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The interaction between duration of study abroad, diversity of loci of learning and sociopragmatic variation patterns

Whilst the field of Interlanguage Pragmatics has produced a rich and diverse literature which ‘takes more than the average persistence to stay on top of’ (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 1), one area that remains relatively under-researched is the acquisition of sociopragmatic variation or the ability to vary language output in a way that is congruent with the situation and/or the speakers' needs. With the aim of filling that gap, the current study explores the interplay between duration of study abroad (SA) and the development of sociopragmatic variation patterns whilst enacting the speech act of ‘asking for advice’ in three groups of highly-advanced non-native speakers of English. The study takes a cross-sectional, cross-linguistic approach focusing on primarily foreign language (FL) users of L2 English from 11 different L1 backgrounds.

With the aim of furthering understanding into the impact of SA on the development of sociopragmatic variation patterns, the study employs the novel paradigm of Loci of Learning – that is the study of the intensity and diversity of socially-constructed micro-learning spaces encountered by learners. This goes beyond measuring linguistic interaction in terms of ‘interactive’ or ‘non-interactive’ (Freed, 1990) to investigate how interactions can be qualitatively different irrespective of participants or physical location. Three loci have been identified: the conversational, institutional and media-based.

Sociopragmatic Variation

We will start by situating the socially sensitive area of sociopragmatics. O’Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs refer to it as ‘the knowledge of how to select an appropriate choice given a particular goal in a particular setting’ (2011, p. 138). That is to say that sociopragmatics is concerned with the appropriate use of language which is congruent with the context and speakers’ needs at a particular point in time. It represents variables such as interlocutor identity, social distance, formality, linguistic norms and physical location in a dynamic manner. It recognises that, in order to be appropriate, users must be able to vary their choice of linguistic elements in such a way as to convey what they mean in a manner that is socially acceptable both to them and to the situation.

It may seem that such social niceties represent the ‘icing on the cake’ (Tyne, 2009) in terms of second language acquisition; however, this notion has been robustly challenged (Amouzadeh & Tavangar, 2005; Bayley & Regan, 2004; Thomas, 1983; Tyne, 2009). Bayley & Regan (2004) posit that ‘knowledge of variation is part of speaker competence. [...] in order to become fully proficient in the target language learners need to acquire native speaker patterns of variation’ (2004, p. 325). Tyne (2009), on the other hand, argues that awareness of social variation is an element of a learner’s linguistic repertoire from the beginning. Moving the debate away from matters of language proficiency, Thomas (1983) and Amouzadeh & Tavangar (2005) foreground the inherently social nature of variation whereby lack of variation or negative transfer from the L1 may be construed not as a linguistic error by native speakers (NSs), but rather as a personality deficit and ‘could lead to the formation of cultural stereotypes.’ (Amouzadeh & Tavangar, 2005, p. 174). As highlighted by Thomas:

Sociopragmatic decisions are social before they are linguistic, and while foreign learners are fairly amenable to corrections that they regard as linguistic, they are justifiably sensitive

about having their social (or even political, religious or moral) judgement called into question. (1983: 104)

From the above, it can be clearly seen that awareness of and competence in sociopragmatic patterns are not peripheral to SLA as without such, L2 users may be misunderstood – not from the perspective of the meaning of their utterances, but rather, their intent in interacting in such a way may be interpreted negatively in terms of their personality or nationality which can lead to ‘misunderstandings and communication breakdowns’ (Dewaele, 2008, p. 260). In addition, the precarious nature of the status of non-native speaker (NNS) must be highlighted insofar as NNSs may not be granted access to native-like patterns of variation. As Dewaele (2008) emphasises, native speakers (NSs) often refuse to accept NNSs’ attempts to use NS patterns considering them illegitimate. As a consequence NNSs may be damned for appearing rude, aloof or stupid for their lack of awareness of sociopragmatic norms; and simultaneously damned for their attempts to adhere to them.

Bearing in mind the sensitivities embedded in the analysis of sociopragmatic variation, the current study avoids comparison with an L1 baseline. It does so from a number of perspectives: 1) it is concerned with L2 development and not a deficit model; 2) L1 pragmatic norms are inherently variable within language groups (Barron & Schneider, 2009; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Formentelli & Hajek, 2016; Mulo Farenkia, 2014); and 3) as sociopragmatic choices are social choices based on individual interpretations of appropriateness to the situation, they are often emerging and fluid within both native and non-native speakers. Therefore trying to establish ‘a prescriptive norm’ (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 74) can be highly problematic.

Study Abroad and Second Language Acquisition

When embarking on a review of Study Abroad (SA) research, an important starting point has to be the publication of *Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (Freed (ed.), 1995). This has been described by Jackson as heralding ‘a new stream’ (2008, p. 3) in SLA research, legitimizing SA as a specific learning context that has the potential to facilitate differential acquisitional outcomes. Early studies in the field set about exploring and quantifying linguistic gains which could be attributed definitively to the SA context. The scope was wide and diverse covering area such as predictors for gains (Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995), politeness patterns (Marriott, 1995), sociolinguistic variation (Barron, 2006; Regan, 1995), grammatical gains (Howard, 2001), oral fluency (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004) and pragmatic structures (Barron, 2003).

Since the early days, despite differential findings for linguistic gains, interest in SA has increased, giving rise to large-scale projects such as SALA (Pérez-Vidal, 2014) and more recently LANGSNAP (‘Welcome to LANGSNAP - LANGSNAP,’ n.d.). This may have been buoyed, in no small way by the call by Firth and Wagner for the ‘reconceptualisation of Second Language Acquisition ...’ to account for ‘the contextual and interactive dimensions in language’ (2007, p. 757).¹ This call may also have been instrumental in opening up the scope of SA research, allowing for a complementary ethnographic research trajectory into the experiences of learners to evolve. Situating the learner at the centre of the SA experience has permitted researchers (Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Jackson, 2008;

¹ This article was originally published in 1997

Kinginger, 2004; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005) to foreground the dynamic barriers and conduits arising from identity issues or access to social networks which impact on a learner's interaction with native speakers and consequently range of language structures exposed to in the SA context.

Taken together, both research trajectories provide invaluable insight into not only which language gains are made (or not) during an SA, but why gains are not made uniformly by all.

Moving on now to the impact of SA on the acquisition of socially-situated language, it is worth noting, that this is the aspect of language which seems most sensitive to learning context with Destruel & Donaldson (2017) evoking the classroom as a limited source of pragmatically rich language, relying on canonical forms which have become 'neutralized' (p. 725). The SA context, on the other hand, may be described as a potential 'rich linguistic and cultural haven' (Knight & Schmidt-Rhinehart, 2002, p. 198) which could account for the many studies which compellingly indicate the benefits of a period of time spent in the target language country on sociolinguistic and pragmatic gains (Barron, 2003, 2006; Cohen & Shively, 2007; Devlin, 2013, 2014; Hassall, 2013; Hernandez, 2016; Huebner, 1995; Kinginger & Blatter, 2008; Kinginger & Farrell, 2004; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1995; Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009; Ren, 2013; Schauer, 2006; Shively, 2011; Xiao, 2015). **Plus all authors in this volume.** The studies cover a wide gamut of topics including the acquisition of sociolinguistic/pragmatic awareness, leave taking strategies, pronominal choice, pragmatic markers and socio-phonological variables. **ADD INFO RE THIS VOLUME**

Studies specifically into sociopragmatic/linguistic acquisition, i.e., not just the acquisition of socio/pragmalinguistic variants, but of the appropriate use of variants in context, although few, offer considerable insight into developmental patterns. In a longitudinal study into American secondary school students on an SA programme in Japan, Marriott (1995) highlights the lack of congruency with NS norms at the end of the stay. She points out, 'the data clearly show that most students possessed both styles [plain and honorific], yet they were unable to switch appropriately.' (1995, p. 217). From this, it is clear that the socio/pragmalinguistic variants were acquired, but that a year was possibly not sufficient to acquire the social information needed to use them in a native-like manner. This is supported by Regan et al. (2009) and, to an extent, by Siegal (1995). Regan et al. (2009) note that, after a year of SA, Irish university students of French acquire sociolinguistic variables, yet their use of them differs significantly from NS use with NNSs showing a dispreference for the informal variant. Returning to Japan, Siegal (1995) follows the trajectory of four western women on an SA lasting eighteen months. In conclusion, she states:

the data show that, on one hand, the study abroad experience is important for learning what has heretofore remained unexplained or not emphasised in traditional [...] language classrooms, and on the other hand, the drive for communication and fluency can lead some learners to 'pick up' forms that carry pragmatic meaning [...] and use them in ways that are socio-pragmatically inappropriate. (1995, p. 226)

Whilst this seems to be in line with the findings of the other two studies, it adds another level of complexity. Siegal was exploring the acquisition of honorifics in Japanese women's language. In this case, the informants were aware of the sociolinguistic need to use humble language, but resisted it as they felt it was incongruent with their intentions when interacting as white, western women. It was only towards the end of the eighteen-month period that they became willing to adapt and 'work towards a reconciliation of their own perceptions, feelings and needs with what is necessary to be sociolinguistically competent in Japanese.' (1995, p. 227).

To finish off this section, it is worth stressing that the physical act of simply being in a TL country is by no means sufficient to ensure language gains. After all, a second language is not contagious and cannot be picked up by breathing in the same air as those who have already been 'infected'. Bayley notes variable access to NSs rather than the physical act of simply being in the country as causal, observing that:

Speakers whose social networks are almost exclusively Chinese-speaking, however, seldom participate in informal English conversations. The limited native-speaker input they receive comes mainly in the relatively formal situation of the classroom. They have, therefore, very few opportunities to acquire the sociolinguistic norms that would result in the target-like variable phonological processes (1996: 111).

The Context of Study Abroad

Given that SA seems such a prominent, if not causal factor, in the acquisition of sociopragmatic variation, the following question is then, why does the context of Study Abroad appear to have such a significant influence? In order to answer that question, it is necessary to revise the conception of SA away from one which views the context as a monolithic physical location where all students have equal access to all aspects of the language at all times towards one that sees it as a setting for an infinite number of dynamic, socially-constructed language learning spaces which construct and are constructed by the learner, participants and social needs. This conceptualisation goes beyond what Block defines as 'the physical location of language learning as well as the sociohistorical and sociocultural conditions that accompany that physical location' (2009, p. 10) to encapsulate qualitatively differential interactions that learners can engage in. In this study, such socially-constructed spaces are conceptualized as loci of learning. These have been defined by Devlin as

a micro-context in which language acquisition takes place. It may be predicated on the role of the learner, the role of the interlocutor or contact material, degrees of formality, social distance, physical location of the interaction, mode and topic (2013, p. 201).

The concept has been influenced by recent work in social psychology intended to ensure that 'the specific linguistic and interactive dynamics of the contact situation matter'. (Harwood, 2010, p. 148). Within SLA studies, this has been addressed most prominently by Gee (2004, 2012) from a sociocultural perspective, through the concept of socially-situated learning and more recently by Fukada (2017) whilst exploring the positive aspects of affinity space for the individual in facilitating contact with native speakers. The parameters take into account the coming together of interactants for a 'shared affinity for a common goal, endeavor, or interest' (Gee, 2004, p. 98) and the personal bonding as described by Fukada (2017) to consider all interactions as potential learning spaces.

In analysing the range of socially-constructed spaces, or loci of learning, that learners may engage with, three loci have been identified in the current data set. They are the institutional, the conversational and the media-based. The institutional locus focuses on institutional talk which has been defined either along the lines of workplace or professional terms (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Saranji & Roberts, 1999) or according to power structures (Agar, 1986). Examples include service encounters such as ordering food in a restaurant; academic or workplace interactions where the topic is confined to a professional or academic matter and the roles are fixed. Institutional interaction is defined by two main factors; firstly, its adherence to formulaic structures (Drew &

Heritage, 1992) and, secondly transactionality (Benwell & Stokoe, 2010). Therefore, it can be understood as a socially-constructed space where identities are fixed and the discourse formulaic, predictable and replicable.

In contrast to institutional talk, in the conversational context, the enactment of identity can be fluid and dynamic. Throughout the exchange participants can assume a multiplicity of roles. It often involves multiple parties who can join or leave the exchange at any time. Additionally, the location of the exchange can be anywhere – a park bench, in front of the television, on the bus, in the street, at work, at school to provide a few examples. Examples include: discussing current affairs on a bus, gossiping, relating a story about an event to a friend.

However, it is important to foreground the importance of the social relationships between interactants in shaping the space or locus and thus the nature of the language exchanged. Unlike the framework of social networks, relationships are recognised as being both dynamic and static. Examples of this include the emerging friendship with a shopkeeper as described by Hassall (2006) where the locus evolved from institutional to conversational accompanied by a linguistic interaction which developed concurrently from a strictly formulaic transaction to a fluid, dynamic conversation. Despite the physical setting and interactants remaining the same, the locus of learning evolved to create a new socially-constructed space. On the other hand, studies into homestays consistently highlight the entrenched institutional nature of interactions with hosts where the talk remains highly formulaic and the roles static (see Iino, 2006; Rivers, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b, 2002). Regardless of the length of time spent together, relationships do not evolve, interaction remains the same and new social spaces or loci are not formed. Thus, the current framework is sufficiently sensitive to shed light on the fact that interaction with a shopkeeper or a host family member can create qualitatively different loci of learning for different people at different times.

Oral space is by no means the sole space learners have access to. The media-based locus also plays a large role. This can be defined as the physical and virtual means by which authentic, culturally-coded material is disseminated to a wide audience (see Devlin (2014) for a full discussion) and includes material produced by an authentic user intended for an authentic audience disseminated via cultural artefacts such as TV, radio, newspapers, social media and the internet.

It has been described as noninteractive contact by Freed (1990). This term has been rejected as oxymoronic in so far as contact with the language implies interaction - researchers highlight cognitive, psychological and cultural interaction with reading and listening (Dechant, 1991; Vandergrift, 2011). The relationship between the learner and the various media may also be considered a social space which may fluctuate as the learner's proficiency level improves, her intercultural awareness increases or her interests change. This has received very little attention in SA research. Freed (1990) noted a preference for media-based contact during SA; Pellegrino Aveni (2005) highlighted the importance of TV in increasing contact with NSs and Huebner (1995) tangentially mentions the constant exposure to public signage as beneficial to linguistic gains. More recently, there has been interest in interaction with the virtual space through social media and gains made from linguistic, cultural (Mitchell, 2012) and sociopragmatic (Blattner & Fiori, 2011) perspectives.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to 1) establish a relationship between duration of SA and access to loci of learning; 2) explore differential outcomes in the development of sociopragmatic variation and 3)

map the developmental patterns of interaction to exposure to loci of learning. In order to establish a link a two-stage study was set up. The first stage involves collating data regarding exposure to loci of learning during SA. This was achieved through the use of an adapted version of the Language Contact Profile Questionnaire (LCP) (Freed, Dewey, Segalowitz, & Halter, 2004). The second stage focused on eliciting real-time oral interactions across two socially-differentiated situations through the performance of role plays.

The Informants

A unique aspect of the current study is the composition of the informants. They are comprised of 20 highly proficient teachers of English with 11 different L1s. A cross-linguist approach allows for the investigation of commonalities in L2 development and avoids the trap of the study becoming a cross-linguistic comparison of pragmatic differences. Table 2 provides an overview of the entire group from the perspective of gender, nationality and duration of SA.

Table 1 Overview of Informants and duration of SA

Informant	Gender	Nationality	Duration of SA in days
A	F	German	21
B	F	Bulgarian	21
C	F	Hungarian	22
D	F	Hungarian	10
E	M	Spanish	60
F	M	German	56
G	F	Polish	120
H	F	German	315
I	F	German	300
J	M	German	300
K	F	Estonian	165
L	F	Danish	171
M	F	Danish	1851
N	M	French	485
O	M	German	365
P	F	Hungarian	465
Q	F	Italian	912
R	F	Norwegian	410
S	M	Spanish	435
T	F	Czech	912
Mean			369.8
SD			438.6

They come from a range of 11 different European countries with Germany being the most frequent with 5 informants coming from there. With regards duration of stay there is a wide discrepancy with a low of 10 days and high of 1851.

The data from the entire group proved to have a non-normal distribution. Three groups were formed subsequently according to length of time spent in a TL country all of which had normally distributed data. The breakdown of the groups is shown in table 2.

Table 2 Breakdown of groups

Group 1	60 days or less	N= 6
Group 2	120 days to one year	N=6
Group 3	More than one year	N=8

Language Contact Data

The LCP is a well-established tool intended ‘to elicit information that was deemed useful for students studying in a variety of contexts’ (Freed et al., 2004, p. 350). In the format designed by Freed et al, the focus was on differentiating between ‘interactive’ and ‘noninteractive’ contact with the language. Such a binary distinction was deemed too blunt an instrument to account for the qualitatively different interactions the learners experience. That is to say, that the framework is not sensitive enough to shine a light on the dynamic, differential experiences of interaction. For example, all oral exchanges come under the umbrella of interactive contact. It is obvious that a meaningful, personal conversation with friends is qualitatively different from formulaic and repetitive exchanges with host family members focusing on house rules (as documented by Isabelli-Garcia (2006)). The former may be conceptualised as a mutual socially-constructed space where all participants are engaged in an exchange of ideas, experiences and/or thoughts which does not have a predetermined outcome or format insofar as it is emerging and fluid. On the other hand, an exchange with a host may result in interaction that is predicated on pre-defined roles defined by asymmetrical power structures with a defined outcome. That is to say, that it may be predictable, formulaic, replicable and institutional. Additionally, as already discussed, categorising contact with to TV, newspapers, radio etc as noninteractive is untenable. With this in mind, the LCP was adapted to collate data on language contact which would allow for the classification of exposure as conversational, institutional and media-based.

The second stage of the study i.e. the collection of performance data took the form of two socially-differentiated role-plays where the informants were required to ask for advice. The informants were placed into dyads according to the length of time they had spent in an SA experience and then asked to enact complex role-plays. Each situation was carefully chosen to represent a real-life situation the informants had or could have experience of. In addition, the roles to be enacted ensured that they were put into a situation where they 1) had to enact a lower-status interlocutor in an institutional interaction and 2) an equal status interlocutor in a conversational situation.

The role-play cards can be seen in table 3

Table 3 Role-plays

	Instructions	Formality	Social Distance	Status
Institutional	Ask your child's new English teacher for advice on improving his/her skills	Formal	Distant	Lower
	Ask an expert in a sports centre for advice on getting fit			
Conversational	Ask a close friend for advice of a relationship problem	Informal	Close	Equal
	Ask a close friend on advice opening a Facebook account			

Operationalising Sociopragmatic Variation

With regards performance data, the data were analysed on a group by group level firstly for the institutional situation and then for the conversational situation. The data from each group were then compared to assess the influence of exposure to loci of learning. The data were analysed at two distinct levels – a strategic level and a substrategic level. The strategies and substrategies found were analysed for differential use according to role play and group. The use of strategies was assessed through t-tests, one-way ANOVAs and Tuckey Post Hocs where appropriate. The substrategic analyses were then subject to a qualitative micro-analysis.

Following taxonomies proposed by Kasper (1986) and Kasper & Rose (2002), an approach was established based on the polarities of directness and conventionality. (See table 4).

Table 4 directness and conventionality

	Characteristics	Example
Conventionalised Directness	Matched locution and illocution	Advise me
	No downgraders/mitigation	
Conventionalised Indirectness	Formulaic mitigation/downgraders	Could you give me some advice?
Non-conventionalised Indirectness	Situationally finely-tuned	I'm having a bit of a dilemma
	Locution/illocution mismatch	

The above strategies are categorised along a continuum which moves from a position of unmitigated utterances where there is no mismatch between locution and illocution, through what Kasper & Rose (2002) describe as a midpoint of conventionalised directness where the illocutionary force of the utterance has been mitigated by accepted pragmlinguistic structures for completing the speech

act. The pragmalinguistic structures are neither situationally bound nor likely to require disambiguation. The further end of the continuum finds non-conventionalised indirectness. At this point, the utterances have been finely tuned to meet the demands of a particular situation and may not be readily transferable. Without recourse to specific situational information, the hearer may be unable to disambiguate the mismatch between locution and illocution.

To provide further insight into the range of linguistic devices involved in the development sociopragmatic variation, it is necessary to dig deeper into the substrategies. Whilst substrategies overlap with internal modifiers (see Ren (2013) for a discussion), the concept has been expanded to account for interactional features found in dyadic performance data but not in written data collection tasks. These include features of discourse such as silence, overlap and interruptions as proposed by Young (2009). The substrategies have been categorised as solidary or non-solidary moves – i.e. moves employed to show encouragement or discordance with the interlocutor. They have been summarised in table 5.

Table 5 Substrategies

Substrategy	Polarity	Definition	Example
Backchannel	Solidary	Short responses made in an interaction which indicate active participation without the need for the speaker to lose the floor	Yeah
	Non-solidary		Uh huh Really
Overlap	Solidary	An indication of active participation in the interaction. Routines are broken and the interaction becomes fluid and co-constructed	Advisor: Yes, well, er maybe if he joins an after school circle where there is no pressure to [... #L: ... so you think that'll help him get over his shyness]
Providing alternatives	I. Solidary	Multifunctional substrategies which can be used either as a means of establishing rapport and prolonging the interaction or as a way of rejecting the advice proffered.	I. #F On the other hand, I thought ...
	II. Non-solidary		II. Advisor: You could go running #H: Maybe a mix of all –walking and running
Problematicisation	I. Solidary II. Non-solidary	Can be used to challenge the authority of the interlocutor. It can be considered solidary when	I. #J I don't like ehm eu ehm saying too much about my private life on the

		it is used to introduce a problem to be jointly solved by the interlocutors.	internet ... it might be a bit dangerous. II. Advisor: She could try to talk more with native speaker #L: Oh, we don't really have any nati..., native speakers in our area, yeah
Concordance	Solidary	Showing an alignment of opinions of beliefs with the interlocutor	Advisor: You should maybe sit down and talk with him about this, er, er situation #H: I think likewise
Hints	Solidary	'the open-ended group of indirect strategies (hints) that realize the request by either partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act' (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1983, p. 201)	#G: But, you know, I'm just ... that I'm having a few problems at home at the moment.
Grounders	Solidary	Used to prepare the interlocutor for what may be deemed and imposition	#F: But I can't do almost nothing with a computer. Can you help me?
Imposition minimisers	Solidary	Employed to alert the interlocutor to a forthcoming imposition such as a request	#J: Can I talk to you for a minute?
Interruptions	Non-solidary	to prevent a turn from continuing	Advisor: Well maybe your child could [...] #M: ...I know my child]
Rejections	Non-solidary	'an unfavoured way of performing a disfavoured act, especially [...] with a status-higher	#R Do you think she would be good at that? I'm not sure.

		interlocutor.'(Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 183)	
Questioning	Non-solidary	challenging the legitimacy of the interlocutor	Advisor: She should check the internet for new ideas #G: What do you mean by new ideas?
Avoidance	Non-solidary	a deliberate means of not engaging with the interlocutor.	#D: Silence Advisor: You want to have advice on your son's essay?

The above list is not meant as an exhaustive taxonomy. Rather it is reflective of the substrategies found in the data set

Results

Exposure to Loci of Learning

In this section, the results from the LCP will be considered first. Assessing interaction with loci of learning was operationalised via contact with native speakers and authentic media. Access to the oral loci will be presented together. For the institutional locus, intensity of contact with service personnel and for the purpose of obtaining or exchanging information considered. The metrics used for the conversational context were extended conversations and social encounters. As a result each informant has a possibility of two scores for each locus. For the media it was newspapers, novels, TV, songs, cinema and internet. Results are below:

Oral loci (Institutional and conversational)

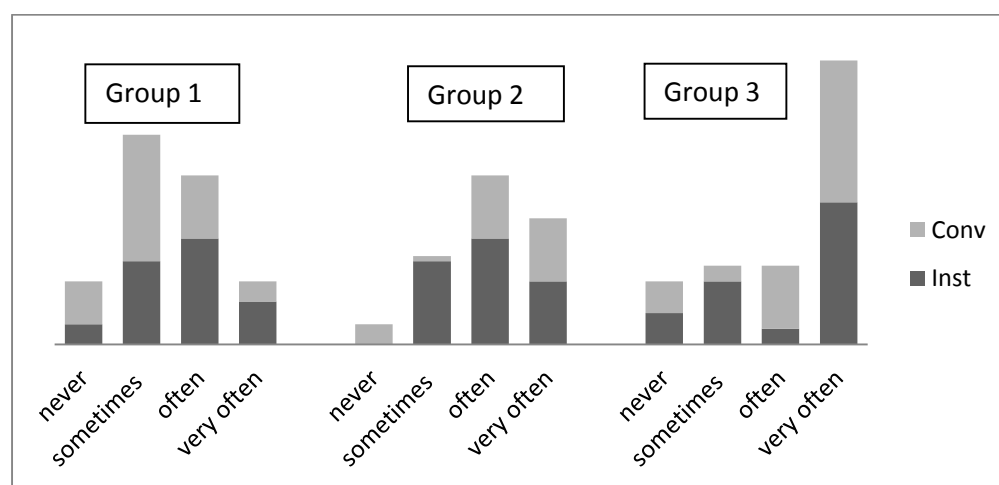


Figure 1 Contact with oral loci of learning

Institutional Locus

Data in figure 1 indicate that for both group 1 and group 2, contact is most frequent in the categories of sometimes and often. In contrast, contact for those in group 3 falls mainly into the very often category. In order to test the impact of increased duration of SA on the above findings, between group one-way ANOVA tests were conducted. When results are considered, the effect of duration on intensity of exposure is not significant at the $p < .05$ level [$F = 2.932, p = .066$]. As a result, it can be concluded that duration of SA has little impact on interaction with the institutional locus of learning. That is to say interaction with the institutional locus remains constant across time.

Conversational Locus

Moving on to the conversational locus, the figures here are more clear-cut. Group 1 and Group 2 experience interaction in mainly in the category of 'sometimes'. Similarly to the results of the institutional locus, Group 3 experiences most contact in the 'very often' category.

A one-way ANOVA clearly indicates that interaction with the conversational locus is commensurate with duration of SA, that those with an SA of in excess of one year will experience significantly more intense exposure to prolonged conversations and brief social chats than those who have spent less than a year [$F = 4.351, p = .02$]. A Tukey Post Hoc was subsequently conducted and significant differences were found between groups 1 and 3 ($p = .018$). In light of the above, it can be said that duration of SA has a significant impact on interaction with the conversational locus of learning with stays of more than one year resulting in intense, very often exposure, but those of less than 60 days more likely to see reduced interaction.

Intra-group patterns are also worth noting insofar as group 3 experiences equal and intense very often access to both oral loci of learning. This is in contrast to the other groups. Whilst group 2 experiences equal access to both loci in the very often category, it is not intense comprising only 25% of all contact. Group 1, on the other hand, shows a strong overall bias towards the institutional locus. In conclusion, the data point towards SAs of less than 60 days giving rise to interaction that is primarily institutional in nature. That is to say that learners will experience highly formulaic interaction with NSs which rarely goes beyond transactional encounters. For those with an SA of between 120 days and one year, interaction shows a bias towards institutional interaction, though it is not as strong as in group 1. Those who experience an SA of more than one year have intense, yet balanced interaction with both oral loci.

Media-based locus

Turning now to the media-based locus, the results for each group are mixed. Overall patterns indicate a decrease in the categories of media 'never' interacted with and an increase in those interacted with 'very often'. (See figures 2, 3 and 4).

Group 1

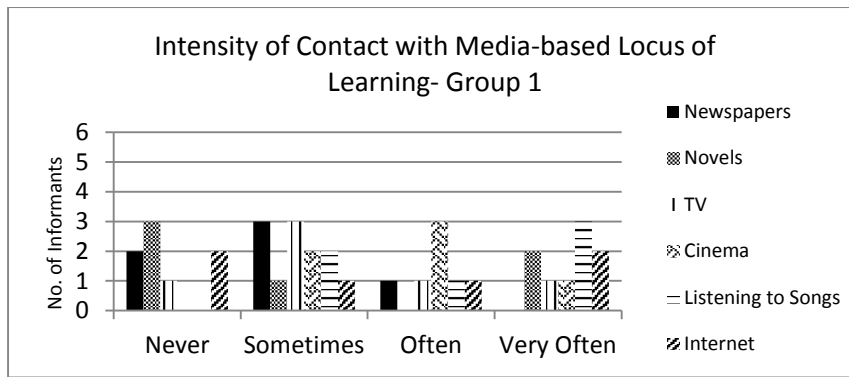


Figure 2 Group 1

Group 2

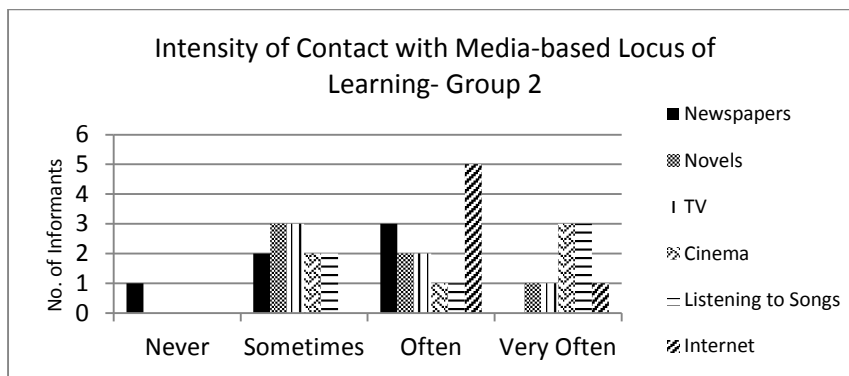


Figure 3 Group 2

Group 3

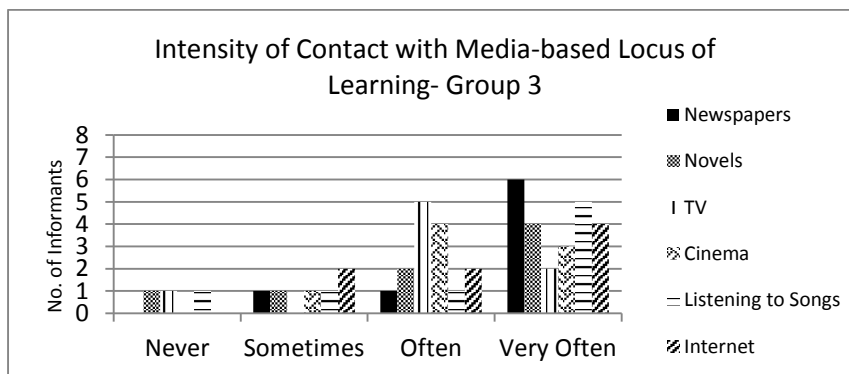


Figure 4 Group 3

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted and results showed no significance except in the case of interaction with newspapers. Results indicate that group 3 have significantly higher interaction with newspapers ($F= 15.3, p= .000$). A post hoc Tukey HSD further reveals that significant differences lie between groups 1 and 3 ($p= .001$) and groups 2 and 3 ($p= .001$). No significant differences were found for the results pertaining to groups 1 and 2 ($p= 1.00$).

That contact with newspapers is significantly more common with group 3 is of great interest insofar as interaction with newspapers has been linked with greater cultural embedding within a community (Kramsch, 1996). Kramsch has described newspapers as culturally-coded artefacts belonging to and intended for members of a specific community, therefore they are almost impossible to 'authenticate' (1996, p. 186) without being culturally embedded in that community.

Putting this together, it is interesting to note the patterns insofar as greater intensity of contact with the conversational locus i.e. greater interaction with a more fluid learning space correlates with a higher degree of embedding in the local culture as witnessed through the frequency with which learners authenticate culturally coded loci and this in turn is correlated with a duration of SA of more than one year. The next question is then, how does this differential interaction impact on language development.

Performance data Results

Firstly, we will look at results at the strategic levels of direct conventionality, indirect conventionality and indirect non-conventionality. Table 6 provides an at-a-glance overview of inter- and intra- group results for both the institutional and conversational situations.

Table 6 Directness and conventionality

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
	Institutional	Conversational	Institutional	Conversational	Institutional	Conversational
Conventionalised Indirectness	39.4%	41.6%	5.3%	8.9%	25%	15.9%
Conventionalised Directness	21.2%	4.2%	1.3%	3.9%	0%	12.7%
Non-conventionalised Indirectness	39.4%	54.2%	93.4%	87.2%	75%	71.4%

The data were analysed statistically at both an intra- and an inter group level. Turning firstly to the intra-group analysis, two-tailed paired sample *t*-tests were conducted. With regards group 1, a significant difference was found for the strategy of conventionalised directness ($p = .01$) with significantly fewer tokens employed in the conversational situation. In contrast, there were no significant differences found in the strategies employed by group 2. This is surprising as it may be hypothesised that longer SAs would give rise to greater levels of variation. Within group 3 significantly different patterns in use were found for two strategies – conventionalised directness ($p = .04$) and non-conventionalised indirectness ($p = .044$) with both strategies being used less in the conversational situation. Whilst it may be surmised that SAs of more than one year give rise to greater levels of variation, the patterns of variation are different.

One-way between group ANOVAs were used to analyse inter-group differences. With regards the institutional genre, all 3 strategies varied significantly according to duration of SA ($p = .00$ in all cases). Post hoc Tukey HSD shed more light. With CI strategies no differences were found between groups 1 and 3 ($p = .30$); however differences were found between groups 1 and 2 ($p = .00$) and

groups 2 and 3 ($p = .017$). This indicates that that deployment of the CI strategy may remain stable over time with group 2 being anomalous using it significantly less than the others. Results for CD show significant differences between groups 1 and 2 ($p = .00$) and groups 1 and 3 ($p = .00$) implying that CD is a strategy found in the discourse of primarily mono-contextual learners and that SAs of a duration of 120 days or more are sufficient to lead to its decrease. When NI strategies underwent the same statistical process Post hoc Tukey HSD tests revealed differences once more between groups 1 and 2 and 1 and 3 ($p = .00$ in both cases) indicating an upwards trend. The use of finely-tuned, socially situated language increases after 120 days in a TL environment within an institutional situation.

A different pattern is found for use in a conversational situation. One-way ANOVAs showed significant differences on the use of two strategies only: CI and NI ($p = .00$ in both cases). Rates of use of CD strategies remained small yet static over time. Post hoc Tukey HSD tests revealed that the use of CI strategies decreased significantly after an SA of 120 days with significant differences between groups 1 and 2 ($p = .00$) and 1 and 3 ($p = .006$). Unexpected results emerged after the post hoc for the use of NI insofar as overall trend was stable over duration with a significant increase between group 1 and 2 ($p = .001$) and a significant fall in use between groups 2 and 3 ($p = .045$).

(REF Ren, this volume)

Substrategies

Whilst an analysis at a strategic level provides insight into general trends vis-à-vis a tendency towards non-conventional indirectness commensurate with duration of SA, a deeper analysis is necessary to explicate how this is happening. The differences in language variation can only really be explored at a substrategic level. To recap, substrategies were considered from the polarities of solidary and non-solidary moves and within each polarity a number of linguistic substrategies were deployed differentially both across situations and groups. They contain internal modifiers as well as interactional features of language.

Looking at overall patterns, the first things that strike are the number of tokens in the data for each group and the range of substrategies in the repertoire. (See figures 5 & 6). With regards overall use of tokens, a rise in numbers can be found over time. However, that is not to say, the longer the time spent in SA, the greater the number of tokens. The number of tokens grew from 13 in both situations for group one, peaking at 69/89 for group 2 before falling back to 42/46 for group 3.

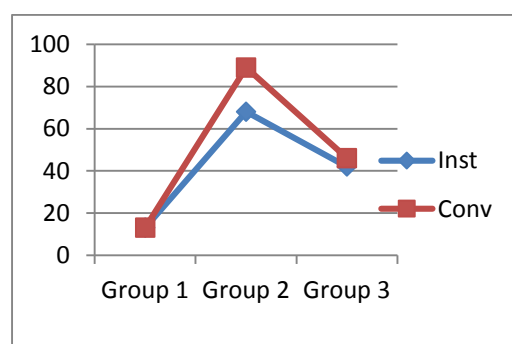


Figure 5 no of tokens

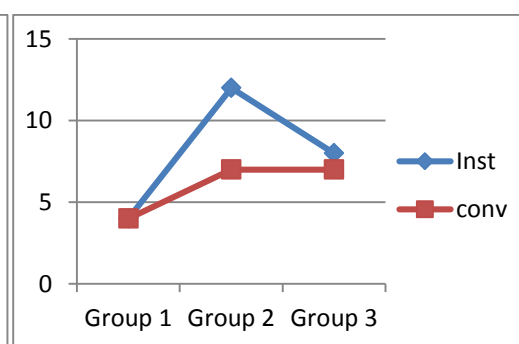


Figure 6 no of substrategies

A similar pattern has emerged for the number of strategies. However, the pattern is not linear with group 2 showing the highest number of strategies and the biggest gap between the institutional and

the conversational situations. Moving on to a classification of the substrategies, the discourse of group 1 is dominated by solidary moves in both situations. It is devoid of backchannels and there is no evidence of the multifunctionality of substrategies. The discourse of group 2 is characterised by an overreliance on backchannels which account for 71% of all tokens. However, there are signs of awareness of the multifunctional nature of substrategies namely backchannels, problematisation and providing alternatives. A large number of backchannels are also present in the discourse of group 3 making up 47% of all tokens in comparison. Multifunctionality is noted in backchannels and providing alternatives. Group 2 and group 3 compare differentially to group 1 also in the number of nonsolidary moves employed in the institutional situation, but differ in token number and substrategies. In group 2, there are 18 tokens spread over 6 substrategies. In line with the overall data, one-third of tokens are negative backchannels. In group 3, there are 30 tokens spread over 5 substrategies. Once more these are not equally distributed as 43% make up the substrategy of 'rejection' implying that the nonsolidary moves of group 3 are less ambiguous as 'rejections' is not a multifunctional category.

Turning to an analysis of intragroup variation patterns across situations, although a repeated measures ANOVA indicated that significant differences are present in the use of strategies ($F = 2.18$, $p = 0.012$), a descriptive analysis sheds more light into how variation is achieved linguistically.

Table 7 Group 1

	Institutional	<i>f</i>	%	Conversational	<i>f</i>	%
Solidary	Grounders	5	38.5	Grounders	3	23
	Hints	6	46.1	Hints	7	53.8
				Providing Alternatives	2	15.5
Non-solidary	Questioning	1	7.7	Avoidance	1	7.7
	Avoidance	1	7.7			
Total		13	100		13	100

Within the discourse of group 1, from the perspective of inter-situational variation, there is very limited variation at a substrategic level. Hints make up the majority of solidary moves in both the institutional and conversational situations. However, the conversational situation sees the addition of providing alternatives which may indicate an awareness of differential situational demands. With regards non-solidary moves, these are minimal within the data with only two tokens in the institutional data and one in the conversational.

Moving to group 2, we can see a different pattern:

Table 8 Group 2

	Institutional	<i>f</i>	%	Conversational	<i>f</i>	%
Solidary	Backchannels	34	49.2	Backchannels	72	81
	Providing Alternatives	2	2.9	Concordance	2	2.24
	Concordance	1	1.45	Repetition	1	1.12
	Overlap	2	2.9	Providing Alternatives	2	2.24

	Imposition					
	Minimisers	2	2.9	Overlap	1	1.12
	Hints	10	14.5	Hints	9	10.04
				Problematicisation	2	2.24
Non-solidary						
Moves	Backchannels	6	8.7			
	Problematicisation	4	5.8			
	Questioning	2	2.9			
	Correction	1	1.45			
	Providing					
	Alternatives	2	2.9			
	Interruptions	3	4.4			
Total		69	100		89	100

Within group 2, inter-situational variation at a substrategic level is pronounced. 61 tokens are found in the institutional data compared to 89 in the conversational implying that the conversational situation undergoes much more mitigation. However, 80% of all tokens in the conversational situation are accounted for by backchannels. This is in comparison to 65% in the institutional situation. In contrast to group 1, the number of substrategies found in the institutional situation is greater than that in the conversational – 7 and 9 respectively. Notably, there were no nonsolidary moves deployed in the conversational. This is a strong indication of the presence of the learners varying their use of language to meet the perceived sociopragmatic demands of each situation.

Group 3

Table 9 Group 3

	Institutional	<i>f</i>	%	Conversational	<i>f</i>	%
Solidary	Hints	1	2.4	Backchannels	25	54.35
				Providing		
	Grounders	5	11.9	Alternatives	8	17.4
	Backchannels	6	14.2	Overlap	2	4.35
				Hints	6	13.05
				Grounders	1	2.17
				Problematicisation	2	4.34
Non-Solidary	Backchannels	8	19	Backchannels	2	4.34
	Providing					
	Alternatives	5	11.9			
	Interruptions	3	7.2			
	Rejections	13	31			
	Questioning	1	2.4			
Total		42	100%		46	100%

What is noteworthy in the data from group 3 is that, although, the numbers of tokens remains similar – 42 and 46, their distribution across substrategies shows notable degrees of variation.

Firstly, the institutional situation is characterised strongly as non-solidary in nature (71%) and dominated by rejections (43%). By contrast, only 4% of the tokens found in the conversational situation are non-solidary. The conversational situation is dominated by backchannels accounting for 59% of all tokens compared to 33% of all tokens in the institutional data. Although, the number of tokens may be similar in both situations, differences in their distribution across substrategies is an indication of high degrees of varying language use to meet the sociopragmatic demands of socially differentiated situations.

In conclusion, there are two main points to raise. Firstly the number of tokens and the number of substrategies showed an overall rise. However, the increase is not commensurate with time as group 2 deployed by far the greatest number of both. It should also be noted that in the strategic analysis, group 2 results were likewise unexpected. The other issue is that the pattern of variation in use by all three groups is extremely different, therefore whilst increased variation is happening, it is accompanied by differential variation patterns

Discussion and conclusion

To begin the discussion, it is necessary to return to the aim of the paper. The paper aims to explore the correlation between duration of study abroad, access to interaction and its impact on the acquisition of sociopragmatic variation patterns. Therefore the first point for discussion is does duration of SA impact on the intensity and diversity of interaction experienced by learners?

The answer to that is 'yes'. It has an impact commensurate with duration. The concept of locus of learning facilitated the exploration of qualitatively differential interaction with the language and findings show that duration has an impact on interaction with the socially-dynamic conversational locus of learning insofar as learners with SAs of more than one year experience significantly more contact with the conversational locus than those who have experienced less than 60 days. Findings for those who have spent between 120 days and a year are inconclusive indicating highly individualised contact. Converging with those findings is that interaction with the media-based locus in the guise of newspapers increases significantly for those who have accrued an SA of more than one year. Taking those two findings together, it can be stated that increased duration leads to increased interaction with socially-embedded and dynamic learning spaces; however, this may not be guaranteed until learners have accrued a minimum of one year SA experience. Prior to the one year boundary, interaction is dominated by the institutional locus – that is to say, that it is formulaic, static and replicable. When the statement by Dietrich, Klein, & Noyau that 'duration of stay is an uninteresting variable ... (and) too crude a measure' (1995, p. 277) is reconsidered, it can be claimed that it may be true, but only if learning context is conceptualised as a homogeneous mass where all contact is treated as qualitatively equal and the tools for measurement employed are not sensitive enough to differentiate.

With the knowledge that interaction with intense and diverse loci of learning is contingent on duration of SA, the next issue to explore is the impact of this on learners' sociopragmatic variation patterns. The first thing to note is that contrary to findings by Ellis, (1992); Hill, (1997); Rose, (2000); Scarcella, (1979); and Trosborg, (1995), all learners, even those who are primarily mono-contextual foreign language learners display degrees of variation. This may be accounted for due to the fact that all informants are highly proficient and are L2 users in the sense put forward by Firth & Wagner (2007). However, degrees and patterns differ significantly. Group 1 displayed minimal levels of variation at both a strategic and substrategic level. The significantly higher use of CI strategies in the institutional situation seems to be congruent with the demands of the situation (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The fact that primarily mono-contextual users align their discourse with the institutional is

not surprising as their interaction with the language in SA is characterised as mono-locally institutional. Taking into account that the informants are all FL teachers of English, it can be surmised that their primary locus of use at home is likewise institutional. Therefore, the very limited contact they have with the conversational and culturally-coded media loci is insufficient to facilitate more pronounced and complex patterns of variation. As posited by O'Grady, Lee, & Kwak (2009), the classroom context may not provide sufficient input of multiple form/function mappings.

To recap on group 2, their interaction with the loci of learning was characterised by increasing levels of contact with the conversational locus but with a slight bias still towards the institutional; and minimal contact with the culturally-coded media locus. The correlation between this and variation patterns is much less clear cut. Whilst no variation is present at a strategic level, it is witnessed substrategically as the repertoire is increased albeit highly biased towards backchannels and there is a significant increase in the use of nonsolidary moves.

With group 3, we return to more discernible correlations between contact with loci of learning and the realisation of variation. The contact of those who have an SA in excess of one year is classified as intense, balanced and culturally coded. Such interaction with a diverse range of socially-constructed loci of learning seems to lead to greater variation at a strategic level and substrategic variation which is balanced. In short, such users appear to have more control over their linguistic choices and are able to employ language more variably in ways that are congruent with the situational/individual needs.

In conclusion, very few studies have investigated the impact of SA on learners' abilities to vary their language inter-situationally. The majority have explored the acquisition of specific sociolinguistic/pragmatic variables. Previous studies (Devlin, 2013, 2014; Siegal, 1995) have all stressed the not only the importance of the SA learning context on ability to vary language, but have likewise indicated that an SA of one year or less may not provide sufficient cultural interaction within a range of socially-situated experiences to allow learners to agency to express themselves in a way which is situationally sensitive and meets the learners needs.

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