen, et al., 2008). The use of nexus analysis as a conceptual and analytical framework guided this study.

In nexus analysis, the focus is on a social action, which in this study we consider the blogging about language learning and teaching. Thus, we were interested in the nexus of practice around this social action, which occurs at the intersection of three aspects: the historical body of participants, the interaction order of the social context, and the discourses in place in this context. The historical body can be considered the “ways of being” of the participants (Author 1, 2012). “Ways of being” include what the participants bring to the social action in terms of background, beliefs, and personal attributes, but go beyond to examine their embodied pasts, presents, and envisioned futures. In the case of the pre-service teachers in this study, the historical body might include the languages they speak, their teaching specialization, their previous life and travel experiences, and their career goals.

The interaction order refers to the “ways of doing” (Author 1, 2012). These “the norms of interpretation and norms of interaction” guide how people behave, speak, act, even write, in a given context (Hult, 2019, p. 139). In the social context of study abroad, participants can use blogs as a mediational means to negotiate their learning about how teachers teach and learners learn in the placement country.

The discourses in place are the “ways of thinking” that circulate in these social contexts (Author 1, 2012). Since “all social action is accomplished at some real, material place in the world, and that the place itself manifests a sort of discourse of its own”, it is important to identify what these discourses in place are and how they are reproduced in this context (Levine, 2009, p.

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

35). In this study, discourses in place pertaining to language learning and language teaching are of interest.

Historical body, interaction order and discourses in place come together in a nexus of practice that reveals what we can learn about language learning and teaching from pre-service teachers' blogging. Since all aspects offer a lens on the nexus of practice, they can be examined separately at first, but how they converge provides understanding of how pre-service teachers learn about language learning and teaching through blogging.

Context

The context for this study is a larger study on sojourn preparation, reflection, and debriefing, with this study delimited to the time participants spent abroad. The participants were students in an undergraduate Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree in a university in western Canada. They took part in a formal co-curricular program which allowed them to live and volunteer-teach abroad for nine weeks in the final year of their BEd. The program was open to all pre-service teachers, so there was no requirement to be specializing in second language teaching. Their involvement from the interested student workshop to the final celebration of learning spanned 1.5 years.

The placements included in this study were in Brazil, Germany, Japan, Spain, and Vietnam. These placements involved varying amounts of formal language learning, language teaching, and involvement in schools. Each included the potential for up to 12 hours of time in the classroom, but all elements took on different forms in each placement. For example, the placement in Vietnam involved only informal language learning, but considerable responsibility for teaching and lesson planning. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the placement in Japan started with a month of intensive language learning and school visits, culminating with more

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

regular school visits involving observation and some teaching of isolated lessons. As with many study abroad programs, certain expectations were outlined ahead of time, but students were told to expect changes based on local circumstances.

The program included several research-informed elements: preparation workshops in advance; group activities and writing while away; debriefing activities upon return. Throughout the program (before, during, and after) opportunities for reflective writing were embedded. For their time abroad, their reflective writing took the form of blogs on a public social networking site [name of platform – blinded for review purposes] which was chosen because it could be openly read by anyone on the internet, but only commented upon by members (the participants themselves). Additionally, blogs could be tagged such that the intended audience, the general public, friends, family, university peers or future study abroad participants, could sort by year, country or blogger. Students were asked to write five blog posts, or approximately one every two weeks. The instructions students received were open-ended, with general guiding prompts (e.g., reflect upon your experiences visiting schools). Students were also instructed to remember that the blogs would be public and therefore they would be representing themselves as current students and future teachers. As such, knowing that liaisons, current instructors and peers, as well as future employers might read the blogs, their writing should be professional in tone. The comment feature was enabled, but seldom used, so no comments were included in the data. Languages other than English were used by participants on occasion, but primarily the blogs were written in English. The 41 participants listed in Table 1 wrote a total of 181 blog posts (4-5 per person), averaging 668 words each, showing the large corpus of data from which we could focus on a picture of personal and professional learning about language learning and teaching through blogging.

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

(Insert Table 1 near here)

Analysis

To prepare for analysis, research assistants compiled Word documents of the blogs of consenting students by cutting and pasting from the web platform in chronological order. Although pictures were an optional component of the blogging site, they were not considered part of the data because they were neither included in the ethics clearance nor consistently used by participants.

An initial round of coding involved a content analysis exploring references to a) personal language learning or b) volunteer language teaching. The data were coded by two coders separately. Year 1 data were coded by Author 1 and Author 2. Year 2 data were coded by Author 2 and a research assistant. After each rater coded separately, they met to establish consensus. Where consensus was difficult in year 2, Author 1 was consulted. The established coding was then entered into NVivo software for data management.

Focal participants

The second round of coding was the nexus analysis. First, we chose one participant from each country in the program based on percentages of coverage generated by NVivo during the initial coding round (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). While such percentages of coverage are a crude measure, they allowed us to choose blogs to analyze which most often document and reflect upon their personal language learning and volunteer language teaching. This selection served the project's purposes as the participants chosen clearly exceeded their counterparts in quantity of writing about language learning and teaching, providing the clearest picture of participants' learning in each country placement.

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

We refer to these five (out of 41) as the focal participants by their pseudonyms: Ava (Japan), Chloe (Brazil), Kimberly (Spain), Steffi (Vietnam) and Matilda (Germany). As the program attracted more female participants overall, it is representative that the focal participants are all women. For the second round of coding, we coded for aspects of nexus analysis: historical body, interaction order, and discourses in place.

Results

Information gleaned about the five participants and their conceptions of their teaching and learning experiences in study abroad are presented here through the lens of nexus analysis. Each aspect of nexus analysis (historical body, interaction order, discourses in place) described contains a narrative for each of the participants, drawn heavily from their own words, as found in their blogs. We reserve a discussion on the nexus of practice for the Discussion section of this article.

Historical body

Since the program is open to all pre-service teachers in their penultimate year of the BEd, the participant pool included those studying to be elementary generalists and secondary level content teachers. All participants became de-facto language teachers due to the study abroad model. Going abroad and blogging about their experience volunteering in schools opened the door to reflection about the participants' own language learning, teaching experiences, beliefs, and their professional identity, in particular their identity as de-facto language teachers, which are all aspects of their historical body. In the blogs, participants revealed their language learning experiences prior to and during the study abroad program.

Ava in Japan

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

Ava was enthusiastic about going to Japan, saying she “jumped at the opportunity to participate,” and that she had “always longed to visit” this country and “was interested in being able to observe, and participate in the Japanese education system.” Despite her interest in the country, she did not have prior experience with the language. “Most weekdays, [Ava] went to the [university] with [her] fellow ~~Japan~~ [study abroad] students and studied Japanese language for three hours a day,” and she used the blog to demonstrate her Japanese knowledge, noting “Nihongo wa omoshiroi desu, demo muzukashi desu (Japanese language is interesting/fun, but hard).” Ava’s historical body can be characterised as a novice second language learner.

Chloe in Brazil

Chloe went to Brazil with no knowledge of Portuguese and had not “done a lot of traveling and grew up in a small town,” noting that this experience would “be pushing [her] in every aspect.” She was enthusiastic about her participation, and said she loved the “challenge” of “a new country, culture, and language on top of online classes and the [...] program.” She saw study abroad as an opportunity to “learn from people whose background and educational values may be different.” During her time there, along with the other participants in Brazil, Chloe attended “Portuguese class once a week,” and wished her “Portuguese was a bit better,” adding that “hopefully it [would] come.” Yet even towards the end of the program she “was able to have basic conversations but alas, Portuguese had not come easy to [her]. [She could] say hello, greet for morning, afternoon, and night, say goodbye, how are you? And respond. But other than asking people their names, age, where they are from and what their profession is, [she] struggle[d].” At that point her goal was to “order Acai with granola and condensed milk ... and not receive granola and banana instead”. It’s unclear if she attained this goal, but she did mention that “according to [her language learning app] [she was] up to about 70 words,” and “overall,

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

[she] struggle[d] a lot “with the understanding and speaking.” Like Ava, Chloe’s historical body is also that of a novice second language learner.

Kimberly in Spain

This was Kimberly’s “first time in Europe”, and she noted that it had been “eye opening... to step into different countries only knowing some basic words and navigating [her] way around.” Prior to her placement in Barcelona and a nearby satellite town where they volunteer taught, she did not have much knowledge of either Spanish or Catalan. She noted that it was “definitely nerve wrecking at first to try to speak a foreign language.” Over the course of her placement, she grew more accustomed to the country, and started “to feel at home here and less like a tourist,” noting that she was “slowly picking up on more Spanish and Catalan and trying to speak it more often.” Kimberly’s historical body can be characterised as a novice, first-time second language learner learning Spanish and Catalan informally, who was valued in her placement as a native speaker of English.

Steffi in Vietnam

Like most of the other participants, Steffi had not been to her host country before. She mentioned that upon arriving in Vietnam, the “culture shock and the language barrier was immediately evident and like nothing [she had] ever experienced.” She said that “the language barrier ha[d] not been easy” and that she felt like a “western tourist.” The participants that went to Vietnam typically did not pick up much of the language, nor did they take language lessons. They also lived in town where English was very rare. Steffi herself did not reveal a lot about her language learning experiences in Vietnam, but like most other study abroad participants, she found herself a de facto language teacher. Rather than experiencing second language learning, Steffi found

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

herself drawing on her historical body as a native speaker of English to engage with the EFL teaching she was called upon to do in her Vietnam placement.

Matilda in Germany

Matilda was unlike most of the study abroad participants in terms of her language learning background, as she had a working knowledge of German when she arrived in her host country, noting that she could “understand ninety-five percent of what is told to [her] in German; however, when [she] articulate[s] [her]self [she] tend[s] to stumble and pause.” She had also been an immigrant to Canada and had been coded as an English Language Learner (ELL) in school. Matilda wrote of her language learning experiences and frustrations; she described how trying to keep up in a German high school biology class was “a not-so-nostalgic reminder” of being a second language learner growing up in Canada. As she continued through the program she noted that she could “keep a basic conversation going,” but that “some complex topics are difficult to engage with,” and by the end of her stay she reported being able to “speak with greater confidence than before” and did not find it “as stressful or exhausting to speak, listen, and follow in German.” Matilda reported growth, drawing upon previous language learning experiences and skills positioning her historical body as that of an experienced second language learner.

The five focal participants represent a range of historical bodies from non to new to experienced second language learners. Identifying these historical bodies provided us with one aspect to understand the nexus of practice as it unfolded in this analysis.

Interaction order

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

The contexts of the study abroad placements display different interaction orders. For the participants, the interaction order of the placements was often articulated in the blogs to contextualize their comments on language teaching and learning.

Ava in Japan

Ava, like all the participants who went to Japan, took part in Japanese language classes and also helped out in EFL classes at Japanese schools. In particular, she recognized that both “studying and teaching abroad” would help her to gain “skill and strategies that will improve both [her] pedagogy and everyday life.” She also noted that through the experience of studying Japanese with other program participants she “gained two very important things: the ability to use and understand some simple Japanese phrases and terms, and being able to know what it is like to struggle with an unfamiliar language,” adding that the “second point [is of] particular value to [her] future teaching, as [she] will inevitably have students in [her] class whom [sic] are English language learners.” For Ava, the salient features of the interaction order were about knowing enough of the students’ language to relate to them and sharing the experience of “not-knowing” that second language learners bring to the classroom.

Chloe in Brazil

Chloe blogged about the interaction order of her placement by making connections between the Brazilian teaching contexts she experienced as well as those she would experience back in Canada. In speaking Portuguese, she was proud that she had not let the “language barrier slow [her] down.” In speaking English to students, she had to “remember to speak slowly and use simple language.” She noted “one thing to take away ... was that education was for the individual student not the masses – this reminded [her] of one of the mandates for [the Canadian provincial Ministry of Education] being for the individual student and making sure learning was

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

personalized.” In her final blog she indicated that after her placements in Brazil, she was “looking ahead to [her] practicum.” Chloe’s focus on relational aspects of teaching resemble some interaction order features Ava highlighted in terms of pedagogy and relationships: providing language input at the level of the students and differentiating instruction to personalize education.

Kimberly in Spain

Kimberly spoke a lot of her teaching experiences where her “main role in the classroom [was] to be an assistant teacher in EFL classes and encourage students to [be] conversant in English through fun and engaging activities.” As language teaching was not her area of specialization, she noted that it had “been eye opening.” She found that she had to “modify some of the words used.” She also noted that “teaching English has been such a big learning experience, as you do not realize how many words ... have similar meanings and you can use many different words to explain one thing.” When faced with grammar questions, she would have to “stop and think deeply” to respond. She also noted student progress and that there was a “huge difference from the first class, as many students who did not speak at all [were] ... speaking up more while having fun.” Through her blog, Kimberly articulated aspects of second language teaching that were new to her: teacher rate of speech, deep knowledge of her own first language, and pedagogy to encourage oral interaction.

Steffi in Vietnam

Like the other participants who went to Vietnam, Steffi found herself “teaching English classes” and helping “with English Club” as the main part of her placement. She found it difficult because the system is “much more standardized than in Canada” and it can be challenging to keep “so many children engaged while also dealing with a language barrier.” She ended up focussing her

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

lessons on “Canadian and North American culture” because “students love to discuss this” and it gave her the opportunity to “incorporate many opportunities for them to practice their speaking and listening skills,” indicating that she considered the teaching context when preparing her lessons. In Steffi’s second language teaching placement, she noted the constraints of an interaction order that emphasized standardization, and she also sought to bring in differentiation of course content that students were interested in.

Matilda in Germany

Matilda was very cognizant of the opportunities to not only improve her own German, but also learn more about pedagogical approaches in her work placement. As part of her blog writing, Matilda did an experiment in a high school biology classroom she was observing; she “pretended to be... a student that has limited language abilities...in a high school biology class.” This experience led to rich observations about the difficulties she faced. She noted in her blog that “it takes a large amount of mental energy to stay faced [sic] in class” and that “the teacher used a large variety of new vocabulary that [she] did not know” and “spoke too fast for [her] to be able to understand everything.” In the end, she “wasn’t fast enough with [her] dictionary and didn’t complete the given task in time.” To more deeply explore what she had experienced, she approached German colleagues and spoke with “five teachers about differentiation and what they do if a student in their class speaks minimal to no German” and found that “as tough as differentiation can sometimes be to plan or to figure out on the spot, it is crucial for the success of language learners and other students who may need help.” Matilda’s blogging about her inquiry also demonstrated a focus on differentiation in second language pedagogy.

The interaction order reported in the blogs required participants to adapt their pedagogy for the second language learner in several ways. By exploring what the needs of their students

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

were, these pre-service teachers learned about some of the tenets of second language teaching they might have learned in their university classes had they specialized in teaching ESL.

Interestingly, their study abroad placement provided the interaction order for this learning, as evidenced in their blogs.

Discourses in place

The discourses in place are interpreted as the strongly-held ideas around language learning or teaching that exist in this context. The discourses from their teacher education program were tested out in a new context, and new discourses surfaced as they found themselves not just as teachers, but language teachers.

Ava in Japan

In her blog posts, Ava also expressed how “learning a new language from scratch is incredibly challenging” and that she was pushed “beyond [her] comfort zone.” As a pre-service teacher, she also saw that to be able to “know what it is like to struggle with an unfamiliar language...[will] be of particular value to my future teaching ...[with]... English language learners.” She further recognized that this helped “deepen [her] appreciation of diversity” and become “more mindful of the cultural practices and traditions that take place in the lives of [her] future students.”

Although she felt she had “only really begun to deeply reflect on my experience”, she had, in a short time, embraced the discourse that language learning is challenging, and teachers are mediators of these challenges.

Chloe in Brazil

Chloe recognized this study abroad experience as something that “[pushed her] out of [her] comfort zone and [helped her] grow both professionally and personally.” In particular, she expressed an interest in “learning more about a different culture/language and by experiencing

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

being in a different culture surrounded by a language [she didn't] understand." At the same time, Chloe also expressed the frustrations of second language learning, describing how "it seems if your pronunciation isn't just right people don't seem to understand at all what you want or need." Chloe recognized the impact this experience could have on her future practice by being "able [to] relate by having gone through something similar," alluding to ELLs in her future classroom. Chloe's blog echoed Ava's discourse of second language learning as challenging, but also noticed the interconnectedness between language and culture, and the relationality (relationships and shared experiences) of second language teaching.

Steffi in Vietnam

Like all the participants in Vietnam, Steffi did not have much of an opportunity to learn Vietnamese and noted that "speaking English ... is a highly sought-after skill and can create many opportunities so parents are very adamant about their children's learning." In her placement she found herself teaching EFL classes and helping out in the schools' English club, in which she observed the "interesting" practice that "members of the club must choose an English name for themselves." She elaborated on the differences between the Canadian system and that in Vietnam, noting that "teaching entailed a lot of lecturing and textbook reading, something [she found] very different from teaching in [Canada]." Working in such a different environment with limited resources was a challenge. The reality of the placement's focus on English emphasized the discourse of English as the privileged language in both language learning and teaching.

Kimberly in Spain

During her time in Spain, Kimberly's views on second language learning and teaching became more nuanced. In her second blog post, she articulated that "since we are so accustomed to using English on a daily basis, we never stop to question why sentences are structured in certain ways,"

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

and later noted that she had “begun to understand that through the structure of language, you can get a glimpse into a culture and how the world is viewed through certain words and their meaning.” Reflecting on her own experiences in Spain, she noted that “as a teacher, [she] will be able to mirror these experiences to students who are English Language Learners to encourage their verbal communication.” She also understood that teachers and learners “need to come out of our comfort zones sometimes to see what we are capable of doing!” Kimberley’s blog articulated discourses of second language teaching that speak to the need for native speakers to develop meta-linguistic knowledge of their own language, the interconnectedness between language and culture, and the relationality of second language teaching.

Matilda in Germany

Matilda seemed to have many strongly held beliefs about second language learning and teaching when she went to Germany, but she expressed an interest in and enthusiasm for exploring these notions. Matilda felt the experience of living and volunteering “transformed and moved [her] enough that [she] would like to stay,” but she also realised that as she was returning to Canada it was “time to focus on the aspirations [she] had at the beginning and how they were met - or not!” Her experiment as a language learner in a mainstream biology class showed her “the importance of not letting ELL students be stranded or strand themselves.” Discourses of language learning as challenging and potentially isolating as well as language teaching as mediating those challenges were intertwined in her blogging.

Discussion

Nexus of practice

The social action of blogging about second language learning and teaching revealed a nexus of practice that varied among participants. As their historical bodies came together in the

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

interaction order of each placement, different discourses in place emerged. In returning to the research question, “What do study abroad participants learn about language learning and teaching through blogging?”, the findings can be understood as highly influenced by the specific interaction order of the placement, whether second language learning or second language (in this case, EFL) teaching was central, but sometimes also the historical body of the sojourner, based on previous knowledge of the language of the placement country.

Ava (Japan) and Chloe (Brazil) blogged about second language learning because it was new to their historical body and learning the language of the country (Japanese and Brazilian Portuguese respectively) was a central aspect of the interaction order. Through their own formal and informal language learning (Mitchell, et al., 2015), they began to reflect upon second language teaching. For the most part, they related their personal experiences of being novice second language learners to both the opportunities and challenges they could imagine English Language Learners in their future classrooms in Canada would have, allowing them to better relate to learners whose cultural backgrounds and experiences differ from their own (Egbo, 2019). They spoke of frustrations with not being understood and needing to step out of their comfort zones, demonstrating empathy to the challenges of learning English at school and the necessity for teachers to show compassion and modify instruction to take these challenges into account. These discourses in place of “language learning as challenging” and “teacher as mediator” of these challenges may not have been part of their previous education, but they emerged as part of the nexus of practice of linguistically responsive teaching and the importance of fostering a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to language learning and welcoming to language learners (Roskvist, et al., 2017).

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

For Steffi (Vietnam) and Kimberley (Spain) EFL teaching was crucial because it was central to the interaction order of their placements and because, as English speakers, they were seen as expert and thrust into roles as language teachers (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). Their historical bodies as native speakers of English were foregrounded, and therefore, they blogged much less about their own personal foreign language learning (Vietnamese and Spanish respectively). They wrote about their increasing metalinguistic awareness of English and their recognition of the privilege being a native speaker of English provided them in their placements. These sojourners share a common experience of critically reflective pre-service teachers in their home university who are preparing to become English as an Additional Language teachers (Sharma, et al., 2011). The circulating discourses in place around English came together with these other aspects around a nexus of practice of linguistically aware teaching.

Matilda (Germany) was the only participant of the five who reported being an advanced second language learner. This historical body positioned her differently, as much of her personal language learning preceded her placement. Nonetheless, she sought to add to her German language competence and noted her efforts in her blog. Additionally, by blogging about her professional learning from taking on the role of the student, she capitalized on the interaction order in ways that were unique to her, as a German learner. It is possible that the required blog post was a catalyst to engage in this activity since it was optional and entirely her idea. Matilda's discourses in place around language learning echoed those of Ava and Chloe in that she focused on the opportunities and challenges of language learning, even though her placement was more similar to that of Steffi and Kimberley in that it did not have an emphasis on language learning through formal lessons. The resulting nexus of practice was also one of linguistically responsive teaching.

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

Conclusion and implications

The findings from this study underscore the personal and professional learning of the five focal participants through blogging. The novice second language learners Ava and Chloe reported considerably on personal language learning, which influenced them to focus on empathy for the language learning in their professional learning. For Steffi and Kimberley, whose personal learning was less focused on the language of the country, the personal learning was about the role of English in other countries, but the professional learning was around the metalinguistic knowledge needed by native speakers to teach their own language as well as understand the privilege of English in their contexts. For the one focal participant who was already quite competent in the language of the placement country, Matilda, her personal learning still focused on language, but that learning was very intertwined with her professional learning about empathy for students as well.

The results from this study suggest that the personal and professional learning for sojourners is influenced by the extent to which the placement emphasizes second language learning. In placements with this emphasis, novice second language learners experienced firsthand the opportunities and challenges of language learning that are a common experience among pre-service teachers in their home country who have already decided to become second language teachers. They also picked up on the discourses related to second language teaching that might otherwise be made explicit in the professional learning of second language pre-service teachers in their home university. In the placements where personal second language learning was not the focus of the interaction order, the discourses in place reflect those of EFL teaching by native speakers. The blog posts reflect the professional learning of English native speakers as they recognize the unearned privilege of their historical body. Whether the placement

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

emphasizes personal language learning or not, if the sojourner does, this emphasis influences the personal and professional learning and holds the potential to result in blogging about critical engagement with the topic, as was the case with Matilda, who chose to experiment with keeping up in a biology class in Germany, discuss her experiment with host teachers, and blog about her personal and professional learning that resulted.

~~Reporting on the blogs of only five focal participants may be viewed as a limitation to the study at hand. Certainly, the understanding of the social action of blogging about personal and professional learning would be enhanced by an in-depth examination of the blogs of more sojourners.~~ Few of the participants in the larger corpus blogged about language learning. While it cannot be concluded that the other sojourners did not have personal or professional learning in this area, one limitation is that if they did, they did not choose to blog about it. By reminding sojourners to use a professional tone, we recognize that they were less likely to blog about negative experiences or reveal opinions they might perceive as negative. Therefore, we must conclude that not all sojourners see blogs as a venue for this type of reflection (see Authors, forthcoming), which suggests a venue for future research investigating, perhaps through interviews, how sojourners decide what to include in their blogs.

Yet, from what is evidenced through this analysis, we argue that for those that choose to blog about their personal and professional learning, the blogs provide a glimpse into what they have learned and how the three aspects of the nexus of practice (historical body, interaction order, and discourses in place) played a role in their learning. We suggest that some of this reflection might not have taken place without the medium of blogs and that, in the end, many of these pre-service teachers, regardless of their content area specialization, became de facto

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

language teachers and would carry this learning into classrooms to the benefit of their future students.

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

References

Allen, L. Q. (2013). Teachers' beliefs about developing language proficiency within the context of study abroad. *System, 41*(1), 134–148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.01.020>

Authors' citations to be added after acceptance

Bell, R. (2016). Concerns and expectations of students participating in study abroad programmes: Blogging to reveal the dynamic student voice. *Journal of Research in International Education, 15*(3), 196–207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240916669028>

Black, G. L., & Bernardes, R. (2014). Developing global educators and intercultural competence through an international teaching practicum in Kenya. *Canadian and International Education / Education Canadienne et Internationale, 43*(2). <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol43/iss2/4>

Corder, D., Roskvist, A., Harvey, S., & Stacey, K. (2018). Language teachers on study abroad programmes: The characteristics and strategies of those most likely to increase their intercultural communicative competence. In J. L. P. & K. Misfeldt (Ed.), *Second language study abroad programming, pedagogy, and participant engagement* (pp. 257–297). Palgrave Macmillan.

Desai Trilokekar, R., & Kukar, P. (2011). Disorienting experiences during study abroad: Reflections of pre-service teacher candidates. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(7), 1141–1150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.06.002>

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

Douthit, T. L., Schaake, S. L., McCammant, M. R. H., Grieger, D. M., & Bormann, J. M. (2015).

Student blogs and journals as assessment tools for faculty-led study abroad trips. *NACTA Journal*, 59(3), 213–218. Retrieved from <https://www.nactateachers.org/>

Douglass, K. (2007). From the learner's perspective: A case study on motives and study abroad.

In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Insights from study abroad for language programs* (pp. 116–133).

Thomson Heinle.

Egbo, B. (2019). *Teaching for diversity in Canadian schools*. (2nd Edition). Pearson Education.

Eloa, I., & Oskoz, A. (2008). Blogging: Fostering intercultural competence development in

foreign language and study abroad contexts. *Foreign Language Annals*, 41(3), 454–477.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2008.tb03307.x>

Gelfuso, A., & Dennis, D. V. (2014). Getting reflection off the page: The challenges of

developing support structures for pre-service teacher reflection. *Teaching and Teacher*

Education, 38, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2013.10.012>

Hult, F. (2014). Drive-thru linguistic landscaping: Constructing a linguistically dominant place in a bilingual space. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 18(5), 1–17.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006913484206>

Hult, F. M. (2019). Toward a unified theory of language development: The transdisciplinary

nexus of cognitive and sociocultural perspectives on social activity. *Modern Language*

Journal, 103, 136–144. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12527>

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

- Hult, F. M., & Källkvist, M. (2015). Global flows in local language planning: articulating parallel language use in Swedish university policies. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 4208(December 2015), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2016.1106395>
- Jackson, K., & Bazeley, P. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo*. Sage.
- Lee, L. (2011). Blogging: Promoting learner autonomy and intercultural competence through study abroad. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15(3, SI), 87–109. <https://doi.org/10.1.1.474.6258>
- Levine, G. (2009). L2 learner talk-about-language as social discursive practice. *L2 Journal*, 1(1), 19–41.
- Levine, G. (2014). From performance to multilingual being in foreign language pedagogy: Lessons from L2 students abroad. *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 2(1), 74–105.
- Mitchell, R., Tracy-Ventura, N., & McManus, K. (Eds.). (2015). *Social interaction, identity and language learning during residence abroad*. European Second Language Association.
- Naqvi, R., Schmidt, E., & Krickhan, M. (2014). Evolving 50-50% bilingual pedagogy in Alberta: What does the research study abroad? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5(June), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00413>
- Pasterick, M. L. (2015). *Language and culture learning abroad: Mediating pre-service world languages teachers' development of interculturality*. [Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University].

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

Pietikäinen, S., Alanen, R., Dufva, H., Kalaja, P., Leppänen, S., & Pitkänen-Huhta, A. (2008).

Languaging in Ultima Thule: Multilingualism in the life of a Sami boy. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 5(2), 79–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710802152289>

Plews, J. (2015). Intercultural identity-alignment in second language study abroad, or the more-or-less Canadians. In *Social interaction, identity and language learning during residence abroad* (pp. 281–304). European Second Language Association.

Plews, J. L. (2019). Research topics for language teacher education in study abroad contexts. In G. Barkhuizen (Ed.), *Qualitative research topics in language teacher education*. (pp. 155–160). Routledge.

Reyes, I., & Moll, L. (2008). Bilingual and biliterate practices at home and school. In B. Spolsky & F. Hult (Eds.), *Handbook of Educational Linguistics* (pp. 147–160). Blackwell.

Roskvist, A., Harvey, S., Corder, D., & Stacey, K. (2017). Language teachers and their perceptions of the impact of “short-term” study abroad experiences on their teaching practice. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 14(1), 5–20. <http://e-flt.nus.edu.sg/v14n12017/roskvist.pdf>

Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2004). *Nexus analysis: Discourse and the emerging internet*. Routledge.

Stewart, J. A. (2010). Using e-Journals to assess students’ language awareness and social identity during study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43(1), 138–159. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2010.01064.x>

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

- Sleeter, C. (2018). A framework to improve teaching in multicultural contexts. *Education and Self Development, 13*(1), 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.26907/esd13.1.05>
- Sharma, S., Phillion, J., & Malewski, E. (2011). Examining the practice of critical reflection for developing pre-service teachers' multicultural competencies: Findings from a study abroad program in Honduras. *Issues in Teacher Education, 20*(2), 9–22.
- Smolcic, E., & Katunich, J. (2017). Teachers crossing borders: A review of the research into cultural immersion field experience for teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 62*, 47–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.11.002>
- Trentman, E. (2013). Imagined communities and language learning during study abroad: Arabic learners in Egypt. *Foreign Language Annals, 46*(4), 545–564.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12054>
- Vélez-Rendón, G. (2010). From social identity to professional identity: Issues of language and gender. *Foreign Language Annals, 43*(4), 635–649. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2010.01113.x>

NEXUS ANALYSIS OF STUDY ABROAD BLOGGING

Table 1 Participants by Country and Year

Participants	Brazil	Germany	Japan	Spain	Vietnam	Total
Year 1	1	5	5	4	3	18
Year 2	3	6	5	3	6	23
Total	4	11	10	7	9	41