

Vasi Mocanu/Enric Llurda

# Constructing and Reconstructing Attitudes towards Language Learning in Study Abroad

## 1 Introduction

Study abroad has been defined by Kinginger (2009: 11) as “a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes”. In this chapter, *study abroad* refers to a period of time spent at a foreign university, which can last for one or two semesters and where the study of or studying through a second language is implied, even though it might not always be the main purpose of the sojourn.

Study abroad has consolidated as an attractive initiative for those who want to learn an additional language (Allen 2002; Isabelli-Garcia 2006; Kinginger 2011; Llanes/Muñoz 2009; Segalowitz/Freed 2004). A considerable amount of research on the topic has focused on its impact upon the acquisition of a foreign or second language, and in spite of the fact that the results are far from pointing to a single clear direction, some voices have claimed that study abroad provides a good environment for language learning. For instance, Kinginger (2013: 341) notes that:

[...] particularly in areas related to social interaction, such as awareness and use of sociolinguistic variants or command of pragmatics, the research has provided concrete and convincing evidence to substantiate the claim that students learn languages while abroad.

However, Kinginger (2011) also points to the fact that study abroad is not a magic formula for language learning *per se* and recommends programs that foster observation, participation, and reflection by the students about the sociolinguistic context. Similarly, DuFon and Churchill (2006) affirm that feelings of being rejected by the host culture or a certain degree of superficiality in the relationship with the host members can lead to withdrawal and reduce success in second language acquisition. And yet, these authors put the finger on the fact that the positions the learners adopt when encountering sociocultural and linguistic differences may also play a role in restricting or facilitating their access to the target communities. Consequently, investigating language learning in study abroad contexts can be an ambitious endeavor, since there are many factors to be taken into account, such as the identities, motives, or desires of the learners, as

well as the opportunities to learn and the ways they position themselves under these circumstances.

Besides language learning, which seems to be one of the highest assets of the experience (e.g. Kinginger 2013), study abroad might also be seen as a way to raise world citizens who are able to deal with cultural, linguistic and other social issues in a cross-cultural way. In this respect, a period studying abroad could give the participants the chance to see the world through a different lens provided by a different language, which might increase their opportunities on the global market. For instance, de Courtivron (2000), as cited in Brockington and Wiedenhoef (2009: 121–122), affirms that:

We are told that technical proficiency will one day become the only real passport needed by a citizen of the world. But such a passport will not be enough to flourish in the cultures to which it gives access. Communication skills, the ability to interact with others, historical awareness, analytical abilities, the mastery of several languages, and the cross-cultural knowledge to hear our polyphonic planet are some of the most important tools that we can provide students. And it is equally important, in my view, that we teach them how to think about, and through, this new fluidity.

In connection to the *passport* that gives access to different cultures, supranational institutions such as the European Union have been working for a few years on training European citizens to become agents in different sociocultural and linguistic environments. However, Brockington and Wiedenhoef (2009) remark that while study abroad is perceived as the climax of intercultural experience, this is often not the case due to a lack of tools of the students to engage and learn from their sojourn, as well as to a lack of structured reflection after the stay abroad experience.

This chapter draws from a research project in which a mixed-methods longitudinal framework was adopted to approach the issue of identity, investment and language learning in study abroad. It did so by examining the sense of belonging, imagined identities, attitudes towards languages and cultural differences, expectations, and degree of investment in both personal and professional learning among European higher education students. The general aim of the project was to investigate the impact of the participation in the Erasmus study abroad program on the identities, language attitudes and uses, and employability, as reported by international university students in three different contexts: Finland, Romania, and Catalonia (Spain).

The goals of this study in particular are to investigate how attitudes towards languages and language learning are constructed and reconstructed by European students during a study abroad period. Therefore, this chapter examines the attitudes of international students towards languages present in

the three abovementioned contexts and towards language learning, as well as the participants' expectations in relation to language use at the beginning of their stay abroad and their linguistic practices eventually realized during their sojourn.

## **2 Methodology**

### **2.1 Data and participants**

The quantitative data presented in this chapter come from a project which included a total of 465 participants, all of them international students enrolled in a study abroad program for either one or two semesters in the three abovementioned contexts: Oulu (Finland), Bucharest (Romania), and Lleida (Catalonia, Spain). However, the results that are presented here derive from a smaller pool of 155 participants from the total of 465, since our analysis exclusively focuses on those students who come from a European country and have participated in both phases of the data collection. Therefore, we will report on data elicited from questionnaires administered at the beginning and at the end of the stay abroad to a number of 80 European international students who studied in Oulu, 35 participants who did so in Lleida, and 40 international students in Bucharest.

The sample was composed by 87 males and 68 females from 26 different nationalities, and their average age was 22.2. The highest number of students comes from Italy (30), followed by Germany (27), France (18), Spain (18), the Czech Republic (10) and the Netherlands (10). The other 42 students represent Poland (7), Belgium (5), Austria (4), Slovakia (4), Bulgaria (2), Finland (2), Greece (2), Hungary (2), Sweden (2), Turkey (2), Bosnia (1), Lithuania (1), Moldova (1), Norway (1), Portugal (1), Romania (1), Slovenia (1), and Switzerland (1). Finally, 2 students have nationalities of countries outside the EU, namely Cameroonian and Kazak. The reason why these participants were included in the sample is that, in fact, they came from European countries where they were either living or pursuing a university degree, and so they were enrolled in their stay abroad through the Erasmus program. Finally, in relation to the length of their stay abroad, 116 participants spent one semester abroad, and the remaining 39 participants spent two semesters abroad.

### **2.2 Instruments**

The instrument used in this study was a Likert-scale questionnaire, organized around three themes: identity, prospects of future mobility, and language attitudinal factors. The items consisted of a set of statements to which the participants had to express their agreement or disagreement by selecting from 1 (strongly

disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire could be completed in approximately 25 minutes and was distributed in print to the international students in Oulu and Bucharest during the welcoming session and after an initial Catalan language and culture test to those in Lleida (PRE questionnaire), and electronically using Google Forms after having individually contacted all the available students via email or Facebook (POST questionnaire). The POST questionnaire was almost identical to the PRE questionnaire version. The only differences were (i) the addition of a few questions in the POST questionnaire, in which the participants were asked to reflect about their past experience; (ii) and the use of future verbal tenses to express aspects related to their expected experiences (PRE version) and past tenses (POST version). Questionnaires given to participants in the three different contexts also differed in the specific mentioning of the local context or the local language, which in the case of Lleida included references to both local languages: Catalan and Spanish.

The questionnaire contained items dealing with the following topics, directly linked to the specific objectives of the study:

1. Imagined identities and European citizenship (27 questions).
2. Multilingualism, language learning and attitudes to languages (15 questions).
3. Investment, expectations and perceived outcomes of the stay at personal/academic/professional level (12 questions).
4. Language use, linguistic practices, and perceived language-related outcomes (13 questions added in the POST version).

Therefore, the only differences between the PRE and the POST versions of the questionnaire were in the different verbal tenses used to express aspects related to their expected experiences (future in the PRE version and past in the POST version), and the addition of 13 questions in the POST questionnaire, in which the participants were asked to reflect about their past experience. The questionnaire was distributed in English in the three contexts, but the participants in the Lleida group were given the option to choose between English and Spanish, according to their preference.

Given that the main goal of this paper is to understand the attitudes of the students towards the languages they encountered in the respective contexts in which their stay took place, we analyzed the answers to a set of eleven questions that were addressed in both the PRE and POST versions of the questionnaire. As stated above the verb tenses were altered to reflect either the participants' initial expectations for what was coming ahead or their views on their experience at the end of the stay abroad period. Students were asked to give a mark (1 = not

at all; 2 = not really; 3 = so-so; 4 = quite a lot; 5 = very much) to the following questions:

Question 1: To what extent did the opportunity to learn one of the following languages motivate you to take part in this mobility program? (Finnish/ Catalan/Spanish/Romanian; English; Other languages)

Question 2: I want to spend/ I spent most of my stay with (local people/other international students/people from my own country/native speakers of English).

Questions 3-11: A set of 9 questions on linguistic attitudes and expectations towards the local languages and English:

- I will never use Finnish/Romanian/Spanish/Catalan, so it is/was useless to learn it.
- We should all try/have tried to use Finnish/Romanian/Spanish/Catalan frequently.
- In my current context, learning Finnish/Romanian/Spanish/Catalan is/ was more important than learning English.
- I like or I would like to speak Finnish/Romanian/Spanish/Catalan.
- I like listening to people speaking Finnish/Romanian/Spanish/Catalan.
- I will never use English, so it is/was useless to learn it.
- We should all try/have tried to use English frequently.
- I like or I would like to speak English.
- I like listening to people speaking English.

### 2.3 Data analysis procedure

Once all the data from the PRE and POST questionnaire were obtained, they were introduced in an SPSS spreadsheet for statistical analysis. As indicated above, only the European participants (total = 155) who had completed both questionnaires were included in the analysis. This analysis was conducted in a number of stages. First, the three contexts at both the PRE and the POST moments were compared by means of a one-way ANOVA test. When significant differences appeared in the one-way ANOVA test, a post-hoc TukeyHSD test was conducted in order to find exactly the contexts that were responsible for those differences. Once the three contexts were compared, a repeated measures ANOVA test was also conducted in order to compare each participant's results at the PRE and POST moments, and determine whether there were significant changes in their responses that could be attributed to the stay abroad experience.

**Tab. 1:** Language learning motivation: mean scores.

Language	Oulu		Lleida		Bucharest	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
English	4.4	4.4/	4	3.7/#	4.5	4.3#
Local language (Finnish/Catalan/Romanian)	2.9/	2.6/	3	2.6	3	2.6
Local language (Finnish/Spanish/Romanian)	2.9/*	2.6/<	4.5*+	4.6#<	3+	2.6#
Other languages	2.*+	2.3*	2.	2.1	2.6+	2.3

\*+/#< p < .05

### 3 Results and discussion

#### 3.1 Question 1: To what extent did the opportunity to learn one of the following languages motivate you to take part in this mobility program?

As can be observed in Tab. 1, the one way ANOVA test revealed significant differences between the three settings in the PRE questionnaire with respect to two items: local languages and other languages.

As both Spanish and Catalan are local languages encountered by students in Lleida, the item on local languages was analyzed twice: once comparing Finnish, Romanian, and Spanish ( $F(2, 152)=22.63, p<.05$ ), and then comparing Finnish, Romanian, and Catalan (no significant difference). Post-hoc Tukey HSD comparisons revealed significant differences between the mean score in the Lleida group – with regard to Spanish – ( $M=4.5, SD=.98$ ) and both the Oulu ( $M=2.9, SD=1.18$ ) and the Bucharest group ( $M=3, SD=1.34$ ). This points to the fact that right from the beginning, the importance of the local language Spanish is a considerably more significant determinant for the choice of the stay abroad than both Finnish in Oulu and Romanian in Bucharest.

The second item with respect to which significant differences between the three groups were found in the PRE test was “other languages” ( $F(2, 129)=4.22, p<.05$ ). The Tukey HSD post-hoc test signaled that the mean score for the Bucharest group ( $M=2.6, SD=1.26$ ) was significantly higher than the mean score for the Oulu group ( $M=2, SD=1.12$ ) and almost significantly higher than the one in the Lleida group ( $M=2, SD=1.13$ ). Worth mentioning is also the fact that the mean score for the item “English” in the Lleida group was clearly lower than the mean scores for the same item in the Bucharest and Oulu groups, but no significant difference was found, possibly due to the limited number of participants in the Lleida and Bucharest groups. Were all groups made up of the same number

of participants as in Oulu, no doubt more significant results would have been obtained, as means appear to be different enough as to indicate so. Finally, the lack of significant differences when the local languages Catalan, Finnish, and Romanian were compared could be regarded as an indicator of the fact that the motivation for learning the three local languages at the beginning of the stay was similar. Considering this together with the significant differences between the contexts when Spanish is considered, we may get some clues about language commodification and the economic value of languages in study abroad, and how Spanish is one of the most internationally marketable languages with a strong appeal to prospective learners, whereas Finnish, Romanian, and Catalan are regarded as much less valuable languages.

At the end of the sojourn, when the same ANOVA test was run, the language motivations from the beginning appeared to be regarded by the participants in a different way. In the first place, there were significant differences between the groups concerning the first item, "English" ( $F(2, 154)=5.06, p<.05$ ), as the mean score for the Lleida group ( $M=3.7, SD=1.3$ ) was significantly lower than the mean score for both the Bucharest ( $M=4.3, SD=1.07$ ) and the Oulu group ( $M=4.4, SD=1.05$ ). The second significant difference was found with respect to the item "local language" comparing Finnish, Romanian, and Spanish ( $F(2, 154)=41.64, p<.05$ ). In this case, there was a coincidence of results in the PRE and POST questionnaires. Once more, the mean score assigned to Spanish ( $M=4.6, SD=.77$ ) was significantly higher than the mean scores assigned to both Finnish ( $M=2.6, SD=1.29$ ) and Romanian ( $M=2.6, SD=1.15$ ). Furthermore, at the end of the stay, the perceived motivation for learning other languages had been homogenized among the three groups.

When a Repeated Measures ANOVA test was implemented to compare the answers given at the two moments of observation (PRE and POST), significant differences were also revealed with regard to two items. The first one was the motivation to learn Finnish in Oulu (Wilks' Lambda=.91,  $F(1, 78)=7.6, p<.05$ ), which had significantly decreased by the end of the stay. In fact, a similar trend is observed concerning all local languages (Catalan, Romanian, and Finnish) with the exception of Spanish, but in the case of Romanian and Catalan, differences are not significant, probably due to the limited number of participants in those two groups. The second item that produced significant differences was the motivation to learn other languages in the Oulu group, which is perceived as significantly higher at the end of the study abroad sojourn (Wilks' Lambda=.92,  $F(1, 63)=5.15, p<.05$ ).

The above results show that international students hold similar perceptions towards the local languages encountered in their settings with the exception of

Spanish, which seems to be playing in a league of its own. Whereas Finnish, Romanian, and Catalan are perceived in the low-middle range of the 1–5 scale, Spanish stands out from the rest with very high scores significantly different from the scores of the other local languages both at the beginning and at the end of the stay abroad. This clearly speaks of the high international prominence of Spanish as one of the most valued world languages, in opposition to the clearly more modest roles of the other local languages in this study. Noteworthy is the lack of differences between Catalan and either Finnish or Romanian. Being the former a language without full international recognition as a national language and having no official status in the European Union, there would be ground to assume that international students would more enthusiastically embrace Finnish or Romanian than Catalan, but this is not the case. The perception of Catalan is also particular in that it shares its space with Spanish, and this clearly brings certain tensions and conflicts as international students mostly aim at increasing their proficiency in Spanish but have no specific desire to learn Catalan.

Another finding that is worth discussing is the decrease in the value attached to all local languages (with the exception of Spanish) after the sojourn. From an initial mean of 3 or 2.9, the score goes down to 2.6 for the three languages at the end of the sojourn. Finnish, Catalan, and Romanian were all rated lower at the end of the stay, though only in the case of Finnish the difference was significant.

The motivation to learn languages other than English and the local one was significantly higher among students in Bucharest than in Oulu at the beginning of the stay. Yet, no significant difference appeared at the end of the period abroad. Instead, what we see is a homogenizing trend across contexts at the end of the stay abroad. This may be so because the experience with English and the possibility of using languages that are different from English and the local one/s is rather similar in the three contexts. This question was identical in both versions of the questionnaire. They were asked to reflect on the relative importance they had allocated to the opportunity to learn different languages in their choice of place of destination. The most important outcomes here were, first, the low importance generally given to the opportunity to establish contact with speakers of other languages, and the slightly higher score in Bucharest; and second, the increase in the appreciation of other languages in Oulu after the stay abroad. All in all, a coherent pattern may be observed in the decrease of appreciation of Finnish and the increase in the value given to other languages in Finland after having experienced the study abroad life.

Students in Lleida had a very obvious goal to learn Spanish as well as English. In the other two contexts, English was the language that was profiled as the main

**Tab. 2:** Motivation to spend time with/time actually spent with different groups of people.

Motivation to spend time with...	Oulu		Lleida		Bucharest	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Local people	3.9*	3*	3.8-	3.2-	4.1+	3.1+
Other international students	4.2*+	4.4	4.6*	4.5	4.6+	4.6
People from my own country	2.6*	3.1*	2.6-	3.3-	2.4+	3.5+
Native speakers of English	3.4*	2.2#*	3.3+	2.5#+	3.6-	1.3#-

-\*+/# p < .05

linguistic motivation. It appears that all students had a clear awareness of the role of English as an international lingua franca. Yet, those in Lleida at the end of the stay abroad displayed significantly lower scores with regard to English than those in the other two contexts, thus reinforcing the perception that learning Spanish was a prominent factor in the choice of Lleida, at the expense of a lower prominence of English.

### 3.2 Question 2: I want to spend/ I spent most of my stay with (local people/other international students/people from my own country/native speakers of English)

With respect to the people the participants would like to spend most of their time with, as presented in Tab. 2, it seems that, by far, the students wish to spend most of their time with other international students, followed by local people, and native speakers of English. The lowest score is obtained by people from their own country of origin. On the whole, there was a contrast between the desire to spend their stay with local people, which was considerably high, and the desire to learn the local languages (Finnish, Romanian, and Catalan), which was lower (see Tab. 1 again). Furthermore, the willingness to spend their stay with people from their own countries is low, an indicator of a rather negative predisposition to it. In fact, the wish of the participants to spend their time abroad with native speakers of English was higher than the one with people from their own countries, even though none of the host institutions were in a country where English is the native language. Significant differences were found in the PRE test only with respect to the second item: "other international students" (ANOVA:  $F(2, 152)=6.93, p<.05$ ). The Tukey post-hoc comparison showed that the mean score in Oulu ( $M=4.2, SD=.74$ ) was significantly lower than both in Lleida ( $M=4.6, SD=.55$ ) and in Bucharest ( $M=4.6, SD=.67$ ).

When we compared the outcomes of the students' actual experience expressed in the POST questionnaire, we found significant differences only with regard to the last item: "native speakers of English" ( $F(2, 152)=16.46, p<.05$ ). The post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Bucharest ( $M=1.3, SD=.60$ ) was significantly lower than the mean score for both Oulu ( $M=2.2, SD=.97$ ) and Lleida ( $M=2.5, SD=1.26$ ), which points to a significantly lower contact with native speakers of English in Bucharest than in Oulu and Lleida.

In relation to differences between their initial expectations and their reported experiences at the end of the sojourn, significant differences were revealed by the Repeated Measures ANOVA test. With regard to the item "local people", the actual outcomes were significantly lower than previous expectations in the three groups: Oulu (Wilks' Lambda=.71,  $F(1, 79)=31.03, p<.05$ ), Lleida (Wilks' Lambda=.78,  $F(1, 34)=9.57, p<.05$ ), and Bucharest (Wilks' Lambda=.57,  $F(1, 39)=29.09, p<.05$ ). Significant differences were also found in the three groups concerning the item "people from my own country", where the final outcomes were significantly higher than the initial expectations: Oulu (Wilks' Lambda=.85,  $F(1, 79)=13.60, p<.05$ ), Lleida (Wilks' Lambda=.79,  $F(1, 34)=8.87, p<.05$ ), and Bucharest (Wilks' Lambda=.71,  $F(1, 39)=15.27, p<.05$ ). Furthermore, the outcomes regarding time expected to be spent with "native speakers of English" were significantly lower than the expectations in the three groups: Oulu (Wilks' Lambda=.63,  $F(1, 79)=46.38$ ), Lleida (Wilks' Lambda=.79,  $F(1, 34)=8.89$ ) and Bucharest (Wilks' Lambda=.22,  $F(1, 39)=134.33$ ). These results indicate a considerable disparity between expectations and reality.

It is clear from the above results that international students initially desired to spend most of their time with other international students, and to a lesser extent with local students, followed by native speakers of English. Desire to spend time with co-nationals was by far the lowest, with scores that range from 2.4 to 2.6 in the 1–5 scale. The high score obtained by the desire to spend time with local students (3.9/3.8/4.1) is in stark contrast with the low score obtained in question 1 by the local language as a motivating factor in the choice of context (2.9/3/3).<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is interesting to note that the high value given to Spanish does not correspond to a higher desire to interact with local people in Lleida than in the other two contexts. When we look at the results at the end of the stay abroad, these reflect the participants' perception of the actual time spent with different people, and so it may be considered a kind of reality check of their expectations vis-à-vis

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1 The value given for the Lleida context corresponds to Catalan (Spanish score was much higher: 4.5).

their actual experiences. What we see here is that the time spent with locals is lower than expected in all three contexts, and that is consistent with the result in question 1, in which a decrease in the motivation to learn the local languages is made evident.

Another result that deserves further comment is the difference between the low desire to spend time with co-nationals at the beginning (2.6/2.6/2.4) and the not so low score (3.1/3.3/3.5) given to the actual time spent with them. At the end of the sojourn, the participants declared that the group they spent most time with was international students, which is consistent with their initial desire. For all the other groups, significant differences appear: upward in the case of co-nationals and downward in the case of locals and native speakers of English.

### 3.3 Questions 3–11: Linguistic attitudes and language expectations

Concerning expectations and attitudes with regard to languages (see Tab. 3), there are very positive attitudes in general terms towards English across the three contexts, both at the beginning and at the end of the sojourn. Attitudes and expectations regarding three of the local languages (Finnish, Romanian, and Catalan) seem to be kept at a moderate level, and clearly lower than the remaining local language (Spanish) and English. This tendency is maintained throughout the stay. The Spanish language clearly stands out from the rest of local languages. The one-way ANOVA test revealed significant differences among the groups with respect to five of the nine items, and the sole language that accounts for such differences is Spanish.

The main differences found among the three contexts in the PRE test are listed below:

- I'll never use Finnish/Spanish/Romanian, so it's useless to learn it: ( $F(2, 152)=9.96, p<.05$ ). The reversed mean score<sup>2</sup> in Lleida ( $M=4.7, SD=.61$ ) is significantly higher than in both Oulu ( $M=3.9, SD=1.04$ ) and Bucharest ( $M=4.2, SD=1.12$ ).
- We should all use Finnish/Spanish/Romanian frequently: ( $F(2, 151)=11.37, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=4.1, SD=.99$ ) is significantly higher than in both Oulu ( $M=3.1, SD=1.00$ ) and Bucharest ( $M=3.4, SD=1.03$ ).

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2 The reason why we have reversed the results obtained in questions that were formulated in a negative way is to reflect more intuitively the attitudes behind them, as higher scores are typically associated to positive attitudes and lower scores normally convey a negative value.

**Tab. 3:** Linguistic attitudes and language expectations (I).

Linguistic attitudes and language expectations	Oulu		Lleida		Bucharest	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
I'll never use Finnish/ Spanish/Romanian, so it's/ it was useless to learn it. (REVERSED SCORES)	3.9*	3.4/	4.7*+	4.7/#	4.2+	3.7#
... Catalan			3.6	3.2		
We should all use/have used Finnish/Spanish/Romanian frequently.	3.1*	3/%	4.1*+	4.1/#	3.4+	3.5#%
... Catalan			2.9	2.9		
Learning Finnish/Spanish/ Romanian is/ was more important than learning English.	2*	1.9/	3.1*+	3.4/	2.2+/ 2.2	1.9#
... Catalan			1.5/	2		
I like or I would like to speak Finnish/Spanish/Romanian.	3.9*	3.5#	4.8*+	4.8#%	4.2+/ 4.2	3.9%-
... Catalan			3.4/	2.9-		
I like listening to people speaking Finnish/Spanish/ Romanian.	3.8*	3.7/%	4.6*+	4.9/#	3.9+/ 3.9	3.8#-
... Catalan			3.3/	2.8%-		
I will never use English, so it's/was useless to learn it. (REVERSED)	4.9	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.8	5
We should all try/ have tried to use English frequently.	4.5	4.6*	4.5	4.1*+	4.4	4.9+
I like or I would like to speak English.	4.6	4.7*	4.7	4.6*/	4.6	4.9/
I like listening to people speaking English.	4.5	4.4*	4.4	4.3*/	4.5	4.7/

\*+ / #%- p<.05

- Learning Finnish/Spanish/Romanian is more important than learning English: (F (2, 152)=11.56, p<.05). Mean score in Lleida (M=3.1, SD=1.07) is significantly higher than in both Oulu (M=2, SD= 1.20) and Bucharest (M=2.2, SD=1.24).

- Learning Finnish/Catalan/Romanian is more important than learning English: ( $F(2, 152)=3.72, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=1.5, SD=.88$ ) is significantly lower than in Bucharest ( $M=2.2, SD=1.24$ ). This indicates that the interest to learn Catalan in Lleida is not just low, but significantly lower than the interest to learn Romanian in Bucharest.
- I like or I would like to speak Finnish/Spanish/Romanian: ( $F(2, 152)=11.73, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=4.8, SD=.77$ ) is significantly higher than in both Bucharest ( $M=4.2, SD=.86$ ) and Oulu ( $M=3.9, SD=.99$ ).
- I like or I would like to speak Finnish/Catalan/Romanian  $F(2, 152)=6.28, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=3.4, SD=1.16$ ) is significantly lower than in Bucharest ( $M=4.2, SD=.86$ ).
- I like listening to people speaking Finnish/Spanish/Romanian: ( $F(2, 151)=10.11, p<.05$ ). Mean score for Spanish ( $M=4.6, SD=.84$ ) is significantly higher than for both Finnish ( $M=3.8, SD=.95$ ) and Romanian ( $M=3.9, SD=.94$ ).
- I like listening to people speaking Finnish/Spanish/Romanian: ( $F(2, 152)=4.15, p<.05$ ). Significantly lower mean score for pleasure listening to people speaking Catalan ( $M=3.3, SD=1.25$ ) than Finnish ( $M=3.8, SD=.95$ ) and Romanian ( $M=3.9, SD=.94$ ).

Finally, as mentioned previously, the participants showed very positive attitudes and rather ambitious expectations with regard to the English language. No significant differences were encountered among the three contexts concerning English in the PRE test. In the POST test, the following significant differences among the groups were revealed by the one-way ANOVA test:

- I will never use Finnish/Spanish/Romanian, so it was useless to learn it: ( $F(2, 151)=17.82, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=4.7, SD=.65$ ) significantly higher than in both Oulu ( $M=3.4, SD=1.33$ ) and Bucharest ( $M=3.7, SD=1.05$ ).
- We should all have used Finnish/Spanish/Romanian frequently: ( $F(2, 151)=15.34, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=4.1, SD=.87$ ) significantly higher than in both Oulu ( $M=3, SD=1.14$ ) and Bucharest ( $M=3.5, SD=1.12$ ). Also, mean score in Bucharest ( $M=3.5, SD=1.12$ ) significantly higher in Oulu ( $M=3, SD=1.14$ ).
- Learning Finnish/Spanish/Romanian was more important than English: ( $F(2, 151)=20.77, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=3.4, SD=1.46$ ) significantly higher than in both Oulu ( $M=1.9, SD=1.15$ ) and Bucharest ( $M=1.9, SD=1.25$ ).
- I would like to speak Finnish/Spanish/Romanian: ( $F(2, 151)=18.65, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=4.8, SD=.45$ ) significantly higher than in both Oulu ( $M=3.5, SD=1.22$ ) and Bucharest ( $M=3.9, SD=1.20$ ).

- I would like to speak Finnish/Catalan/Romanian: ( $F(2, 151)=5.44, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=2.9, SD=1.32$ ) significantly lower than in Bucharest ( $M=3.9, SD=1.2$ ).
- I like listening to people speaking Finnish/Catalan/Romanian: ( $F(2, 150)=7.33, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=2.8, SD=1.38$ ) significantly lower than in both Oulu ( $M=3.7, SD=1.20$ ) and Bucharest ( $M=3.8, SD=1.07$ ).
- We should all have tried to use English frequently: ( $F(2, 150)=11.72, p<.05$ ). Mean score in Lleida ( $M=4.1, SD=1.01$ ) significantly lower than in both Oulu ( $M=4.6, SD=.72$ ) and Bucharest ( $M=4.9, SD=.30$ ).

Overall, Spanish appears to play a role that is substantially different from the role played by any other local language. In fact, the power and attraction of Spanish seems to equal the power and attraction of English in the Lleida group. We may argue that this might be the reason why Catalan is assigned significantly lower scores than Finnish and Romanian in some cases. This adversity can be perceived most especially when it comes to a possible wish to learn Catalan, and even the mere fact of listening to people speaking Catalan.

Table 4 includes the same items as in Tab. 3 incorporating a symbol to indicate the cases where the Repeated Measures ANOVA test showed significant differences between the PRE and the POST questionnaires. Significant differences between the initial and final moments of the stay abroad are listed below:

- I'll never use Finnish/Spanish/Romanian, so it's/it was useless to learn it: Decrease in Oulu (Wilks'  $\Lambda=.89, F(1, 79)=9.38, p<.05$ ), and also decrease in Bucharest (Wilks'  $\Lambda=.87, F(1, 38)=5.47, p<.05$ ).
- Learning Catalan was more important than English: Increase in Lleida (Wilks'  $\Lambda=.84, F(1, 34)=6.45, p<.05$ ).
- I like or I would like to speak Finnish/Spanish/Romanian: Decrease in Oulu (Wilks'  $\Lambda=.86, F(1, 79)=11.86, p<.05$ ), and decrease in Bucharest (Wilks'  $\Lambda=.88, F(1, 38)=5.16, p<.05$ ).
- I like listening to people speaking Catalan: Decrease in Lleida (Wilks'  $\Lambda=.84, F(1, 34)=6.11, p<.05$ ).
- We should all try/have tried to use English frequently: Decrease in Lleida (Wilks'  $\Lambda=.87, F(1, 34)=4.95, p<.05$ ), and increase in Bucharest (Wilks'  $\Lambda=.76, F(1, 38)=11.63, p<.05$ ).

Therefore, we can say that, in fact, with regard to the first question: "I'll never use Finnish/Spanish/Romanian, so it's/it was useless to learn it", at the end of the stay, significantly more negative attitudes are reported by the students in Oulu towards Finnish, and by the students in Bucharest towards Romanian. A similar

**Tab. 4:** Linguistic attitudes and language expectations (II).

Linguistic attitudes and language expectations	Oulu		Lleida		Bucharest	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
I'll never use Finnish/ Spanish/Romanian, so it's/ was useless to learn it. (REVERSED SCORES) ... Catalan	3.9*	3.4*	4.7 3.6	4.7 3.2	4.2/ 3.7/	
We should all use/ have used Finnish/Spanish/Romanian frequently. ... Catalan	3.1	3	4.1 2.9	4.1 2.9	3.4	3.5
Learning Finnish/Spanish/ Romanian is/ was more important than learning English. ... Catalan	2	1.9	3.1 1.5#	3.4 2#	2.2	1.9
I like or I would like to speak Finnish/Spanish/Romanian. ... Catalan	3.9#	3.5#	4.8 3.4	4.8 2.9	4.2%	3.9%
I like listening to people speaking Finnish/Spanish/ Romanian. ... Catalan	3.8	3.7	4.6	4.9	3.9	3.8
I will never use English, so it's useless to learn it.(REVERSED)	4.9	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.8	5
We should all try/ have tried to use English frequently.	4.5	4.6	4.5+	4.1+	4.4-	4.9-
I like or I would like to speak English.	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.9
I like listening to people speaking English.	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.5*	4.7*

\*+ / #%- p&lt;.05

trend can be observed in relation to Catalan in Lleida, even though the difference is not significant. Spanish, on the other hand, maintains the same high score. Interestingly, when it comes to the relative importance of learning Catalan vs. English, and despite the fact that the score is still very low in the POST test, it is significantly higher than in the PRE test. However, if we take into account also

the results of the first item with regard to Catalan, and the significantly lower score to the item “I like listening to people speaking Catalan”, we might interpret the higher importance allocated to the need to learn Catalan as an outcome of the realization that the Catalan language had a considerable weight for the local people in Lleida, and therefore, the participants might have realized it was certainly more important to learn it than they had imagined at the beginning of their sojourn. Yet, it seems that this situation did actually lead to an increased animosity towards the Catalan language. In fact, more negative feelings towards the local languages (Finnish, Catalan and Romanian) are revealed in the *POST* test, where the participants assign significantly lower scores to those three languages.

Finally, with regard to English, the students in Lleida assign a significantly lower score to the item “We should all have tried to use English frequently”, while the ones in Bucharest do the opposite, assigning a significantly higher score to the same item. A possible interpretation could be that the Lleida group might perceive they did not learn as much Spanish as they expected to, and using English might have interfered with their use of Spanish. On the other hand, the students in Bucharest might also perceive that their English level may not have improved to the extent they expected. If we take into account the reported time the students spent with people from their own countries, using one’s first language might be understood as a factor limiting the use of English, which the participants could regret at the end of their stay abroad.

## 4 Conclusions

The results of this study show that, straight from the beginning, the roles of different languages in study abroad are perceived to be different. The clearest example of this is the considerably higher importance assigned to English and to the local language Spanish, when compared to all the other local languages considered in this study. Therefore, the motivation and degree of investment of the participants in each language might be correlated to the perceived economic value of the languages more than to anything else. The similar value assigned to Finnish, Romanian, and Catalan at the beginning of the stay points to the same direction. However, it is worth mentioning that despite not holding the same status as Finnish and Romanian, Catalan is embraced in a similar way.

The stay abroad sojourn seems to have a homogenizing effect among the three groups with regard to the motivation to learn languages other than the local ones and English: while at the beginning of the sojourn, the participants appear to be significantly more motivated to learn other languages in Bucharest than in Oulu, at the end of their stay, these differences have disappeared, and we can observe

a decrease in the appreciation of Finnish, as well as an increase in the interest for other languages in the Oulu group – all of it as a result of the study abroad experience.

The prominent role of English is considerably visible both at the beginning and at the end of the stay. However, the scores assigned to English in the Lleida group at the end of the sojourn are significantly lower, which points to the fact that Spanish was the language in which the participants were willing to invest in, even if it was at the expense of not investing so much in the global *lingua franca* – that is, English.

With respect to the desire to spend their time with local/international/co-national/native speakers of English, it seems that initially, spending time with other international students is the most highly preferred option, followed by local people, and native speakers of English. Spending time with co-nationals receives the lowest scores. The high degree of willingness to spend time with locals contrasts with the rather low degree of investment in the local languages. This trend is also followed in the case of Spanish: a high motivation for learning this language does not seem to trigger a higher motivation to spend time with local people.

At the end of the stay, expectations and reality are different in the three groups. Time reported to have been spent with locals is significantly lower in all three contexts, which correlates with the decrease in motivation to learn the local languages. Time expected to be spent with co-nationals is also significantly different from time reported being spent with this group of people – participants report having spent much more time with their co-nationals than expected or desired. The opposite pattern is observed in the case of time expected to be spent and time actually spent with native speakers of English.

As we have already mentioned, Spanish seems to play a considerably different role than the other local languages. This might have triggered some of the significantly lower scores attributed to Catalan when compared to Finnish and Romanian with respect to willingness to learn the language and a liking for listening to people speaking Catalan. This fact, together with the perceived need to speak Catalan in Lleida after the sojourn, might have led to an increased negative feeling towards Catalan. However, this trend can also be appreciated in the case of Romanian and Finnish, and significantly lower scores are assigned to the three languages at the end of the stay.

All in all, the above findings indicate a certain disparity between expectations and reality in these three study abroad contexts. This concerns both social aspects, like the groups of people in the company of whom the stay is expected to be spent or reported to have been spent, and language-related aspects. In the

first place, a certain *fetichisation* of English appears straight from the beginning, which is observable through the high expectations to learn English and spend time with native speakers of English in contexts where English is not spoken as a native language. Secondly, what we can observe is a clear *hierarchisation* of languages and a resulting different degree of investment in each of the encountered languages according to their economic value. Finally, the results also indicate a rather unexpected effect of the stay abroad experience which is an increased adversity towards the local languages in all three contexts. As explained above, this study is part of a wider project in which qualitative interview data were also collected. We expect that the analysis of such interviews will shed more light onto the deep reasons that inspire the participants' attitudinal responses to the different languages present in their respective environments.

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