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Assessing Students' Language Proficiency

A New Model of Study Abroad Program in China

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This article describes a model that integrates an at-home preparation intensive summer program with a short-term, study abroad summer program to increase students' Chinese-language proficiency, cultural awareness, and personal career development. The results indicate that the at-home preparation program can build students' self-esteem and confidence and subsequently allows them to benefit from interacting with native speakers during their study in China. This model program also assesses students' multiskills language proficiency, including listening, oral, reading, writing, cultural competences as well as their personal development by combining measurement instruments of the SAT Chinese scores, the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), and portfolio writing. The results demonstrate a positive relationship between the scores of the SAT Chinese and the level of the OPI test. The cutoff scores for participants' selection for designing study abroad programs are also suggested.

Keywords: *language proficiency; international education; student assessment; study abroad; China*

In recent years, the number of U.S. study abroad students going to China has grown dramatically from 4,737 students in 2003 to 8,830 students in 2006 (Institute of International Education, 2007). As the need for improving language proficiency increases, many universities have made study of foreign languages in language-immersion settings a key priority. As Ingram (2005) noted, short-term study abroad programs recast foreign-language learning in greater linguistic and cultural competences. Students' cultural awareness has been investigated in a variety of study abroad programs, and the results indicate that experiences abroad deepened students' cultural understanding of the target country and enhanced their cross-cultural

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skills (Allen, 2003; Emert & Pearson, 2007; Gorka & Niesenbaum, 2001; Kitsantas, 2004; Lindsey, 2005; Mapp, McFarland, & Newell, 2007).

The study abroad program furthers the emerging trend of globalization and will enable students to be better positioned to compete in the global market place (Budden, Baraya, & Juban, 2005). In terms of the development of intercultural competence, Alred and Byram (2002) interviewed 15 former students 10 years after the study abroad experience. They found that study abroad functioned as a reference point that affected self-understanding and helped develop careers that draw upon what was learned during the experiences abroad. Also, study abroad programs can increase enrollments in advanced courses and play a major role in the ongoing effort to internationalize the undergraduate student body (Chieffo & Zipser, 2001).

Some researchers documented the domestic regular-semester language pedagogy and study abroad programs and made comparative analyses of the language proficiency of students who participated in study abroad. Compared to the domestic context, learning in the study abroad setting led to greater oral proficiency gains (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Based on the analysis of the development of the Spanish subjunctive by advanced learners through comparisons of students returning from a study abroad program and at-home instruction, Isabelli (2007) observed that the students who studied abroad were more linguistically mature than at-home students.

However, the connection between domestic instruction and study abroad immersion programs was separated until relatively recently as attention has turned to discuss students' linguistic preparation before the period of study abroad (Ife, 2000). One of the successful examples is the French program in Avignon, France, as described by Ingram (2005). The program was an integral four-credit third-semester French course to be completed in two parts: a 7-week component at Goucher College, Maryland, and a 3-week study abroad component in France with guest lectures and excursions. Ingram noted the Avignon combination program deepened participants' oral proficiency skills. It also suggested that students first do a short-term study abroad to build self-confidence in their speaking proficiency, then return to do at-home coursework, and after that, complete another study abroad program to interact with native speakers earlier during the study abroad program (Magnan & Back, 2007).

Study Abroad Programs in Chinese

Historically, although Chinese-language programs have been involved in study abroad for a long time, few research studies have been published in the area of Chinese-language studies (Chiang, 2002; Hayden, 1998; Kubler, 1997; Tseng, 2006). Kubler provided guidelines for designing study abroad programs based on his extensive personal experience. Hayden investigated the influence of a semester-long study abroad term on reading proficiency. Yao (1995) utilized the HyperCard, and created the Computer Adaptive Test for Reading Chinese (CATRC) that was adopted by

Hayden as an instrument for evaluating study abroad students' ($n = 21$) reading proficiency level. The evaluation was undertaken in September 1997 and a second evaluation was done in January 1998. Of the students who participated in the reading proficiency test, 14 participants showed improvement between the first and the second evaluation, representing 66.7% of the total of 21 participants (Hayden, 1998).

Chiang (2002) investigated the perspectives of beginning-level teaching methods, including Chinese-learning difficulties, the best learning method at the beginning level, and the effect of student-to-student conversation in class. The data were collected from 26 second-year students from different universities who finished an 8-week "Princeton in Beijing (PIB)" summer program. Although the researcher designed three questions regarding the comparison between "learning Chinese in the States" and "learning Chinese in Beijing" (p. 63), the study did not provide a detailed analysis.

One of the few study abroad studies on second-year Chinese-language learners published to date is the study by Tseng in which she investigated language gain in grammar, listening, and reading by comparing study abroad and at-home contexts. The data were collected by administering the Chinese proficiency test and the language aptitude test pre- and post-stage. The Chinese proficiency test was designed by the Center for Applied Linguistics and encompasses listening, reading, and structure. The language aptitude test was created by Second Language Testing Inc. and includes phonetic script, spelling, and words in sentences. Unfortunately, due to the unexpected difficulties in administering the oral interviews as planned, oral language proficiency tests were removed from the project. The participants were 30 nonheritage students who had completed first year Chinese at Virginia University and volunteered to participate in the study in two different learning contexts: 18 students in a domestic program during a two-semester academic year in the United States and 12 students in a summer intensive study abroad program (7.5 weeks) in China. It was noted that "a one-day workload in the study abroad program was the equivalent to a four-day workload in the American learning context" (Tseng, 2006, p. 74). In the conclusion, Tseng found the greatest advantage the study abroad learners had over the at-home learners was that study abroad learners tended to socialize more with native Chinese speakers than did at-home learners.

Purpose of the Study

Building on previous related research on study abroad programs, the present study investigates whether the model of a combination of at-home preparation immersion instruction and a study abroad program increases students' language proficiency at an advanced level and enhances their cultural awareness and personal career development. It also aims to assess students' multiskills language proficiency skills including oral, listening, reading, writing, cultural competences as well as personal career

development. The present study uses a variety of measurement instruments (ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview [OPI] test, SAT Chinese scores, and portfolio writing) during a pre- and post-study abroad program so that future program development can evaluate the model and its implications.

Design of the Study Abroad Program

Background Information

With the support of a federal grant, the strategic language initiative (SLI) program was initiated in summer 2007 with 4 foreign languages that were classified as strategic languages currently much in demand at 4 branch campuses among the 23 branch campuses of California State University (CSU): Chinese at Long Beach, Arabic at San Bernardino, Farsi at Fullerton, and Korean at Los Angeles.

To the knowledge of the current researcher, little empirical research has been devoted to assessing the combination of at-home immersion summer programs and study abroad summer programs. For students who intend to study in non-English-speaking countries, the advantage of developing competence in another language should be a primary goal (Magnan & Back, 2007). Students can develop a "greater preparation and a confidence level that would stimulate social interactions with native speakers earlier during the study abroad program" (Magnan & Back 2007, p. 54).

Team preparation was considered important to the success of the SLI program. The Chinese faculty team members from two different CSU campuses had monthly meetings starting spring 2006 before the program began, in order to develop curriculum, teaching methods, materials, and schedules. Through the preparation meetings, faculty participants became well acquainted with each other and worked collaboratively as a team.

Participants

The first question is, what is the appropriate level for the perspective students who plan to participate in a study abroad program? According to Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg (1993), students with a high level of language proficiency were more likely to use the target language than students who arrived with less proficiency. The level of language proficiency for students must be high enough to allow them to interact (Bacon, 2002) with other students. Kubler (1997) stated that the best time for most students to study in China is when they have reached the intermediate level, that is, after completing 2 years of college Chinese or its equivalent. "Good students have attained a solid grasp of basic vocabulary and grammar and are able to interact in simple Chinese with most of the Chinese speakers they meet, allowing them to take optimal advantage of the study abroad opportunity" (p. 16).

In April 2007, approximately 50 students applied for the SLI program had completed 2 years of university-level Mandarin-language instruction (or its equivalent).

Although students completed 2-year Chinese courses or its equivalent from various home university programs in southern California, their actual Chinese proficiency levels were quite varied. Some possible reasons for this diversity are different motivations, different textbooks or materials, different teaching methods, different instructional campuses, and varying class sizes (Magnan, 1986).

Thus, the next question is, what is a reliable measurement for selecting qualified participants? In the SLI program, all applicants took the SAT Chinese in April 2007, and an oral interview similar to the OPI was also conducted for each candidate by four experienced Chinese faculty members. Based on the results, the SLI program admitted 12 students from 6 different universities with their SAT Chinese scores ranging from 420 to 660. It was determined that one of the 12 students was a heritage student with a score of 660. Because it was the first cohort SLI program, we accepted her as one of the participants. These 12 students received full scholarships that covered tuition, books, international air tickets, room and board, excursions, and other extracurricular language activities.

In the 8-week intensive program in United States in summer 2007, participants included 12 students, 6 graduate assistants, and 4 faculty members. In the study abroad program in China in Summer 2008 there were 12 students, 1 graduate assistant, and a researcher who was an on-site director and a faculty member for an independent course. The ethnicities of the 12 participants were 7 Asian, 3 White, and 2 Black. The home languages for the seven Asians were Vietnamese (2 students), Cantonese (2 students), Japanese (1 student), Indonesia (1 student), and Mandarin (1 student). There were two graduate students, one postbaccalaureate, one senior, two juniors, and eight sophomores. Of the total students, there were eight women and four men. A total of eight majors were represented among the students: business (5 students), economics (1 student), architecture (1 student), history (1 student), anthropology (1 student), hospitality (1 student), Chinese studies (1 student), and interior design (1 student). The SLI program imposes a language pledge policy "where students vow during the entire period of training to speak nothing but Mandarin"; such a policy can be of great value in improving students' fluency and listening comprehension (Kubler, 1997, p. 19).

In the program that began in Summer 2007, students participated in an 8-week intensive at-home Chinese preparation course in the United States before going abroad. In this preparatory segment, students took three courses that were combined with various cultural activities. During the intervening semesters in fall 2007 and spring 2008, students continued their study of Chinese by meeting monthly with assigned mentors and taking one on-line course. After arriving in Qingdao and Beijing in Summer 2008, students took two courses with excursion activities.

Objectives and Assessment Methods

Study abroad programs must have objectives that are clear to all involved (Coleman, 1997). Based on the overall goal statement, six specific objectives for the SLI program were proposed: reading, listening, speaking, writing, cultural awareness, and

Table 1
Connection of Student Learning Objectives and Assessment

Advanced-Level Objectives	Methods of Assessment
Listening acquisition	SAT Chinese: score 700 OPI: advanced level
Reading acquisition	SAT Chinese: score 700
Speaking acquisition	OPI: advanced level
Writing acquisition	Portfolio writing: 50-page writing in Chinese
Culture acquisition	SAT Chinese: score 700 OPI: advanced level
Personal Career Development	Portfolio writing: score 700 SAT Chinese: score 700 OPI: advanced level Survey: positive response for their future careers

Note: OPI = ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview.

personal career development. The choice of a criterion for evaluating language performance is difficult (Bachman & Savignon, 1986); therefore, a combination of different measurement instruments, such as OPI test, SAT Chinese scores, portfolio writing and survey, were used to identify student learning objectives to achieve advanced level (Table 1).

To replace credit-based requirements and focus instruction on proficiency-oriented goals, the OPI test was launched in 1979 (Magnan, 1986). The test has been widely used with study abroad learners (Magnan & Back, 2007). The OPI test is a 20- to 30-min telephone interview between a certified ACTFL tester and an examinee supervised by a local test supervisor. The interview is interactive and continuously adapts to the interests and abilities of the speaker. The speaker's performance is compared to the speaking component criteria outlined in the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. The interview is double rated and an official ACTFL oral proficiency certificate stating the candidate's proficiency level is issued to the candidate. As Magnan stated, the OPI assesses only the speaking skills and cannot gather information on listening, reading, writing, and culture. In order to promote multiskills proficiency tests, the present study is the first to combine three different measurement instruments: OPI, SAT Chinese, and portfolio writing for a study abroad program.

SAT Chinese. The SAT II Chinese was launched in 1999 and consists of 85 multiple-choice questions, including listening, grammar, and reading sections to test students' understanding of Chinese in the context of contemporary Chinese culture. Some test materials are taken from real-life sources. Listening comprehension questions are based on short spoken dialogues and narratives, primarily about everyday topics. Reading comprehension questions test students' understanding of main and supporting ideas, themes, and the setting of passages.

Portfolio writing. To make the two summer programs an integrated unit, as Ingram (2005) suggested, the most important connection between study on campuses and study abroad is the independent research project. Our students were required to keep daily journals of their observations and comments on the cultural and historical sites: "They had been encountering at an accelerated rate within a very brief period of time" (Raschio, 2001, p. 537). The portfolio writing was comprised of four steps: theme development, revision of journals, presentations, and evaluation at the end of the study abroad segment. Discussion began with a group brainstorming process. For instance, students were asked to write about their reasons for studying Chinese and what they hoped to gain from it that would help them in their personal career development. The purpose of portfolio writing was to use the daily journals as a measure of making purposeful contact with the objective of developing Chinese writing skills.

Assessing language proficiency. To assess participants' language proficiency changes, students were required to take the Chinese tests in different times: before, during, and after the program. As mentioned previously, all 12 students took the SAT Chinese and oral interview test to determine admission eligibility in April 2007. In August 2007, at the end of the intensive program at CSU, Long Beach, all students took the SAT Chinese. At the end of the study abroad program, all students took the SAT Chinese and the OPI test in July and August 2008. After the program, SAT Chinese scores between the pre- and the post-program and the students' OPI scores were analyzed. The portfolio writing allowed students to revise their journals based on new vocabulary they had learned both in the United States and in China and to be graded by graduate assistant and faculty members.

In order to assess the program outcomes, at the end of the program, all students completed the postprogram questionnaire and answered questions in several different areas under the supervision of the researcher (see Appendix). The evaluation was conducted in Beijing, China. The questionnaire served to gather students' perspectives on the curriculum, teaching, and business workshops. The open-ended questions provided insights into students' opinions regarding the entire 2007-2008 SLI program, its efficacy in advancing their Chinese-language ability, and the most effective aspects of the study abroad program in China.

At-home summer immersion preparation program. An 8-week at-home intensive residency program in Mandarin Chinese offered 120 hr of classroom contact from June 26 to August 5, 2007. Three American professors from the participating colleges taught three Chinese courses (Chinese culture and tradition, advanced Chinese listening and speaking, and advanced reading). Six graduate assistants, who were native Mandarin Chinese speakers from mainland China and Taiwan, lived with the twelve students to provide individualized tutoring under the supervision of a faculty member as activity coordinator. The program offered 6 hr of lecture classes in the morning and the afternoon, 50-min graduate assistant-to-student tutoring sessions, 2-hr

cultural activities in the afternoon, and 1-hr graduate assistant-to-student tutoring sessions in the evening.

All students were required to eat together in campus cafeterias. In addition to classroom language instruction, cultural events were also arranged such as shopping in Chinatown, visiting a Chinese TV station, watching Chinese movies, playing Chinese games, attending a guest lecture on Chinese calligraphy, and hands-on calligraphy practice, and so on. At the end of the program, students presented a Chinese skit/show in Chinese to celebrate the program. These kinds of at-home teaching and cultural activities can help students understand Chinese culture and life in southern California, which will in turn relate to the study of Chinese and the excursions in China.

Intervening semesters. During the 11-month academic year from August 2007 to June 2008 before the study abroad segment in China, SLI participants continued to engage in language development activities, including monthly face-to-face mentoring, graduate student tutorials, and online coursework. All learning activities were designed to advance students' language proficiency and to connect their language learning with the content of their academic disciplines via authentic written materials and oral interaction. Faculty members from the students' disciplines at their home institutions who possess native-language skills served as mentors during the 11-month academic year. On-line language materials, which matched to the student's abilities and academic needs, provided the majority of the reading and writing assignments. In addition to meetings with the mentor and on-line learning, periodic face-to-face intensive colloquia with SLI program faculty members were launched to ensure students' oral language proficiency development. Consistent tracking of student progress and feedback was provided via weekly and monthly activity reports.

Study Aboard Program in China

The SLI program was affiliated with a local Chinese university in Qingdao, China, for 4 weeks, including travel to Beijing for 2 weeks. In summer 2008, the students took two courses: (1) contemporary Chinese culture and (2) special topics in Chinese. The first was taught by local instructors in Qingdao, based on various topics drawn from contemporary culture and society, and the second course was taught by U.S. faculty, focusing on students' portfolio writing. As the on-site director, the researcher observed most of the classes as they were taught, and on the basis of the researcher's opinions and suggestions, there were discussions with the instructors regarding curriculum design.

Times for tutorials were set up from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. from Monday to Thursday with Chinese tutors who were college students from the English department, in particular, and also from other departments as recommended by local instructors. Students could discuss what they learned during the day and from writing journals. Students

also visited various historical, cultural, educational, and business entities, including business workshops presented by three business executives in Beijing.

Results

Curriculum

Students appreciated the vocabulary building and cultural topics from the courses. One student stated:

Both the summer at home and the summer in China are necessary for this program. Last summer, the program allowed me to be comfortable speaking Chinese, and this summer really tested that. . . . The combination is crucial.

In addition, the student said, "I learned some useful vocabulary. Class is important for vocabulary ." This echoes the finding of Kubler (1997) that one of the advantages of study abroad is learning new vocabulary from the environment. We found that a majority of students (66.7%) indicated a preference for tutoring sessions with feedback such as "useful most of the time" and "necessary." Another stated:

Student 8: I really appreciated Laoshi's [professor] setting us up with other Qingdao students (non-English majors). It would have been useful to have more time with them.

Portfolio Writing in China

To complete the portfolio, all students registered in an independent study course in China, that is, special topics in Chinese, which was taught by the researcher. Students were asked to focus on their themes or topics that were highlighted in the journals they wrote both in the United States and China.

In the presentation stage, students presented their portfolio-writing final draft in Chinese in Qingdao, which was required as a mid-term test for Qingdao local college instructors and students. Based on feedback from graduate assistants and faculty members, the presentation of final portfolio writing was made for some local people and faculty members in Beijing. The portfolio was required to be submitted with a minimum of 50 pages in Chinese text.

The topics chosen were as follows:

An American Wushu warrior (talking about a 12-year career in professional national martial arts athletics),

Colorful choice (talking about a future career in architecture by making comparisons of Western buildings and Chinese buildings),

China gave my life a purpose (talking about how Chinese history and philosophy changed the student's thinking),

A journey to the East, my life's turning point (talking about learning Chinese and relating it to the student's personal development, and so on.

The evaluations of the portfolio writing were positive ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.165$). Most students gave positive feedback on the two portfolio presentation assignments, which were both necessary and integral to the program.

Excursions

Each student attended local cultural and historical sites to experience Chinese culture and society. In order to handle the sensitive issues of security and food safety, all the excursions and meals in campus cafeteria were group activities, and students were instructed to stay with group members. Former researchers, Ingram (2005) and Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2002), stated the benefits of grouping Americans together. As a group, students were given a guided tour of excursion to various historical and cultural locations in Qingdao and Beijing, including a visit the Qingdao beer factory, Confucius' house, the Forbidden City, and the WangFuJing (shopping street). Students also went to the cinema in a local theater to watch a Chinese movie "Wo Men Zhe Yi Jia" (One Family) with local people. Three group excursion activities were ranked high in student appreciation: going to the cinema, followed closely by climbing Mount Tai and visiting Confucius' house.

About 2 weeks later in China, students became more familiar with the environment and asked for "outside (solo) activities to have us put our skills into use." The program abbreviated the number of group travel schedule and provided more chances for small groups and individuals to communicate with local persons, such as eating outside and shopping on their own. To cite one instance, the group took a subway to a Peking Hotel to meet with business executives for workshops. Following the workshops, students returned home on their own by taking the subway, bus, or taxi and talking with locals or taxi drivers. Students indicated the following:

Student 9: I really feel that this year was more about Chinese culture. The only times I felt I could use my Chinese or practice it was when I went off campus. For example, whenever we went shopping or out to eat I found myself speaking more Chinese. . . . I think if we interacted more with locals we could practice and learn Chinese a lot better.

Student 10: Having the ability to go out on our own, especially shopping, in China really gave my language abilities a major boost. I had the opportunity to meet with my professor from Long Beach and she really noticed my language skills improved.

As was seen with group travel and group meals, these findings seem to indicate that students prefer to have more individual opportunities to communicate and use their language in the target-language setting. "This is because group travel isolated

students from native speakers, diminishing opportunities to participate in authentic communicative exchanges” (Adams, 2006, p. 268). If the study abroad program were to reduce the number of group-travel opportunities, it seems likely that students would have more opportunities to communicate with local Chinese speakers. According to Adams, group travel should be minimized, and the students should be encouraged to interact with native speakers in the language chosen for the study abroad program. Three students commented:

Student 3: The program in China has helped me with the ability to understand different people’s accents. I learned little from class, but more from interaction.

Student 6: I think the most effective way to learning the Chinese language was through our communication with local students and residents. Oftentimes, we were in our own bubble, and it would help to have more interactions with the locals.

Maganan and Back (2007) demonstrated that students’ speaking proficiency for social interaction with native speakers improved significantly during their stay abroad. Students speaking with Americans peers may impede proficiency development. Through interaction with native speakers, study abroad learners expanded opportunities to improve linguistic accuracy, as noted by Isabelli-García (2006). Therefore, a combination of group travel, small group, and individual activities is needed.

Business Workshops

Two business workshops for students were designed in Beijing. The goal of the business workshops was to provide students with real-world learning environments in which students could use the language they had learned from textbooks and in classrooms. One workshop regarding domestic business was presented in Chinese by two domestic businessmen who have more than 15 years experience in the antiques trade but seldom conduct international business. The domestic workshop received positive feedback ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.31$). Twelve students filled out the questionnaires and responses for the domestic business workshops:

Student 11: This was an informative workshop because we were able to ask real Chinese business men about their business structure as well as challenges that they face. I enjoyed receiving their Chinese perspective about doing business.

Students also visited an international company, Colliers International Beijing branch, one of the top real estate corporations in the United States. The presenter was a White American senior executive with bilingual capabilities, both Chinese and English, with more than 25 years of international business experience. The workshop lectures were conducted in company meeting room and generated students’

interest about doing business as their future careers in China. Students' evaluations were more positive as indicated in the comments about the International Business workshops ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .985$). The responses included the following:

Student 9: I think Jim's position in China is a reasonable goal for a Chinese-language learner to achieve. It was good hearing his perspective on how a foreigner does business in China.

Student 11: This was great because we were able to see and hear first hand from a foreigner who has made it in China.

Providing workshops with international business persons in Chinese (partly in English) encourages students to be successful bilingually. The business workshops in Beijing improved students' career prospects relating to Chinese in business law, real estate, international business, architecture, and accounting.

Overall Proficiency Before and After SLI Study Abroad Program

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the analysis of results before and after the SLI study abroad program in Chinese as a foreign language. These data were submitted to determine whether students' language proficiency was improved by a comparison of pre- and post-program. Unfortunately, one student did not participate in the postprogram SAT Chinese and OPI test because she was staying in Shanghai for another one-semester study abroad program. Thus, the number of students included in the postprogram tests was 11 of 12 students.

The comparisons revealed that all students improved their level of Chinese proficiency. No student saw his or her SAT scores decrease. Some students made more rapid progress, whereas some made relatively slow progress. The results show that there is a positive relationship between the performance levels in OPI and SAT Chinese. As Table 2 shows, after study abroad in China, 8 of 11 students (73%) reached the advanced level of the OPI test, and 7 of these 8 students' SAT Chinese scores of post-China program were between 700 and 760. Another 3 of the 11 students (27%) who achieved at the OPI intermediate level indicated that their SAT scores were between 570 and 660.

A closer look at 8 students at OPI advanced level indicates that they all began at more than a score of 490 before the preparation program and reached at least 590 before the study abroad program. In terms of ethnic background, Student 3, with SAT Chinese score of 490, and from a Cantonese family in which her parents did not communicate in Mandarin Chinese, reached an advantage level in her language proficiency. However, Student 2, with a SAT Chinese score of 460, and who did not have an Asian cultural background, achieved the level of intermediate middle. In other words, the heritage background influenced students' motivation to learn Chinese (Liu & Shibata, 2008).

Table 2
Results Pre- and Post-China Program

Students	Ethnic background	Preprogram		Post-China Program	
		SAT Chinese Scores: Prior to Program (April 2007)	SAT Chinese Scores: Intensive Summer Program in the United States (June 26 to August 5, 2007)	SAT Chinese Scores: Study Abroad in China (June 10 to July 20, 2008)	OPI: Study Abroad in China (June 10 to July 20, 2008)
1	White	420	520	600	Intermediate middle
2	White	460	550	570	Intermediate middle
3	Cantonese (listening and speaking)	490	650	700	Advanced low
4	Indonesia	500	640	660	Intermediate high
5	Black	520	640	630	Advanced low
6	Vietnamese	520	590	780	Advanced low
7	Black	530	640	770	Advanced middle
8	Vietnamese	610	690	750	Advanced low
9	White	650	650	760	Advanced middle
10	Japanese	650	750	770	Advance middle
11	Heritage Mandarin (listening and speaking)	660	710	760	Advanced high

Note: $N = 11$. OPI = ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview; advanced high, $n = 1$; advanced mid, $n = 3$; advanced low, $n = 4$; intermediate high, $n = 1$; intermediate mid, $n = 2$.

The data seem to indicate that learners whose SAT Chinese average scores at 590, with SAT scores ranging from 520 to 630 preprogram, are likely to achieve an average SAT Chinese score of 750, and their OPI scores were at advanced level by the end of the study abroad program. The students whose SAT scores were more than 700 typically continue with their professional studies of choice, focusing on specific professions and personal career development, such as business, architecture, anthropology, law, and nutrition science, and so on. Therefore, the cutoff score for the future study abroad suggests that students who scored more than 590 in their SAT Chinese, preprogram, will likely achieve the advanced level within the same model program for two summers.

Overall Assessment of the Program

At the end of the program, students were asked to evaluate the entire 2007-2008 program. Most of the students, 83.3% ($n = 10$), indicated that the program helped

them improve their Chinese and advance their careers, whereas 16.7% ($n = 2$) of the students said that the program helped them improve their Chinese only. The prior, intensive, at-home coursework helped them interact with native students during study abroad in China. These are some of the sample comments from students:

Student 8: It was a valuable opportunity to apply what I have learned (both language and culture) in everyday life. I am certain [that] the practice will benefit any future endeavors.

Student 6: In general, I have noticed that my experiences in China have proven my SLI learning to be effective. I seldom had problems communicating in Chinese while I was in China. It would have been really helpful if the information we learned in class was readily applicable to our travels in China.

Student 11: I felt that this summer's SLI program was great in that it focused more on future job prospects. Also, we had a lot of opportunities to travel and experience Chinese culture.

Students indicated that the most effective aspects of the summer program in China were the tutoring sessions, portfolio writing, and workshops. One student wrote the following:

Student 11: The most effective aspects of the summer program were: (1) The presentations [portfolio writing] forced us to present in Chinese; although it was a lot of work, it was very helpful. (2) Our excursions and workshops, they helped us get a better understanding of Chinese culture and business.

Students in different majors, such as business, history, business, architecture, and so on, have used study abroad as a special opportunity to forge language or culture capacities approaching a professional level. Students' perceived career choices related to Chinese and China were enhanced after the study abroad experience. Students often improve their foreign-language proficiency by learning about another culture and society, as "This is more likely to be offered abroad than at home, and are better qualified for a professional career abroad" (Teichler, 2004, p. 397).

Conclusion

This study presents a combination program of an at-home, intensive, residency summer instruction and a study abroad program. The goal of the program is to increase students' language proficiency and enhance their cultural awareness and personal development. The results demonstrate that this goal has been met. The solid predeparture intensive preparation program was an important factor in the success of the study abroad program. The at-home, intensive residency program built students' self-confidence and lessened anxiety, whereas the study abroad program facilitated the interaction with native speakers in China. However, there is one major limitation to the present study. The study has examined a relatively small sample

involving only 11 students with different amount of exposure to the target language during the 15-month period. Future studies may need to examine larger samples of study abroad learners.

This study is foremost an exploration of the applicability of SAT Chinese, OPI, and portfolio writing to measure the outcomes of a model program. Like most study abroad programs, this program is confronted with students of varying skill levels from different home universities. Therefore, a preprogram test is needed. Students who obtain the cutoff scores of SAT Chinese at 590 can reach an advanced proficiency level through the intensive preparatory program and the study abroad program. Thus, it shows a positive relationship between SAT Chinese score and OPI test performance level.

This model program enhanced the students' career prospects related to Chinese and China. One of the recommendations for future research stemming from this empirical research study is that the target language be used at workplaces by providing internship opportunities to benefit students' individual careers. More research needs to be conducted to examine the efficacy of this model when applied to different levels of language proficiency and in other less commonly taught languages.

Appendix

Summer Study Abroad Program Evaluation Form

1. Please rate the effectiveness of the 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. tutoring sessions.
 1. Not helpful
 2. Somewhat helpful
 3. Undecided
 4. Helpful
 5. Very Helpful
 2. Do you feel that the portfolio writing was effective?
 1. Not helpful
 2. Somewhat helpful
 3. Undecided
 4. Helpful
 5. Very helpful
 3. Do you feel that the China domestic business workshop was effective?
 1. Not helpful
 2. Somewhat helpful
 3. Undecided
 4. Helpful
 5. Very helpful
 4. Do you feel that the international business workshop was effective?
 1. Not helpful
 2. Somewhat helpful
 3. Undecided
-

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

-
4. Helpful
 5. Very helpful
 5. What do you think about the entire SLI 2007-2008 program?
It helped me to improve my Chinese and advance my career.
It helped me to improve my Chinese only.
It helped me to advance my career only.
It did not help me improve my Chinese nor advance my career.
 6. What was the most effective aspect of the summer program that helped you advance your Chinese-language ability?
 7. Please write any comments regarding the summer program.
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