Intercultural Communication and Social Contact on L2 Learners' Pragmatic Competence in a Study Abroad Context

Thongpanh Malivong

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
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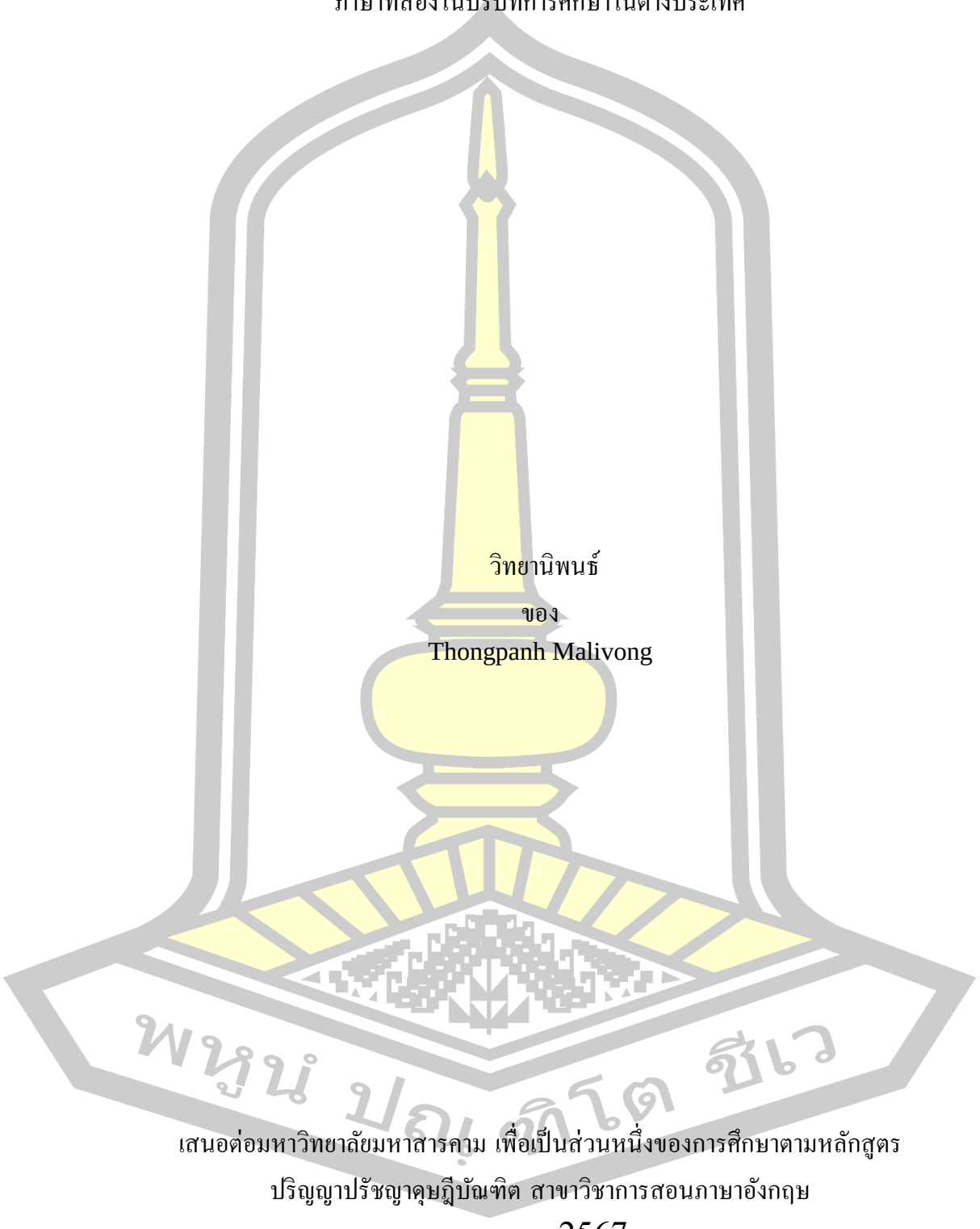

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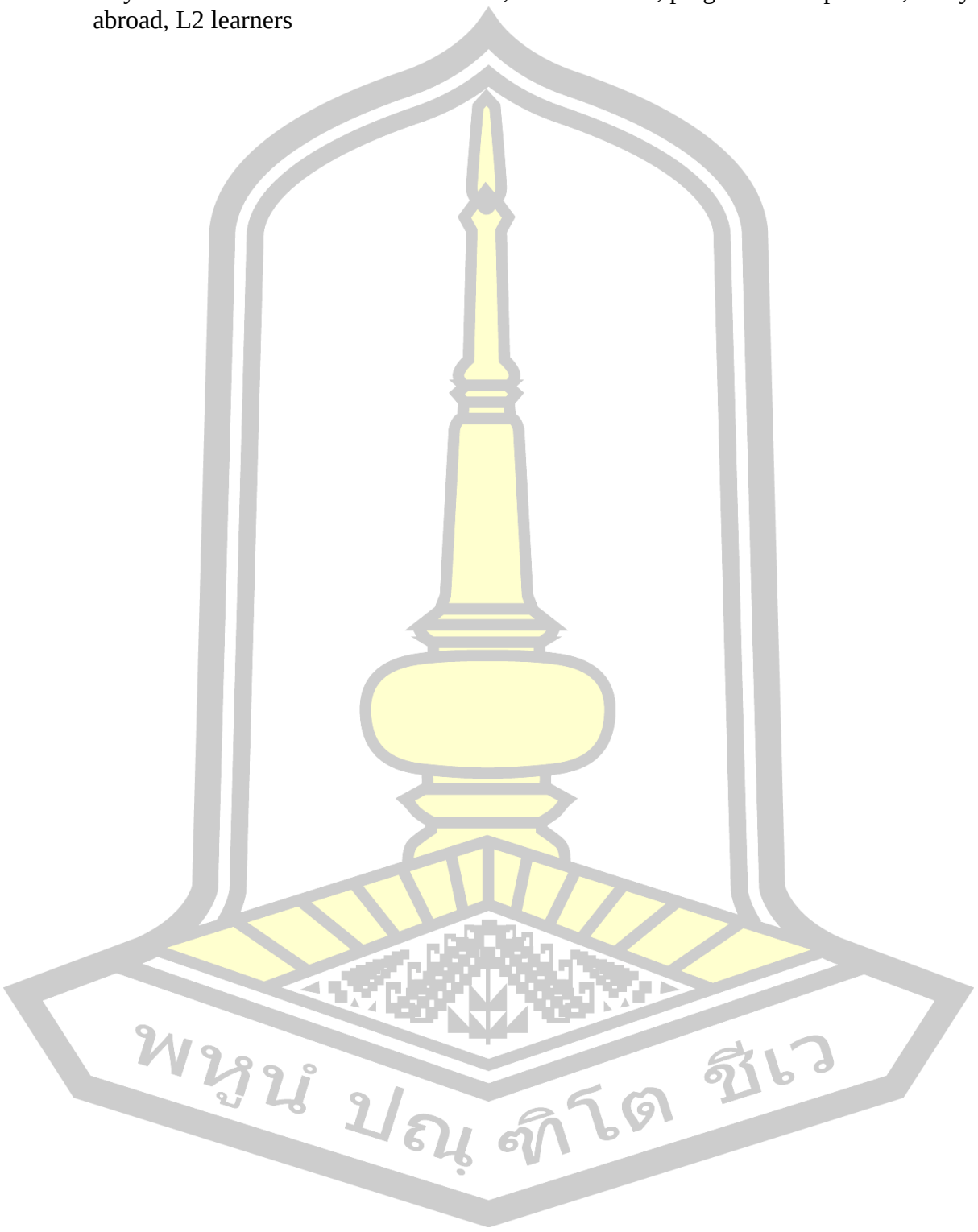
ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of intercultural communicative competence, social contact, and pragmatic competence among Thai learners of English during their study abroad experience in Sydney, Australia. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative data on language use and proficiency with qualitative insights from participant interviews to offer a comprehensive view of the linguistic and cultural immersion process. The quantitative analysis using the Language Contact Profile (LCP) reveals significant increases in the use of English across all key linguistic skills, indicating that immersion in an English-speaking environment substantially enhances language proficiency. Qualitative narratives using the LCP and interviews further enrich these findings, highlighting the transformative impact of cultural immersion on learners' communicative competence and their adaptation to intercultural contexts.

Key findings demonstrate that study abroad experiences facilitate not only improvements in linguistic abilities but also a deeper understanding and application of cultural nuances in communication. The study underscores the importance of active engagement and social interactions with the host community in developing pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative skills. Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges limitations, including a relatively small sample size and the specific context of Thai learners in Sydney, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.

The research offers several implications for educators, program designers, and policymakers, suggesting the need for study abroad programs that prioritize cultural immersion and active language practice. Future studies are encouraged to explore the long-term impact of study abroad on linguistic and intercultural competencies, examine other learner populations, and consider the role of digital technologies in facilitating language learning and cultural exchange. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the benefits of study abroad programs, advocating for an integrated approach to language education that embraces the complexities of learning in an intercultural setting.

Keyword : Intercultural communication, social contact, pragmatic competence, study abroad, L2 learners



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The involvement and cooperation of the study participants are duly acknowledged, as they were critical in ensuring the success of the research. The empirical basis for the study's conclusions was established through their eagerness to divulge their experiences and insights.

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The researcher's family members are the primary sources of encouragement

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This thesis serves as evidence of the combined efforts of numerous individuals, each of whom contributed uniquely and significantly to its successful conclusion. This acknowledgement serves as an emblem of appreciation, recognising the network of support that enabled and enhanced this scholarly expedition.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the stage for the entire study by presenting the research background, the problem statement, and the objectives. It begins with a broad overview of the importance of second language (L2) acquisition in today's globalized world, focusing on the role of Study Abroad (SA) programs in facilitating such learning. The chapter outlines the research questions the study aims to address, providing a rationale for the investigation and its significance. This chapter also introduces the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, setting the foundation for the literature review. Additionally, it outlines the thesis's scope, limitations, and organizational structure, offering readers a roadmap of the research journey.

1.1 Rationale for the Study

Studying abroad (SA) has been growing amidst the global push towards internationalisation in higher education. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) also plays an essential component in second or foreign language (L2) teaching, and learners around the globe are experiencing more intercultural communications as a natural consequence of globalisation. As such, several studies have sought to better understand the SA context's language learning outcomes. Longitudinal studies are particularly valued in this field since they allow the ongoing collection and analysis of qualitative or mixed-methods data to make sense of divergent language and cultural learning processes (García-Amaya, 2017; Jackson, 2017; Kinginer, 2013). Indeed, the SA context is essential to establish the link between L2 use and linguistic progress, which, in turn, notifies principles of L2 acquisition. Notably, stakeholders in SA curricula, including administrators, teachers, and students, have reported concerns that the quality and quantity of L2 interactions in SA contexts do not afford the space to achieve significant linguistic development (García-Amaya, 2017). However, thus far, few studies have examined the language learner's awareness of how much, how frequently, or with what depth it is necessary to use the L2 abroad to meet expectations for language improvement.

Researchers have studied the progress made by language learners abroad by evaluating measurable SA results. In terms of theoretical motivation, this research

draws on the interactionist approach (see Gass & Mackey, 2015), whose central tenet is that engagement with high-quality language use boosts language learning. Sojourners who study a language abroad are expected to learn on the assumption that they will have ample opportunities to engage in rich interactions with target language speakers. A broader cognitive interactionist perspective also posits that adult language learning results from the interaction between internal factors found in the learner and external factors located in the context (Sanz, 2005; Tullock & Ortega, 2017). SA offers immersive learning conditions that are missing from the foreign language classroom. For this reason, traditionally, linguistic benefits have been measured via comparisons with groups of learners in other contexts, most frequently a so-called at-home group receiving classroom instruction in the home country without any immersive component.

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), it is generally acknowledged that L2 learners need to search for opportunities to interact with one another and with Native English Speakers (NESs) to promote individual interlanguage development (Chang, 2011; Long, 1996). The SA context offers both instructed and naturalistic SLA opportunities. The latter aspect is essential for L2 learners, who often seek a learning environment that provides ample opportunities for naturalistic acquisition of L2 beyond systematic academic instruction and increased cultural sensitivity and awareness (García-Amaya, 2017). This desire may be driven by general expectations that the SA context offers better opportunities for L2 learners to interact with NESs and that such interactions will facilitate the development of the L2 (García-Amaya, 2017; Martinsen, Baker, Brown, & Johnson, 2011; Mendelson, 2004).

Exposure to language input and cultural practices of SA is considered a crucial feature of the SA context that promotes pragmatic development. As a measure of exposure, previous studies frequently analyzed the amount of language contact and assessed its effect on pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011; Matsumura, 2003; Taguchi, 2008; Taguchi, Li & Xiao, 2013; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). These studies asked participants to report the number of weekly hours using the target language. The findings showed that the amount of language contact is positively correlated with pragmatic competence, which supports the “exposure” effect. For example,

Matsumura (2003) explored L2 English learners' choice of appropriate expressions over one academic year in Canada and found that their performance improved considerably and approximated native English speakers. Their self-report exposure to English significantly influenced this improvement. In addition, learners' proficiency mediated the link between exposure and pragmatic gains. In another study, Taguchi (2008) found that comprehension speed correlated significantly with the amount of language contact in speaking and reading.

Researchers have shown a positive connection between language contact and pragmatic competence while studying abroad. For instance, Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011) examined the effects of proficiency, length of stay, and intensity of interaction on L2 English learners' knowledge of conversational expressions measured in a North American university. As measured by self-report language contact, the intensity of interaction significantly impacted both recognition and production of colloquial expressions. However, the length of residence had no impact, indicating that the quality of social contact while abroad is more important for language development than the duration abroad. Moreover, in a series of studies, Taguchi and colleagues (2013) provided evidence to support the relationship between formulaic expression development and language contact and examined the effects of intercultural competence and language contact (Taguchi et al., 2016). This latter study revealed that learners' pragmatic knowledge developed incrementally, and the development was accounted for by the amount of social contact (face-to-face interaction). Social contact, such as talking with friends, directly influenced pragmatic development. By contrast, intercultural competence had no direct effects on pragmatic development but had significant indirect effects through social contact. These findings indicate that social contact mediates the impact of intercultural knowledge on pragmatic development. Specifically, these results show that pragmatic competence is, to some extent, the function of learners' L2 use and their characteristics.

Pragmatics has expanded rapidly as a domain of investigation in SLA research, as seen in the steep increase in the scope and number of empirical studies produced in the last few decades (Bardovi–Harlig, 2013; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). A large body of international research has examined L2 pragmatic

competence in a variety of linguistic, discoursal, and interactional units, including speech acts, politeness strategies, implicature, humour, routines, honorifics and speech styles, address terms, interactional devices and mechanisms of conversation (e.g., turn-taking and preference organizations). These studies have shown how characteristics of pragmatic competence—the ability to perform communicative functions in a situation, knowledge of socially appropriate language use, and the ability to interact in a sociocultural activity—can be incorporated to operationalize pragmatic constructs (Taguchi, 2018).

Despite the large body of L2 pragmatics research available to date, only a few studies have empirically investigated the relationship between intercultural competence and pragmatic competence. These studies investigated whether a successful cultural adjustment in the target community, promoted by high-level intercultural competence, positively correlates with pragmatic development. Based on Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity, Shively and Cohen (2008) assessed intercultural development among L2 Spanish learners. Learners showed gains in their speech acts and intercultural sensitivity over a semester abroad, but no correlation was found between these constructs. In another study, Taguchi (2015) examined the relationship between cross-cultural adaptability (based on Kelley & Meyers's model) and speech acts among L2 Japanese learners. Cultural adaptability correlated with appropriate speech act production (r=.501) but not with the use of speech style (polite or plain form) (r=.01). Finally, Rafieyan, Behnammohammadian, and Orang (2015) explored the relationship between comprehension of implicature and acculturation attitudes (i.e., level of acceptance of the target culture) among Iranian learners of English in Australia. Results revealed a strong correlation (r = .82) between acculturation attitudes and pragmatic comprehension. Notably, all of these studies were conducted in a SA setting.

Although the body of existing research is small, the connection between pragmatic knowledge and intercultural competence is plausible. Because intercultural competence involves the ability to engage in intercultural communication effectively and appropriately (e.g., Byram, 2012), pragmatic competence, which is concerned with how to speak appropriately in a social context, can directly contribute to

intercultural competence. These two constructs also share certain similarities. Primary traits of intercultural competence, including flexibility/openness, risk-taking, empathy, and cultural sensitivity, essentially refer to the notion of adaptability (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Individuals with these traits are considered able to adapt to different ways of thinking and behaving, leading to their successful cultural integration. Likewise, pragmatic competence builds on adaptability, or, more precisely, linguistic adaptability, because pragmatic competence involves understanding contextual specifics (e.g., interlocutor relationships and settings) and adapting the use of linguistic resources to different contexts. Critically, contextual specifics are not stable and change even within the same interaction in reaction to the participants' changing attitudes and relationships. Hence, adaptability in pragmatic competence is two-fold, involving the ability to use linguistic resources to adapt to different and changing contexts (Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

Adaptability, a shared dimension of pragmatic and intercultural competences, should be examined with an explicit focus on assessing the relationship between these two competences. In addition to these two constructs, social contact should be included in the research design as it is often theorized as part of the behavioural outcomes of cultural adjustment (Leung et al., 2014). Indicators of social contacts, such as the amount of time spent on intercultural activities (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002), the number of friends with different cultural backgrounds (Hammer, 2005), and the extent of intercultural cooperation (Mor et al., 2013), have been identified as outcomes of intercultural effectiveness.

In summary, L2 exposure in SA contexts, characterized by features such as the perceived amount of language contact, the intensity of interaction, and the frequency of involvement in social gatherings, are associated with pragmatic competence development. However, the evidence for this relationship is indirect because the time-on-task measures are self-report questionnaires assessing EFL learners' perceived exposure, not their actual exposure. It is also indirect because the time-on-task measures do not determine the specific SA experiences that led to pragmatic development.

Based on a detailed review of existing literature, it is clear that questionnaires have predominately been used to track the development of social interaction and social networks in SA contexts (Dewey, Balnap, & Hillstrom, 2013; Dewey et al., 2012; Dewey, Ring, Gardner, & Belnap, 2013). Similarly, self-reported questionnaires have been used to measure the number of interactions. By contrast, the intensity of interactions has been measured through interviews (Dewey et al., 2013), journal entries (Di Silvio, Donovan, & Malone, (2014), and learners' self-assessments (Dewey et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it remains unclear how lifestyle decisions, such as spending free time with members of the SA culture or other L1 speakers from the SA program (e.g., Coleman & Chafer, 2010), can impact L2 use. To better understand the elusive linguistic benefits of SA, researchers have turned to qualitative methodologies to document the SA process through the eyes of the participants themselves. Indeed, SA qualitative studies draw on socially informed approaches to language learning, including language socialization theory (e.g., Dufon, 2006). This social and qualitative lens on SA is gradually proving to be particularly successful in shedding light on how various macro-social and program-level forces interact to reveal the optimal conditions for achieving learning outcomes in SA contexts. Awareness of the variations across pragmatic constructs will serve as an alternative method for understanding context-learning connections in L2 pragmatic studies.

1.2 Purposes of the Study

The present study pursued this investigation by treating intercultural communicative competence, social contact and pragmatic competence knowledge as a three-way interaction. Although this three-way interaction has not been explored in L2 pragmatics, the link among intercultural competence, social contact, and pragmatic development is logical and has theoretical implications. Intercultural competence involves knowledge and skills needed to perform effectively and appropriately in a new culture, and, therefore, greater intercultural competence could increase social contact and successful cultural adjustment. Pragmatic competence might improve as a byproduct of this cultural adjustment. Successful social interaction and networking in the host community, supported by a high level of intercultural competence, could bring about many opportunities for pragmatic practice, leading to pragmatic development. Social contact is particularly relevant because the construct of

pragmatic competence is socially grounded. Exposure to diverse social situations and interactions is essential for pragmatic development, and such exposure is likely to arise in social networks that learners can cultivate in the local community.

This research investigates whether L2 learners' intercultural communicative competence leads to increased social contact, which in turn leads to their increased pragmatic competence. That is, it explores the dynamic interplay between intercultural communicative competence, social contact, and pragmatic competence. This study further tracks the incremental development of pragmatic competence during the SA experience and the role of these competencies and social contact in enhancing the English proficiency of Thai learners of English during study abroad experience. Specifically, this study implemented quantitative and qualitative analyses of responses to an adapted LCP. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do interactional communicative and pragmatic competencies influence each other and contribute to the improvement of L2 proficiency amongn Thai learners during their study abroad experience?
2. What is the influence of intercultural communicative competence and social contact on the development of pragmatic competence and L2 proficiency among Thai learners of English?
3. How do intercultural competence, social contact, and pragmatic competence develop over time among Thai learners of English during the study abroad experience?

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was defined to capture the developmental patterns of second language (L2) use among Thai learners of English participating in a Study Abroad (SA) program in Sydney, Australia. By focusing on a group of higher education students from Thailand, the research targeted individuals actively seeking to enhance their English proficiency through an immersive experience in an English-speaking country. Participants were selected based on their voluntary decision to engage in the SA program, signifying their motivation and commitment to improving their language skills.

The study incorporated the college placement test as a standardised testing mechanism to provide a quantitative measure of the participants' English language proficiency. This allowed for a consistent assessment of participants' language skills, offering a baseline against which their development could be tracked throughout the study. Additionally, participants' pragmatic competence, as measured by the Speaking Scenario Test, primarily adapted from Taguchi, Xiao, and Li's (2016) study, was considered, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their pragmatic knowledge and capabilities.

The research was carefully delineated to focus solely on Thai students, thus limiting the study to a single native language (L1) background. This decision aimed to create a homogeneous group for analysis, reducing variables related to linguistic diversity and focusing on the specific experiences of Thai learners in an English-speaking environment. The choice of English as the second language (L2) further narrowed the study's scope, concentrating on the challenges and opportunities associated with learning this globally dominant language.

Given the logistical and temporal constraints inherent in SA programs, the study lasted approximately three months over a semester. This short duration inherently limited the amount of data that could be collected and analyzed, resulting in only two primary data collection points: at the beginning and the end of the SA experience. This timeframe, though brief, was deemed sufficient to observe initial changes and trends in L2 use among the participants, offering insights into the immediate impacts of immersion in an English-speaking context.

In summary, the scope of this study was intentionally designed to explore the language development journey of Thai higher education students engaged in a short-term SA program in Sydney, Australia. By focusing on a specific participant group, employing standardized measures of English proficiency, and adhering to a concise study period, the research aimed to contribute valuable findings on the effects of SA programs on L2 acquisition and use within a well-defined context.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study marks a pivotal advancement in second language (L2) acquisition, particularly highlighting the nuanced complexities of learning in a Study Abroad (SA)

context. Its significance is manifold, offering fresh perspectives on the mechanisms of language learning beyond conventional classroom settings. The research fills a critical gap in existing scholarship by delving into the pragmatic aspect of language use—how learners navigate the subtleties of language in social interactions. Pragmatic competence, the skill to use language appropriately across various contexts, is a cornerstone for genuinely effective communication in a second language. This study's detailed investigation into the evolutionary trajectory of such competence among learners in an SA program sheds light on the multifaceted process of acquiring not just linguistic skills but also the ability to engage meaningfully across cultural boundaries

Furthermore, the research challenges traditional perceptions of SA programs, proposing a broader understanding of these experiences as vibrant, intercultural platforms rather than mere linguistic immersion opportunities. This expanded view underscores the diverse benefits of SA experiences, which extend beyond language acquisition to encompass intercultural understanding and global awareness. In doing so, the study emphasizes the pivotal role of intercultural communication in L2 learning. In today's globalized society, the capacity to navigate cross-cultural dialogues is as crucial as linguistic fluency. The findings illustrate that SA programs facilitate intercultural exchanges, enabling learners to refine their language skills amidst a tapestry of cultural interactions.

Moreover, this study broadens the narrative on the scope of L2 use, asserting that language learning is not confined to interactions with native speakers alone. It brings to light the importance of lingua franca communication among international learners from varied cultural backgrounds, challenging the conventional narratives of language learning environments. This revelation opens new pathways for the design and implementation of SA programs, advocating for environments that foster diverse linguistic and cultural exchanges.

The implications of this study extend beyond academic discourse, offering tangible insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers engaged in the conceptualization and administration of SA programs. The enriched understanding of pragmatic development and the emphasized significance of intercultural

communication can guide the development of more effective curriculum designs, teaching methodologies, and program structures. These insights aim to enhance the educational outcomes of SA experiences, ensuring learners gain not only linguistic proficiency but also deep-seated intercultural competence.

In essence, the significance of this research lies in its comprehensive exploration of the interplay between language use, cultural engagement, and educational context within SA programs. It not only propels the academic field of L2 acquisition forward but also lays a foundational blueprint for enriching the experiences of future learners in SA contexts. Through its innovative approach and insightful findings, this study not only enhances our understanding of language learning dynamics but also charts a course for the evolution of SA programs as potent sites for intercultural learning and communication.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

Intercultural communication competence *or* ***Intercultural communication*** in this study involves the knowledge and ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in a new culture.

Social contact is the amount of contact learners have with locals and the degree to which they use the L2. It also includes the interactions and engagements students have with others from host country or other international students in Sydney, Australia. This includes a wide range of activities, such as participating in classroom language learning, joining clubs or sports, living with host families, international friends in a dormitory or an apartment, or simply having conversations with local residents. These interactions are crucial for language acquisition, cultural immersion, and the development of a global perspective, enhancing the overall educational experience of studying abroad.

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in different social situations, understanding and applying the rules of language use in various communicative situations. It includes the knowledge of how to express onself in ways that are culturally and situationally appropriate, interpret the

underlying meanings and intentions in others' speech, and follow the rules of polite conversations.

Study abroad context refers to the environment and experiences of students who go to study in a foreign country. This includes their classes and learning, as well as living in a new place, joining local and social activities, having conversations with local residents, and getting to know the cultures and people outside of classroom. It is about learning and growing in a new environment.

Thai learners of English refers to 16 Thai students who participated in this program while studying abroad (SA) in Sydney, Australia.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is systematically organized into five chapters, each serving a distinct purpose in unfolding the study's narrative and comprehensively analysing the subject at hand. The organization of the thesis facilitates a coherent flow of ideas, allowing readers to comprehensively understand the background, methodology, findings, and implications of the research.

The Introduction chapter sets the stage for the entire study by presenting the research background, the problem statement, and the objectives of the study. It begins with a broad overview of the importance of second language (L2) acquisition in today's globalized world, with a particular focus on the role of Study Abroad (SA) programs in facilitating such learning. The chapter outlines the specific research questions the study aims to address, providing a rationale for the investigation and its significance. This chapter also introduces the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, setting the foundation for the literature review. Additionally, it outlines the scope, limitations, and organizational structure of the thesis, offering readers a roadmap of the research journey.

In the Literature Review chapter, a comprehensive analysis of existing scholarly works related to the study's themes is conducted. This chapter delves into the theoretical underpinnings of pragmatic competence, intercultural communication, and the dynamics of language learning within SA contexts. It critically examines previous

studies that have explored the impact of SA programs on language acquisition, with a special emphasis on pragmatic competence and intercultural sensitivity. The literature review identifies gaps in current research, justifying the necessity of the present study. It also discusses the theoretical frameworks that guide the study, such as sociocultural theories of language learning and models of intercultural competence, linking them to the research questions and objectives.

The Research Methods chapter outlines the methodological framework of the study, detailing the research design, participant selection, data collection instruments, and analysis procedures. It describes the mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather and analyze data. The chapter provides in-depth information on the selection of participants, the criteria for inclusion, and the ethical considerations involved. It thoroughly explains the instruments used for data collection, such as the Language Contact Profile (LCP), interviews, and pragmatic competence tests, along with their validity and reliability. The data analysis section describes how quantitative data were analyzed statistically and how qualitative data were examined thematically, ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive understanding of the findings.

In the Findings of the Study chapter, the results of the data analysis are presented in a detailed and structured manner. The chapter is typically divided into sections corresponding to the research questions or themes identified during the data analysis. For each theme or question, the chapter clearly presents the findings, supported by data from the study's instruments, such as statistical outcomes, excerpts from interviews, and observations. This chapter highlights the key patterns, trends, and insights from the data, offering a factual basis for the subsequent discussion and conclusions.

The final chapter synthesizes the study's findings with the theoretical frameworks and literature reviewed in Chapter 2, engaging in a critical discussion of the implications of the research. It examines how the findings contribute to existing knowledge, what they reveal about the impact of SA programs on L2 acquisition and intercultural competence, and how they address the research questions. The chapter discusses the practical implications for educators, program designers, and policymakers, suggesting

ways to enhance SA programs based on the study's insights. It acknowledges the limitations of the study, offering a reflective critique of the research process. Finally, the chapter proposes areas for future research, suggesting directions based on the findings and gaps identified in the literature. The conclusion concisely summarises the study's contributions to second language acquisition and intercultural learning.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the literature pertaining to intercultural communication, social contact, and pragmatic competence in study abroad programs, which serve as essential foundational concepts to the theoretical framework used in this study. Studies will also be discussed that focus on study abroad (SA) and formal instruction, study abroad and individual variables, and length of stay in study abroad. This is followed by a discussion on intercultural competence, with a particular focus on study abroad and L2 pragmatic competence, including pragmatic competence in models of communicative competence, pragmatic competence in interactions, and pragmatic competence in intercultural communication.

2.1 Study abroad (SA)

A common belief is that Study Abroad (SA) provides the unequalled opportunity of immersion in a target culture and a target language. While SA is not typically defined in terms of the exchange length, most studies involve a length of stay between three and 12 months. It is generally acknowledged that learners return from their SA programs with improved linguistic abilities, a greater intercultural sensitivity, and a stronger incentive to learn languages. Indeed, communicative competence improves, and many learners report increases in their motivation to learn languages and cultures following SA experiences. Therefore, more second language acquisition (SLA) research is needed to help us better understand the relationship between SA and L2 acquisition.

Several researchers in foreign language education have attempted to build a theory of SLA in SA contexts. One of the first studies to understand how SA can be framed within SLA research was Freed's (1995) work on linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of SA in European and North American contexts, which documented how the benefits of SA differ from that of formal instruction contexts. Collentine's (2009) research summary published nearly two decades later identified three main themes related to SLA and SA: (1) cognitive processes connected with L2 acquisition in SA contexts, (2) sociolinguistic processes connected with input and interaction while abroad, and (3) sociocultural aspects of language learning which witnessed a shift from language-centred to learner-centred perspectives. Later work on the relationship between SLA and SA revealed the diversity of SA and opened new methods of inquiry (Kinginger, 2014; Pérez-Vidal, 2014b). For instance, this research identified how non-linguistic individual differences, such as foreign language anxiety or willingness to communicate, may influence success in SA-based L2 acquisition.

SA is known in the relevant literature also as "stay" or "residence" abroad, "in-country study", "overseas language immersion", "academic migration" (Coleman 1997), "student mobility", or even an "L2 sojourn" (Jackson 2016). It broadly refers to various types of study at foreign institutions. The primary division is whole-programme and within programme mobility (Coleman 2013: 21). The former denotes studying abroad in an entire academic cycle for a degree, while the latter represents educational mobility for obtaining credits. The understanding of SA depends on the context of the research and the professional interest of researchers. Although Kinginger (2009: 29) refers to it as a sub-field of applied linguistics, SA attracts not only the attention of linguists but also scholars concerned with educational policies, economics, psychology, and social identity (Dervin 2011). Most definitions of SA, however, emphasise the educational context of the phenomenon as a component of a university programme (Coleman 1997) undertaken for educational purposes (Kinginger 2009) in a hybrid communicative-learning context (Collentine & Freed 2004). This lack of unanimity across researchers leads to difficulties in comparing relevant research and makes drawing generalisations difficult. Nonetheless, in the present study, SA is conceptualised as the experience of crossing borders to live and learn in a foreign country.

SA frequently contrasts with formal instruction (FI). Some researchers (e.g., PérezVidal 2014) present the two in sharp contrast at opposite ends of a continuum. SA is perceived as a naturalistic context that allows for nearly full engagement in the target language and culture, which is characterised by massive opportunities for sociolinguistically various L2 inputs and interactions. By contrast, FI is understood as a conventional L2 classroom context, i.e. a place in which learners' attention is drawn to language form and meaning but gives nearly no opportunities for out-of-classroom L2 interaction. Yet, as research findings unfold, a less black-and-white picture of SA/FI contrasts begins to emerge. First, learners benefit from their prior FI in SA contexts. Second, they do not always benefit from the linguistically rich context of SA accessible to them since some do not engage in the available L2 interaction opportunities but instead interact only with their native-speaking sojourners (Devlin, 2014). Moreover, SA necessitates FI, especially in countries where the language of the instruction is the language of the target culture (i.e., when sojourners participate in classes conducted in the language of the target country).

2.2 Factors involved in study abroad

2.2.1 Individual factors

In the SA literature, individual variables such as language proficiency level, age, gender, motivation, as well as length of stay in the target language country, have been acknowledged as playing an essential role in second language learning in a SA context (Freed 1998; Huebner 1998; Engle and Engle 2004; Freed 1995; Regan 1995). Another individual characteristic that may affect the acquisition of an L2 in a SA context is the students' personality, which can determine how much contact with native speakers is required to improve the L2 (Kinginger 2008). Gender may also be a factor that affects language acquisition in the SA context. Some studies have reported that women make less progress than their male counterparts in countries where the women's role is highly different from the first language country, as in the case of American women in Russia (Brecht et al. 1995; Polanyi 1995). These studies report fewer language gains for women since they could not interact as freely as men in their program due to different roles for women in the foreign country. Other individual variables that may affect language acquisition in a SA context include previous FL

learning experience, which is thought to be a facilitating factor in L2 learning in SA (Brecht et al. 1995). Students' age can also be an influential factor. Indeed, in a study of the performance of Americans learning Russian in Russia over many years, Brecht et al (1995) reported that younger learners tend to make more progress than older learners.

Another important variable is the initial level of L2 proficiency. In their study on the acquisition of Russian by American students, Brecht et al. (1995) found that those with the highest initial level of Russian were less likely to make gains after staying abroad. Similarly, Lapkin et al. (1995) observed that, in an interprovincial exchange in which English-speaking Canadian adolescents spent a period of time in Quebec, the students who had made the most gains after the stay were those who scored lowest on the pre-tests. Additionally, in her analysis of fluency in French in the SA context, Freed (1995) reported that students who were rated as less fluent before the SA experience were perceived as having made the most progress in this area in the post-test. In an earlier study, Freed (1990) also reported that intermediate students who studied French abroad for six weeks made more progress than their advanced counterparts. Moreover, it was found that interactive out-of-class contact helped the students improve their French skills more than non-interactive contact (Freed, 1990). It has also been suggested that lower proficiency students demonstrate a greater improvement in vocabulary acquisition than advanced learners in the SA context (Milton and Meara 1995). Similar findings have been obtained for sociolinguistic competence (Regan 1995, 1998). Regarding oral performance, Llanes and Muñoz (2009) found that SA participants with a lower initial L2 proficiency level experienced greater verbal fluency and accuracy gains.

Overall, while some studies have found no differences in FL learning in an SA context in terms of the students' initial L2 proficiency level (Ife et al. 2000 for vocabulary), it seems to be generally agreed that the students who benefit the most from an SA experience are those who already have a specific command of the L2 but are not advanced learners. Some authors have attributed this apparent lack of progress at an advanced level to the types of tests used. Ife et al. (2000) argued that measuring could be problematic at the upper levels of improvement in the L2. Indeed,

performance is often analyzed as the percentage of items acquired (for instance, in the case of vocabulary) and the more knowledge students have, the more difficult it will be for them to make proportionate gains.

2.2.2 Length of study abroad

To date, the studies published on length of stay in a target language country typically suggest that the longer the stay in the target language environment, the greater the participants' gains. For example, Ife et al (2000) examined data from 36 British learners of Spanish who spent either one or two semesters abroad. The study indicated that the length of stay is crucial in the SA context since participants who stayed in the target language country for two semesters experienced greater gains than those who stayed abroad for only one semester. Dwyer (2004) also examined the correlations between specific SA program features and the outcomes of several students. After comparing SA programs of different lengths (summer term, spring/fall term and full-year), it was concluded that full-year students presented greater gains in their self-confidence in their linguistic abilities and tended to use the FL on a more regular basis than their counterparts in an at-home context.

Félix-Brasdefer (2004) examined whether the learners' abilities to negotiate and mitigate a refusal were related to the time they spent abroad. Four groups were formed according to the students' length of study in the host country: 1-1.5 months, 3-5 months, 9-13 months and 18-30 months. The results were comparable to those reported by Ife et al. (2000) and Dwyer (2004) since they suggest once more that 'the longer, the better': the learners who spent longer periods abroad showed a higher ability to cope with negotiating and mitigating refusals, and used strategies commonly used among native speakers. Moreover, Sasaki (2009) assessed written production over 3.5 years in a group of Japanese undergraduate students learning English in a SA context and an at-home university in Japan (the length of stay in the target language country in the SA group varied from participant to participant). Again, it was found that the longer the time of residence in the target language country, the greater the participants' gains.

Finally, Llanes and Muñoz (2009) investigated whether a week of difference in the target language country was enough to account for some oral gains between two

groups that spent three or four weeks abroad. The fluency measures analyzed were syllables per minute, other language word ratio, filled pauses per minute, silent pauses per minute, articulation rate, and longest fluent run. The accuracy measures were error-free clauses per number of clauses and the average number of errors per clause. Statistically significant differences were found between students in the 3-week and 4-week abroad groups, namely in silent pauses per minute, errors per clause and error-free clauses, favouring the group with an extended length of stay.

2.3 Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence has become a primary concern in our globalized society, resulting in more than 30 models of intercultural competence over 300 related constructs (Leung, Ang, & Tan, 2014; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). These definitions of intercultural competence come from diverse disciplines, including international education, communication studies, psychology and personality studies, international business, and global leadership. This diversity reflects the strong interest in this construct across wide-ranging research communities and certainly reinforces its importance in SLA research.

Despite the diversity in existing models, a close inspection reveals overlapping definitions. To illustrate, Byram (1997, 2012) defines intercultural communicative competence as the ability to mediate across linguistic and cultural boundaries by using linguistic knowledge, cultural awareness, and interpreting and negotiating skills. Fantini (2006) describes intercultural competence as “a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p. 12). Johnson et al. (2006) refer to more specific factors by defining intercultural competence as “an individual’s effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad” (p. 530). The similarity between these definitions is two-fold: intercultural competence is placed within the context of cultural differences, and it refers to specific personal qualities, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that help individuals interact effectively while engaging with cultural differences.

Communication skill is part of the core constituents in these intercultural competence models. Under the concept of *intercultural speakers*, Byram (2012) notes that successful intercultural communication involves intercultural competence and communicative competence "in any task of mediation where two distinct languacultures are present" (p. 89). Despite this recognition, current models do not always stipulate the linguistic skills necessary for successful intercultural interaction. Similarly, measures of intercultural competence are typically used to gather evidence of linguistic proficiency only indirectly through a self-report survey. Studies that assessed linguistic competence concerning intercultural competence are scant. In addition, very few studies have investigated the impact of intercultural competence on language development. Previous studies linked gains of intercultural competence to residence abroad (Almarza et al. 2015; Stemler et al., 2014; Taguchi & Xiao, & Li, 2016). However, little research has examined how learners' intercultural competence is linked to social contact or what impact such a relationship has on L2 development. This study intends to fill this gap by investigating whether L2 learners' ability to function effectively in intercultural settings affects gains in pragmatic knowledge.

2.4 Study abroad (SA) and intercultural competence

Intercultural competence has been shown to significantly improve the outcomes of L2 acquisition, as intercultural contacts positively impact L2 learning motivation (Byram 1997, Corbett 2003, Dörnyei & Csizér 2005; Taguchi, 2018; Taguchi & Xiao, & Li, 2016). Research into the links between intercultural competence and SA has revealed that cultural differences, or rather the inability to overcome them, may severely impede the success of one's stay abroad as a result of losing opportunities for interaction with native speakers (Allen & Herron 2003, Block 2007). Therefore, a lack of intercultural competence will result in reduced motivation to learn L2 (Twombly 1995, Wilkinson 1998, Isabelli-García 2006) and greater difficulties integrating into the target culture (Baker-Smemoe et al. 2014). Indeed, openness to new cultures and willingness to communicate with them has been proven to be of great value to L2 acquisition, leading to significant L2 gains during SA (e.g., Segalowitz & Freed 2004, IsabelliGarcía 2006, Martinsen 2010, Martinsen et al. 2010).

An early study by Twombly (1995) highlighted that making friends in a foreign culture was difficult for the SA sojourners. In the new cultural context of Spain, SA students from America lacked common interests with their classmates, observed a different social structure, and different attitudes toward leisure time. As they found more dissonance than expected, they reverted to their country-mates and remained in closed groups, sometimes even deciding to leave the country. Wilkinson (1998) also reported how the experience of American students studying in France had not been a shortcut to linguistic proficiency but turned out to be a source of much frustration. Unexpectedly, English was not perceived as a mode for communication, and the sojourners felt reduced to (1) a minority group and (2) membership in a French-for-foreigners class. As a result, instead of making the most of language learning opportunities, the SA participants in both studies felt troubled and confused, had difficulty integrating into the target culture, and thus experienced fewer L2 interaction opportunities.

Likewise, Allen and Herron (2003), who investigated the development of oral and listening skills of American students travelling to France and their integrative motivation and language anxiety, reported that possessing higher levels of intercultural competence helped the participants make fuller use of the SA experience. The participants faced two primary sources of anxiety while abroad: linguistic insecurity and cultural differences. This anxiety increased while interacting with native speakers leading to fewer L2 gains. However, as time passed, the learners demonstrated a significant improvement in their linguistic skills and a decrease in language anxiety. Their integrative motivation remained unchanged. This suggests that, during the pre-departure stage, more emphasis should be placed on non-linguistic factors, such as intercultural competence, which could help reduce foreign language anxiety. Of note, intercultural sensitivity and cultural adaptation seem to develop more significantly during the second half of a one-year stay, i.e. the longer the visit, the more chances for increased intercultural competence (Engle & Engle 2004, Medina-Lopez-Portillo 2004), although even a short-length stay allows almost all students to develop their intercultural sensitivity and to have a better understanding and acceptance of cultural differences (Jackson 2009).

What seems constant in these studies is that although SA participants can establish relationships with, and learn the language from, the local people, they often prefer to spend time with their compatriots. Block (2007) observed that many SA students finish their stay, realising that they could never be taken seriously as target language speakers. At the same time, those students who establish successful relationships with the locals, and become members of these communities of practice, are more likely to move beyond their ethnocentrism toward intercultural sensitivity. Isabelli-García (2006) rightly points out that the sheer fact of being surrounded by the target language does not guarantee linguistic development and informal relationships contracted by individual learners play a vital role.

Research has consistently highlighted that successful immersion in the target culture is of great value to L2 acquisition, particularly concerning the development of oral proficiency (Almarza et al. 2015; Collentine 2004, Segalowitz & Freed 2004, Isabelli-García 2006, Martinsen 2010; Stemler et al., 2014; Taguchi & Xiao, & Li, 2016). To illustrate, Baker-Smemoe et al. (2014) conducted a large-scale study of more than 100 native English speakers in SA programmes in China, Egypt, France, Mexico, Russia, and Spain, and found that the strongest predictors of L2 gains were cultural sensitivity and social network variables. Those students who scored high on the pre-departure Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003): that is, who displayed higher intercultural sensitivity, were the ones who reported more significant L2 gains. These findings corroborate earlier studies (Segalowitz & Freed 2004, Martinsen 2010, Martinsen et al. 2010), which also demonstrated the relationship between intercultural competence and SA L2 acquisition success. Importantly, even short-term programmes can benefit linguistic development if students effectively deal with the target culture (Martinsen 2010).

As a result of these observations, many American and European universities now offer pre-departure orientation sessions to prepare learners for their intercultural experiences. These sessions for students accepted into SA programmes take different forms in different institutions. They may include:

- reading orientation handbooks that provide information on safely living and travelling abroad and experiencing culture shock.

- using (online) digital resources such as videos, podcasts, infographics or presentations, which students later discuss with their mentors or complete questionnaires about them
- individual or group sessions preparing students for the experience of culture shock, informing them on the strategies for maximising the potential of their stay abroad, or simply discussing with them how to maintain good health
- country-specific orientation providing brief information about their respective destination and the academic system

Learners are sometimes asked to prepare "home ethnography" projects to hone the ethnographic skills that might help them navigate the initial stages of denial to acceptance of the foreign culture (e.g., Jackson 2006). Pre-departure intercultural training may also include ethnographic projects, experiential learning, exploiting cultural texts, and comparative approaches (Róg 2014). The effects of pre-orientation sessions measured with the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003) show that participants' inflated opinions of their intercultural competence and readiness to enter a foreign culture diminish as the sessions progress (Jackson 2009, 2018; Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012).

2.5 Study abroad and pragmatic competence in intercultural communication

The concept of pragmatic competence has shifted from an individualistic view to a more interaction-oriented understanding. For example, Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010) described pragmatic competence as a core constituent of grammatical, discourse, and strategic competence. Specifically, pragmatic competence involves two sub-components: functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge. Functional knowledge enables learners to interpret relationships between speeches and communicative functions (i.e., knowledge of different forms of a word that perform the speech act). By contrast, sociolinguistic knowledge enables learners to create appropriate utterances in the context. For example, language learners know which forms to use when asking a roommate to pass the TV remote or asking a professor to write a letter of recommendation for a job application. These two types of knowledge align with Thomas' (1983) definition of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. The former involves the linguistic forms available for performing communicative

functions, whereas the latter engages a language user's understanding of the context where those linguistic forms are used.

More recently, these conceptualizations of pragmatic competence have been viewed as knowledge of form-function-context mappings (Taguchi, 2018). Another recent model has focused on the skills that enable learners to implement pragmatic competence during interactions. Celce-Murcia (2007) proposed that interactional competence comprises two sub-components: action competence and conversation competence. Action competence refers to functional knowledge of how to perform speech acts. In contrast, conversation competence involves the knowledge of conversation mechanisms that help realize speech acts, such as turn-taking, opening and closing. Interactional competence considers pragmatic acts as collaboratively constructed among participants and distributed over multiple turns.

The knowledge of form-function-context mappings (pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge) is the core of pragmatic knowledge, but this knowledge alone is insufficient (Taguchi, 2018). Interactional competence is critical because communication is grounded in social interactions and language users. Furthermore, pragmatic knowledge is not fixed or pre-determined; it is contingent and emergent, depending on how the interlocutor responds to our proposition. Therefore, interactional competence adds another layer to pragmatic knowledge to ensure that the form-function mappings are not fixed. This view of competence as a socially co-constructed phenomenon is fundamentally different from the traditional view that competence is essentially an individual trait. According to Taguchi (2018), pragmatic competence is conceptualized as three-fold: knowledge of linguistic forms and their functional meanings, sociocultural knowledge, and the capability to use such knowledge to create a communicative act in societal interactions.

In Bachman and Palmer's (1996, 2010) framework, language knowledge consists of organisational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. Organisational knowledge in this framework deals with formal elements of language (grammar and textual elements), whereas pragmatic knowledge is related to language users and language use settings. Two types of pragmatic knowledge are distinguished in this model, namely functional knowledge, which enables learners to interpret relationships

between utterances and the communicative goals of language users (e.g., knowledge of how to perform the speech act of request), and sociolinguistic knowledge, which enables us to interpret or create utterances that are appropriate to specific language use settings (e.g., which forms to use to make a request in a specific situation).

The more recent view of pragmatic competence in social interaction also has a synergy with intercultural communication, which studies intercultural interaction as a cultural practice (Taguchi & Roever, 2017). In intercultural exchange, communication is always a dynamic process where collaboration and negotiation take place to ensure reciprocal understanding among speakers from different cultures. Conversation skills, including knowledge of turn-taking and adjacency pairs, topic management, repairs, and paralinguistic activities, are directly related to the goal of mutual understanding.

The complexity of intercultural interaction lies in the fact that these skills are often culturally specific, and speakers bring their norms to communication. Recent research on lingua franca communication has revealed that participants constantly negotiate interactional norms, standards of politeness and directness, communication styles, and cultural conventions as interactions unfold (e.g., Kecskes 2014, Cogo and House this volume). Participants either interpret others based on their L1 routines or create a new standard of communication.

Intercultural competence is broadly defined as ‘ a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself’ (Fantini 2006: 12). Some models of intercultural competence focus on stages of development by defining intercultural competence as the ability to move from an ethnocentric to an ethno-relative worldview (Bennett & Bennett 2004). Others emphasise a specific set of elements that form the basis of one’s potential to succeed in intercultural encounters. For example, Byram (1997) proposes five aspects of intercultural competence: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness.

Language competence is recognised as the core of intercultural competence, and is explicitly mentioned in many models. Fantini (2012), for instance, stresses the importance of language proficiency in intercultural competence, arguing that

developing intercultural competence with language competence promotes full access to a new culture. Similarly, under the term *intercultural speaker*, Byram (2012: 89) argues that being and acting interculturally involves 'both intercultural competence and linguist/communicative competence, in any task of mediation where two distinct langua-cultures are present.'

Despite this recognition, it suggests that intercultural and linguistic studies have developed separately. None of the models of intercultural competence provide detailed descriptions or linguistic analyses of intercultural interaction, or the linguistic abilities that are needed for successful intercultural communication. Similarly, despite the extensive literature on models of communicative competence, the concept of intercultural competence is mainly absent from linguistic research. Recent literature has noted this separatism and called for more explicit integration of linguistic and intercultural competences in research and teaching (Byram 2012; Fantini 2012; Spencer-Oatey 2010).

The framework of intercultural competence can be helpful for interlanguage pragmatics in enhancing the conceptualisation of pragmatic competence. The characteristic of pragmatic competence (e.g., the ability to interact and perform language functions in context) can be situated within the core constructs of intercultural competence, such as communicative awareness and intercultural empathy. Such a conceptualisation would go beyond the traditional scope of pragmatic competence focused on how learners perform a pragmatic act in the L2, and would extend the concept to understand how learners successfully participate in intercultural interaction.

Situating interlanguage pragmatics in a broader scope of intercultural studies is timely because, in today's multilingual society, the goal of language learning is not to become a native speaker but to become an intercultural speaker who is linguistically and interculturally competent – a person who is sensitive to other cultures and aware of their cultural position to mediate across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Byram 2012; Wilkinson 2012). Pragmatic competence can serve as a resource that assists in this mediation process. Reconceptualising pragmatic competence to reflect this notion of the intercultural speaker will elevate the practice of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP)

research from SLA matters alone to the arena of global citizenship. At the same time, pragmatic insights into intercultural interaction will help move beyond the current practice of describing intercultural competence and towards an analysis of the acquisition of that competence. Indeed, researchers look forward to future interdisciplinary research in this area.

2.6 The relationship of intercultural competence, social contact and pragmatic competence

The concept of social contact has been addressed widely in L2 pragmatics, particularly in SA settings. The popularity of the SA context in pragmatics research comes from the assumption that exposure to a community full of pragmatic input and practice is beneficial for pragmatic development. Indeed, previous studies revealed a positive relationship between the amount of social contact and pragmatic competence (Bardovi–Harlig & Bastos, 2011; Matsumura, 2003; Taguchi, 2008; Taguchi, Li, & Xiao, 2013). These studies used a survey as a time-on-task measure by asking participants to report the amount of time spent using L2 over various social activities. For example, L2 English learners experience significant gains in accurate and speedy comprehension of conversational implicatures over a five month period, and the improvement in the comprehension speed correlates with the self-reported language contact through speaking and reading (Taguch 2008). In another study, Matsumura (2003) examined L2 English learners' choice of appropriate advice-giving expressions. During a year abroad, learners' performance approximated native speakers' performance, but their self-reported exposure to English mediated this gain. That is, proficiency had an indirect effect on pragmatic progress via exposure.

The positive relationship between social contact and pragmatic competence was also found in routines. Routines, a type of formulaic language, refer to fixed or semi-fixed syntactic strings that commonly occur in certain social contexts and are tied to specific communicative functions (e.g., Bardovi–Harlig, 2012; Wray, 2002). Bardovi–Harlig and Bastos (2011) showed that the self-reported language contact positively affected recognition and production of conventional expressions in L2 English. Interestingly, the length of residence had no effect, suggesting that it is the quality of social contact while abroad, not the sheer time abroad, that matters. Taguchi et al

(2013) later added to the relationship between formulaic development and language contact with another variable at play: initial-level formulaic competence. Over a 10-week study abroad period, L2 Chinese learners developed the ability to produce formulae. There was a significant interaction between the perceived frequency of encountered formulae-use situations and the learners' pre-test scores on formulae development. Specifically, learners who started with low scores benefited more from the perceived contact with formulae situations.

These findings indicate that knowledge of various pragmatic constructs such as implicatures, speech acts, and routines is largely influenced by the amount of target language use in a study abroad context. Target language exposure, characterized by the perceived amount of language contact and frequency of participation, is related to pragmatic development. More research is needed to confirm the generalizability of these findings. It would be particularly useful to examine the development of both social contact and pragmatic competence: that is, to investigate the effect of *changing* social contact on *changing* pragmatic abilities. Indeed, with one exception (Matsumura 2003), previous studies have limited their investigation of the relationship between social contact and pragmatic competence to a single point in time. Given that the amount of social contact is likely to change over time as learners become integrated into the community, investigations should focus on change: whether the change in learners' social contact while abroad affects change in their pragmatic abilities.

2.7 Related studies on the effects of the SA context on pragmatic competence development

2.7.1 Individual differences

Pragmatic development in the SA context varies according to the nature of target pragmatic features (e.g., complexity of pragmaliguistic forms, degree of directness and conventionality, accuracy and speed) and differs across individuals. Six studies have shown that individual differences play an essential role in pragmatic development in the SA context (Ishida, 2009, 2011; Kinginger, 2008; Kinginger & Blattner, 2008; Kinginger & Farrell, 2004). For example, Kinginger and Farrrel (2004) investigated American learners' development of the French second-person

pronouns *tu*, used in an informal situation and indicating close relationship, versus *vous*, which is used in formal situations and indicates social distance. Eight American learners completed the Language Awareness Interview (LAI) before and at the end of their one-year study in France. Participants chose between *tu* and *vous* during the interview and told interviewers how they made their choices. Findings revealed that the learners improved their perception of *tu* and *vous* in the situation over time.

Additionally, the learners who had more interactions with native speakers experienced greater improvement. For example, one participant, Bill, chose to stay with a French family. He was actively involved in social events with French people and distanced himself from his American friends. As such, Bill understood the distinction between *tu* and *vous* by the end of SA. In contrast, another participant, Brianna, shared an apartment with other American peers. Her network with native speakers was limited to people she met in service encounters and class, and she maintained close contact with her American students. The limited exposure to French accounted for her slow development in the knowledge of *tu* and *vous*. These two cases suggest that personal experiences affect the development of pragmatic perception.

Similarly, Kinginger (2008) used the same instrument to investigate 24 American learners' gains in awareness of language variation in French (address forms, conversational phrases, question forms and leave-taking expressions) over a semester-long study in France. Participants took the interview before and at the end of SA. The findings revealed a notable gain in every target pragmatic feature, but there were significant individual differences. The qualitative data showed that the learners with an extensive social network of native speakers improved the most, while those with a limited network with native speakers improved the least. For example, one participant, Louis, actively developed a social network with French peers by attending local activities and doing projects with French classmates. As a result, he achieved large gains in awareness of language variation at the end of SA. Another participant, Beatrice, isolated herself from her host family and spent most of her spare time with American peers. Thus, she improved very little at the end of SA. These two cases provide further demonstrate that individual differences in access to practice opportunities affect pragmatic gains in the SA context.

Consistent with the two studies desribed above, Ishida (2009) used self-recorded conversations to investigate an American learner's change in the use of Japanese sentence-final particle *ne* over his nine-month study in Japan. Conversation analysis revealed the microgenetic development of *ne* in the SA context. In the first three months, the learner could use *ne* to initiate a topic. In the fifth month, as he became more familiar with people in the target community, he became able to show agreement by using soo desu *ne* when talking with native speakers. In the eighth month, he became able to demonstrate alignment with *ne*-ending questions in conversations with native speakers because he had established membership in the target community. In other words, as personal engagement in the target community increased, the learner improved his participation in conversations with native speakers from a peripheral listener to a co-constructor of interaction.

In summary, these studies reveal that individual differences in exposure to the target language, opportunities for practice, and engagement in interaction can influence development in different aspects of pragmatic features such as degree of directness and conventionality, accuracy and speed aspects of pragmatic performance. In essence, pragmatic development in the SA context relies on the complex interplay between the nature of target language features, language users, and the context of language use (Kasper, 1992; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2010; Thomas, 1983).

2.7.2 Positive effects

Three studies have demonstrated a facilitative role of the SA context in pragmatic development and revealed an overall trajectory toward target-like norms (Matsumura, 2001, 2003; Schauer, 2006a). Matsumura (2001), for example, investigated the change in perception of English advice-giving expressions in Japanese learners of English in Japan and Canada (EFL and ESL groups). It was shown that more ESL students selected target-like expressions as time passed, suggesting that the SA context facilitates ESL learners' development of pragmatic perception. In a follow up study, Matsumura (2003) examined the effects of general proficiency (determined by TOEFL) and exposure to the target language (measured by a self-report questionnaire) on ESL learners' development of pragmatic perception over an eight-month study in Canada. Results showed that exposure to the target language had a

greater effect on pragmatic development than general proficiency. There was also an indirect effect of available command on pragmatic development via exposure to the target language.

Similarly, Schauer (2006a) examined the development of sensitivity to pragmatic and grammatical errors in L2 English. Sixteen ESL learners in England and 17 EFL learners in Germany took a video-and-questionnaire task at the beginning and the end of the nine-month SA. Task items contained utterances with either grammatical or pragmatic errors in spoken acts of apology, refusal, request, and suggestion. Participants were asked to decide the appropriateness and correctness of the utterances and rated the severity of errors. The results showed that, compared with EFL learners, ESL learners were more sensitive to pragmatic errors, and they reached the native speaker level at the end of their stay in England. ESL learners also identified more pragmatic than grammatical errors. Post hoc interviews showed that interactions with, and observations of, native speakers accounted for learners' development in the SA context.

2.7.3 Mixed effects on different pragmatic aspects

Previous studies have revealed a nuanced picture of pragmatic gains in the SA context, with SA effects varying according to different aspects of pragmatic features. Among these studies, research on the production of speech acts demonstrated that the impact of the SA context differed across the type of speech acts examined (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Barron, 2003, 2007; Bataller, 2010; Cole & Anderson, 2001; Schauer, 2006b, 2007; Warga & Scholmberger, 2007). Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) analyzed naturalistic advising sessions between student and professor to investigate ESL learners' development of suggestion and rejection over a one-semester study in a U.S. university. The results showed that, as time passed, there was an increase in learners' use of recommendations. Still, the forms of suggestion remained non-native, including a low use of mitigators (e.g., "maybe", "I was wondering") when making suggestions to the professor. This non-native-like production remained the same over one semester. In contrast, learners' production of rejection became more native-like over time: they used less refusal and more credible reasons to reject the professor's suggestion (e.g., "having taken a similar course at another university"). These different development patterns between suggestion and refusal indicate that speech acts may differ in their degree of development; that is, some speech acts may develop more quickly in the SA context than others.

Similarly, Cole and Anderson (2001) revealed Japanese ESL learners' slow productive development of downgraders when using requests (e.g., politeness marker "please", the modal verb "could") over a 10-month study abroad. They used the discourse completion task (DCT), which included scenarios of different interlocutor relationships: interactions with teacher or homestay parents (higher social status) and classmates (equal social status). Japanese learners of English who studied in New Zealand and Canada for ten months took the DCT before and after their SA. Results showed that learners' request production remained non-native-like after SA because of the significantly low use of downgraders in all situations, except when talking to a teacher. Learners' slow development in the use of downgraders in request (Cole & Anderson2001) and mitigators in suggestion (Bardovi-Harlig &Hartford, 1993) may be because learners lack appropriate linguistic resources produced more complex pragmatic forms in the situation.

Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig (2000) also examined English modal expressions. In their study, eight ESL learners in a U.S. university were interviewed monthly over one year. After examining their use of six modal expressions (“maybe”, “think”, “can”, “will”, “would” and “could”), they found that learners’ use of “maybe”, “think”, “can”, and “well” significantly outperformed their use of “would” and “could” in terms of token frequency. Specifically, the learners began using “think” and “maybe” by the end of the first month. Shortly after that, they started to produce “can” and “will” and, finally, after six months, they began using “would” and “could”.

Consistent with studies on pragmatic production in the SA context, differential gain rates have also been observed in studies on pragmatic comprehension (Bouton, 1992, 1994; Taguchi, 2008a, 2008b). For example, Bouton (1992) used a multiple-choice test to assess ESL learners’ ability to understand implicatures in written conversations. Thirty participants took the test twice throughout four and a half years. Results showed that the learners improved their pragmatic comprehension over time, but seven of the 33 test items remained problematic in the second test. Among these items, five were indirect criticism. These findings indicate that learners’ development is affected by types of implicature.

Similarly, Taguchi (2008a) used a computerized listening task to measure 57 ESL (in America) and 60 EFL (in Japan) learners’ change in comprehending indirect refusals and opinions over seven weeks. Indirect refusals are conventional because they are associated with routinized discourse patterns (e.g., giving a reason for the refusal). In contrast, indirect opinions are unconventional because they do not adhere to specific linguistic forms, for example indicating a negative opinion of a movie by saying, “I was glad when the movie was over.” Results indicated that both ESL and EFL groups achieved significant gains in accuracy and speed (measured by response time) of pragmatic comprehension over time. However, the ESL group demonstrated a more considerable gain in speed than in comprehension accuracy, and they did not improve as much as the EFL group in comprehension accuracy. These findings suggest that the SA context has a greater effect on speed than accuracy in understanding pragmatic meaning. In another study, Taguchi (2008b) focused on Japanese learners’ gains in

pragmatic comprehension over a four-month investigation in the U.S.A. The same multiple-choice task was administered three times to 44 Japanese ESL learners during the SA. Consistent with Taguchi (2008a), the results showed significant gains in accuracy scores and response times, but the magnitude of improvement in response time was larger than that of accuracy scores. When indirect refusals and indirect opinions were compared, significant gains were found in accuracy and response time for comprehension of indirect refusals, but not for indirect views. In other words, the learners achieved larger gains in comprehending conventional pragmatic meaning (indirect refusals) than unconventional pragmatic meaning (indirect opinions) in the SA context.

2.8 Related studies in Thai Learners of English

Several studies have used speech acts of requests as a basis to investigate the development of Thai EFL learners' pragmatic competence. For instance, Chiravate (2011) conducted a study comparing 30 native speakers of American English with 60 Thai EFL learners, with the latter divided evenly into high- and low-proficiency groups. The study's objective was to understand the Thai EFL learners' perception of politeness in English requests. Participants were asked to choose only one politeness strategy out of six choices that they would be likely to use in twelve situations that varied in social and psychological factors. The findings revealed differences between the politeness strategies perceived to be appropriate by the EFL learners and the native English speakers, with the degree of closeness in the requester-requestee relationship having a particular influence on the differences between the EFL learners and native English speakers. For example, while native English speakers tended to employ a moderate politeness strategy (Can you...?) in intimate relationship situations, Thai EFL learners employed the most direct strategy: an imperative sentence. The use of imperatives in these situations can be regarded as evidence of L1 influence on the learners' use of politeness strategies, as direct requests in Thai society are typically used in a socially close requester-requestee relationship.

In a study investigating the request production of Thai EFL learners, Suttipanyo (2007) compared the DCT-elicited responses of 22 Thai EFL learners and 22 native speakers of American English. Both groups favoured conventionally direct request

strategies, followed by direct and non-conventionally indirect requests. However, the strategies used by the Thai learners of English were observed to be less varied than those of the native English speakers. Furthermore, the requests of Thai learners of English were limited in their use of internal modifications compared to native English speakers. Other notable differences included the effect of relative power between requester and requestee, with requests made to superiors using direct strategies being more frequent with Thai learners of English than with native English speakers.

Like Suttipanyo (2007), Wongwarangkul (2000) used requests to study Thai EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatics, focusing on the impact of the relative age between requester and requestee. Unlike other studies reviewed in this section, Wongwarangkul (2000) included learners with extensive experience using English with significant experience working and studying abroad. The results revealed an influence of age on both the Thai and English request formulation of participants, as demonstrated by the number of internal modifications, length of utterance, and the use of pronouns. Politeness toward older requestees was mainly characterised by increased use of politeness markers and the address term 'sir'. Furthermore, the length of utterance was observed to be longer in situations involving requests to older requestees when compared to those involving younger requestees. The use of these patterns in the participants' English requests may represent L1 transfer; however, it was noted that transfer of this nature does not necessarily represent pragmatic failure as long as the speaker's intended message is successfully communicated (Wongwarangkul, 2000).

The speech act of apologies has been the focus of several studies involving Thai learners of English. Pin-Ngern (2015), for example, used a written DCT to investigate the effect of proficiency on learners' production of apologies in English. Participants included 20 Thai EFL learners divided equally into high and low proficiency groups. Pin-Ngern (2015) reported no significant proficiency effect concerning the learners' choices of apology strategies or the influence of social variables including social distance, social status, or the degree of severity of the offense. Both groups were also susceptible to social status, reflected in the strategies used in situations involving an apology to a professor, which is attributed to the Thai cultural norm of respect for

teachers. However, differences were observed between the two groups, with high proficiency learners demonstrating more mitigation and greater complexity in their apologies compared to the low proficiency learners.

Consistent with previous studies (Thijittang 2010; Bergman & Kasper 1993), Pin-Ngern (2015) also found contextual variables had a significant effect on the manner in which Thai learners of English made apologies. Thijittang (2010) found that Thai EFL learners were more sensitive to social status when compared to the norms of native English speakers. Apologies from speakers of higher social status were less likely to contain explicit apology strategies, instead expressing a lack of intention rather than an acceptance of blame. In contrast, lower social status speakers were more likely to accept blame when apologizing to a person of higher status. Social distance was also a significant factor in the realization of apologies; however, this was seen as having a comparable effect to that of native speakers of English. Bergman and Kasper (1993) also reported significant differences in how native speakers of American English and native speakers of Thai assessed the severity of various offenses. For example, native Thai speakers were more likely to see offenses involving a religious image as severe, whereas native speakers of American English were more likely to see offenses involving a mistake made by a waiter or a student's plagiarism as serious. It was concluded that L1 pragmatic transfer played a role in the majority of the learners' responses.

In a study investigating the effect of explicit instruction on Thai EFL learners' production of apologies and complaints, Noonkong, Damnet, and Charttrakul (2017) elicited pre- and postinstruction responses using a DCT which were then rated for appropriateness by native English speakers. Using a pragmatic consciousness-raising approach, grounded in Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis, the researchers devised a twelve-hour course to introduce apology and complain strategies favoured by native speakers and promote pragmatic awareness of how these strategies interact with contextual factors. The results revealed significant improvement in the learners' production of both speech acts. However, the low scores in "correct expressions" and "quality of information" indicate that the learners may be limited by their grammatical

proficiency. It was also noted that a delayed posttest would offer a more reliable means of measuring lasting changes to the learners' pragmatic competence.

Sirikhan and Prapphal (2011) investigated the relationship between proficiency and pragmatic competence in the context of hotel front-office work. Participants were fourth-year Thai university students undertaking internships at hotels in Thailand and were divided into high, intermediate, and low proficiency groups. Data were gathered using a closed and open item questionnaire that elicited responses relating to eight speech acts: informing, apologizing, handling complaints, offering, promising, requesting, thanking, and responding to compliments. The results showed a significant proficiency effect, with high proficiency learners performing closer to target norms in the use of lexical/phrasal modifications in particular, including politeness markers and forms of address. The use of syntactic changes, such as adverbials, was also influenced by learners' proficiency but to a lesser extent. The results also showed that regardless of proficiency, pragmatic failures occurred in both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of the participants' production.

In a study focusing on Thai EFL learners' refusal production, Wannaruk (2008) explored the relationships between proficiency, L1 transfer, and learners' use of refusal strategies and modifications. Participants included 40 native speakers of American English, 40 native Thai speakers, and 40 Thai EFL students, who were further divided into high intermediate, intermediate, and low intermediate proficiency groups. The findings suggested that, in general, the refusals of both Thai and English speakers share similar strategies. However, differences were observed in the Thai sensitivity to refusals made to people of higher status and in the value of expressing modesty. Both of these were observed to be a factor in L1 pragmatic transfer in the Thai EFL learner data. In addition, L1 transfer was influenced by proficiency, with lower proficiency learners demonstrating a greater degree of L1 transfer. Similar results were reported by Chantharasombat and Pongpairoj (2018) in their study of Thai EFL learners' responses to written negative English Yes/No questions. Their results demonstrated higher rates of L1 pragmatic transfer among lower proficiency learners, suggesting a greater reliance on L1 pragmatic knowledge, which leads to pragmatic failure with the target pragmatic feature.

Worathumrong and Luksaneeyanawin (2016) investigated the effect of exposure to the target language on the compliments of Thai EFL learners. Thai EFL participants were divided into high exposure and low exposure groups. Their DCT responses were compared to those of native Thai speakers and native speakers of American English. The high exposure group was observed to generally conform more closely to the norms of native English speakers. However, evidence of L1 transfer was observed in the compliments of both groups in the overuse of kinship address terms, such as 'sister' and 'brother'. The low exposure group's preference for hearer-oriented perspectives in their compliments was attributed to training transfer, reflecting a greater reliance on forms learned in the classroom for low exposure learners. Proficiency was also a factor in Thai EFL learners' pragmatic competence in a study investigating compliment responses, such that evidence of L1 transfer was observed in the compliment responses of low proficiency learners, while high proficiency learners approximated the compliment response patterns of native English speakers (Phoocharoensil 2012).

2.9 Chapter summary

This chapter presents a of relevant literature pertaining to intercultural communication, social contact, and pragmatic competence, which serve as essential foundational concepts to the theoretical framework used in the current study. In the interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) field, SA has been widely acknowledged as a beneficial context for pragmatic development. However, despite this common agreement that SA promotes L2 pragmatic competence, due to the non-linear and comprehensive nature of the L2 pragmatic development process, the effect of SA remains inconclusive and is largely influenced by numerous factors (Taguchi, 2015) such as length of stay in the target language country, learners' L2 proficiency, pedagogical instruction, individual characteristics, language socialization, and intensity of interaction.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODS

This study investigates the pragmatic development of second language (L2) learners, focusing in particular on pragmatic learning and routines during a study abroad (SA) context. This chapter outlines the research methodology, including the research approach, participants and context, instrumentations, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

3.1 Research design and approach

A mixed-methods design will be used to collect qualitative and quantitative data in the current study. Mixed methods approaches can improve the quality of research by assisting, complementing, or expanding on the strengths of the other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Ivankova & Greer, 2015; Riazi & Candlin, 2014; Riazi, 2017). Specifically, the present study uses the modified version of Freed et al.'s (2004) language contact profile (LCP) to gather the quantitative data, while an interview will be used to collect detailed information regarding pragmatic development, with a focus on pragmatic routines and how intercultural adaptations and intensity of social interactions affect pragmatic gains.

3.2 Participants and Setting

This study focuses on a diverse group of sixteen Thai participants who embarked on a study abroad experience. Each participant brings a unique background, academic history, and level of English proficiency to the study, offering a rich, varied perspective on the impact of study abroad on language acquisition and cultural immersion. Also, note that all names used in this study were pseudonyms to keep them confidential. The detailed descriptions of the participants are listed below:

> **John** is a 24-year-old with a Bachelor's degree in Accounting. Despite having 14 years of English education, his proficiency is rated at the pre-intermediate level, and he has no overseas experience prior to this study.

Phil, aged 28, holds a degree in Computer Business. Like John, Phil has had 14 years of English schooling, is assessed at the pre-intermediate English proficiency level, and has not had the opportunity to travel abroad before.

Pete, also 28, has a background in English and Math. His proficiency in English is pre-intermediate, supported by 14 years of English education. Unlike John and Phil, Pete has previous overseas experience, adding a layer of depth to his study abroad journey.

Ann, a 24-year-old with a degree in Chinese, shares the pre-intermediate English proficiency level with 14 years of English education under her belt. Ann's prior experience abroad sets the stage for a nuanced understanding of her study abroad experience.

Irene is 24 years old and has a background in tourism and business administration. Her English proficiency is considered elementary despite having 14 years of schooling in the language. Irene brings overseas experience to her study abroad endeavor, potentially influencing her adaptability and cultural integration.

Manow, at 28, holds a degree in Humanity and has a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency after 12 years of English education. Manow has no previous overseas experience.

Molly, a 26-year-old with a degree in Traditional Medicine, is at an elementary level of English proficiency, with 12 years of schooling in the language. Molly's prior overseas experience may offer her unique insights into the study abroad process.

Fai, also 26, has studied Business Administration and is at the elementary level of English proficiency after 12 years of English education. Fai approaches the study abroad experience without previous overseas exposure.

Jane, aged 28, comes from a background in business information. She has a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency with 14 years of schooling and brings prior overseas experience to her study abroad journey.

Chris is 28 years old and has studied Multimedia Art. With a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency after 12 years of education, Chris's previous overseas experiences may enrich his study abroad learning.

Nutty, 26, with a degree in Law and 12 years of English education, is assessed at the pre-intermediate level of English proficiency and has no prior overseas experience.

Paul, at 28, pursued Education and is at an elementary level of English proficiency after ten years of English education, with no overseas experience before this study.

Mona, a 24-year-old with a degree in Information and Communication Technology, has a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency following 14 years of education and has not travelled abroad before.

George, also 24, studied Business English and is unique in having 16 years of English education, leading to a pre-intermediate proficiency level, yet he has no prior experience abroad.

Mod, aged 27, with a background in Marketing, shares a pre-intermediate English proficiency level after 14 years of schooling and enters the study abroad program without previous overseas experience.

Jenny, like several of her peers, is 24 years old and has studied Accounting. She has a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency, achieved after 14 years of English education, and no prior overseas experience.

This diverse cohort offers a comprehensive look into the varied experiences and outcomes of studying abroad, considering their different academic backgrounds, levels of English proficiency, and prior exposure to international environments.

This study included 16 L2 learners of Thai (L1) who participated in a 12-week SA program in Sydney, Australia. Many participants lived with other international students (e.g., from China, Japan, Korea, and Brazil), and some of them lived with other Thai friends during the SA. Before travelling to Australia, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire (Li et al., 2014). The SA programme was structured so that participants attended class four days per weekday, and the class duration was two hours on some days and four hours on others. Classes were not held on weekends, which allowed the participants to spend time in the host city or to travel. Participants could opt to remain in Sydney or travel to enjoy the cultural and linguistic benefits of the host city.

3.3 Research instruments

3.3.1 Language Contact Profile (LCP)

The intensity of interaction questionnaire used in this study was a modified version of the Language Contact Profile (LCP) developed by Freed, Dewey, Segalowitz and Halter (2004). The LCP is a self-report questionnaire for participants abroad. It was used to collect demographic and background information and information about specific language use, measured in hours per week, in each of the four language skills:

speaking, listening, reading and writing. The LCP consists of demographic information, intercultural communicative competence, and social contact. The intercultural communicative competence part measures the cross-cultural adaptability of the learner and assesses the development of intercultural competence in the context of study abroad. The social contact part captured the intensity of language use in different social activities. This part included interactive activities (e.g., communicating with friends) and non-interactive routines (e.g., watching TV and listening to music on podcasts). Each item asks learners to report the number of hours they spend on these respective tasks or activities based on their reflections on a typical week.

The language contact survey aimed to assess the amount of contact in English that participants experience in different contexts, such as the classroom, with friends, strangers or neighbours. This instrument used comprises a preliminary question about living situations. The participants were asked to indicate how many days per week and how many hours per day they spent using the L2 in different scenarios. The modified version of Freed et al.'s (2004) LCP was applied in this study to meet the purpose of the study analysis (i.e., to explore the contexts in which L2 was used) and to address some of the major limitations of the original instrument. To avoid ambiguity in the survey questionnaire items (Fenandez & Tapia, 2016), particular situations that illustrated the context in which the interactions took place (e.g., service personnel) were included.

3.3.2 Meaasure of pragmatic competence

The instrument utilized to gauge pragmatic competence in this research was modified from the original version created by Taguchi, Xiao, and Li (2016). The decision to employ this particular tool was based on several factors that underscore its suitability and effectiveness for this study's objectives. Initially, the instrument's previous application in investigating the progression of intercultural competence within the context of study abroad programs (as highlighted in the work of William, 2005) indicates its relevance and adaptability to similar research frameworks. This prior use provides a foundational basis for its selection, ensuring the instrument can capture the nuanced dimensions of intercultural competence development in comparable settings.

Moreover, the sub-constructs evaluated by this instrument align closely with the core components frequently emphasized in the discourse on intercultural competence. The instrument's focus areas, as delineated by scholars such as Kelley and Meyers (1999), are widely recognized within the academic community for their critical role in understanding intercultural interactions and competencies. This alignment with established literature further validates the choice of this tool, reinforcing its academic credibility and relevance.

Furthermore, the instrument's reliability and the validity of its constructs are strongly supported by empirical evidence. Notably, it boasts robust reliability estimates, evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .90 in Kelley and Meyers's (1995) research and a similarly high coefficient of .89 across all items in the study conducted by Taguchi, Xiao, and Li (2016). These statistical reliability indicators underscore the instrument's consistency and accuracy in measuring pragmatic competence, further supporting its selection for this study.

In summary, the adoption of this modified instrument from Taguchi, Xiao, and Li (2016) for measuring pragmatic competence was driven by its proven applicability in related research contexts, its comprehensive assessment of key sub-constructs within intercultural competence, and its demonstrated reliability and validity through prior studies. This combination of factors makes it an exceptionally fitting tool for exploring the development of pragmatic and intercultural competence among participants in a study abroad environment.

3.3.3 English Language Test

The English Language test, created and validated by the Australian International College, serves as a proprietary assessment tool designed to evaluate the language proficiency and progress of students enrolled in English courses. This test is structured into four key sections: speaking, reading, writing, and listening, with each section contributing 15 points towards a total possible score of 60.

To assess receptive language skills, which encompass listening and reading, the test incorporates a variety of question formats, such as multiple-choice, gap-filling, and short answers. This approach is aimed at gauging students' ability to understand and process information presented in English. On the other hand, productive language

skills, specifically writing and speaking, are evaluated through tasks that require students to actively produce English language content following the guidelines of IELTS. These tasks are reviewed by a pair of native English-speaking instructors, who possess official certification from the state's department of education. Their assessments are based on students' ability to communicate effectively and accurately in written and spoken English, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of language proficiency across all four critical skill areas.

3.3.4 Semi-structured interview

A subgroup of three participants was requested to complete the semi-structured interview at the beginning and the end of the semester. The interview aimed to elicit reasons for individual trajectories of pragmatic acquisition, adaptation development, and patterns of interaction. The interview was conducted in Thai, and it lasted 10-30 minutes. The interview was also recorded. The interview was semi-structured to allow flexibility in the pre-selected issues, including aspects related to sociocultural adaptation, amount and nature of interactions, and awareness of knowledge of pragmatic routines.

3.4 Data collection procedures

The methodology employed to gather and assess data on the study participants' pragmatic competence and interaction within the study abroad environment was meticulously designed to ensure depth and flexibility in exploring their experiences. The data collection process was anchored around two main instruments: the Language Contact Profile (LCP) questionnaire and semi-structured interviews conducted at two critical junctures – the onset and conclusion of the 12-week study abroad semester.

The LCP questionnaire, a modified version adapted to fit the study's specific needs, was administered to participants in a traditional pen-and-paper format during their first week in Sydney, Australia. This initial administration aimed to establish a baseline of participants' language use, social contacts, and engagement in activities within their new environment. As participants completed the LCP, the process was carefully recorded to capture their immediate responses and any interaction with the research team regarding the questionnaire's items. This approach allowed for real-time

clarification and adjustment, ensuring that participants fully understood the questions posed, thereby enhancing the reliability of the data collected.

In addition to the LCP questionnaire, participants were asked to provide monthly updates detailing their previous day's activities, social interactions, and language use. This continuous reporting mechanism was designed to offer a dynamic and nuanced view of participants' engagement with their surroundings and the evolution of their language skills and social networks over time. The flexibility afforded by email correspondence meant that participants could reflect on their experiences and report them in a convenient manner conducive to thoughtful responses.

The interview component of the data collection was equally crucial to the study's objectives. Conducted during the last week of the study abroad program, interviews were designed to delve deeper into the participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and reflections on their language learning journey. The interviews were videotaped and recorded, ensuring a rich, multi-modal dataset that could be analyzed for both content and nuance. Participants were invited to schedule their interviews at a time that suited them best, with the duration of each interview being flexible to accommodate the natural flow of conversation and the participant's willingness to share their experiences. This approach fostered a comfortable and open dialogue environment, encouraging participants to express themselves freely and comprehensively.

Towards the end of the program, participants were again assessed for their pragmatic competence, mirroring the initial measurement taken at the program's beginning. This second assessment aimed to identify and quantify any changes or improvements in participants' ability to use language effectively and appropriately in diverse social and cultural contexts, thereby offering a measure of the study abroad program's impact on their communicative skills.

The study employed a thoughtful and participant-centered approach to data collection, emphasizing flexibility, clarity, and continuous participant engagement. This methodology facilitated gathering detailed and varied data on participants' experiences and language development. It underscored the study's commitment to understanding the multifaceted nature of language learning and intercultural

adaptation in a study-abroad context. Through the LCP questionnaire, weekly email updates, and in-depth interviews, the study sought to capture a holistic view of the participants' journey, contributing valuable insights into the dynamics of study abroad programs and their efficacy in fostering pragmatic competence and intercultural understanding.

3.5 Data analysis

In exploring language acquisition and intercultural competence among study abroad participants, the current study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to achieve a comprehensive analysis. The quantitative component relied on using SPSS 26, a statistical software that facilitated the computation of descriptive statistics. This phase focused on quantifying the time participants dedicated to various language activities, providing a numeric foundation to evaluate the extent of their engagement with the target language during their study abroad experience.

The Rating Scales for Speaking Test Scenarios, slightly adapted from Taguchi, Xiao, and Li (2016), is a structured tool designed to assess spoken language proficiency, mainly focusing on pragmatic competence in different communicative situations. This scale ranges from 1 to 6, with each score corresponding to a specific level of performance, as outlined below:

> **Score 6 (Excellent)**: This highest rating is awarded when the communicative function is fully realized, with expressions deemed fully appropriate for the given scenario by native speaker raters. It signifies virtually no syntactic or lexical errors, showcasing a high degree of linguistic proficiency and situational appropriateness.
>
> **Score 5 (Very good)**: The communicative function is realised chiefly at this level. The expression is mostly appropriate for the scenario as judged by the native speaker rater, with only limited syntactic or lexical errors. These errors are minor and do not interfere with the intended meaning, indicating a strong grasp of language use in context.
>
> **Score 4 (Good)**: A “Good” rating indicates that the communicative function is somewhat realized. The expression may be somewhat appropriate for the scenario, possibly including verbosity or a mismatch in directness or indirectness. Syntactic

and/or lexical errors at this level tend to interfere with meaning or appropriateness but not to the extent that communication is significantly hindered.

Score 3 (Fair): This rating reflects a partial realization of the communicative function, with expressions clearly inappropriate for the scenario regarding directness, formality, or semantic formula. Notable syntactic and/or lexical errors at this level clearly interfere with the meaning or appropriateness of the response.

Score 2 (Poor): Assigned when the communicative function is not realized, expressions at this level are incomprehensible due to significant errors or completely irrelevant to the scenario. The response may be too limited for a reliable judgment, indicating a substantial gap in linguistic competence or understanding of the scenario.

Score 1 (Cannot evaluate): The lowest score is given when no response is provided, indicating either an opt-out by the participant or a total lack of engagement with the task.

This rating scale is essential for evaluating the nuanced aspects of language proficiency, focusing on how well participants can use language in specific, real-world scenarios. By delineating different competency levels, the scale provides a framework for understanding participants' strengths and areas for improvement in pragmatic language use.

Simultaneously, the study ventured into a qualitative examination to delve deeper into the nuances of participants' language use and intercultural interactions. A manual recursive analysis was implemented to identify and analyze themes to uncover patterns within the participants' experiences. This detailed thematic analysis allowed for tracing individual and collective narratives among the 16 participants, offering insights into the subjective aspects of their study abroad journey.

Acknowledging the challenges associated with self-reported data, particularly the potential for inaccuracies in reporting time spent in language-related activities, the study incorporated mechanisms to validate the data collected through the Language Contact Profile (LCP). Scholars like Collentine (2011) and Susan (2017) have emphasized the importance of establishing the validity of self-report instruments in language research. The study employed triangulation strategies to address this concern and enhance the credibility of the findings. Semi-structured qualitative

interviews served as a critical tool for this purpose, enabling a direct inquiry into the participants' engagement with the second language (L2), the nature of their activities, and the dynamics of their interactions with locals and fellow learners. These interviews extended to the conversation partners of the participants, offering an external perspective on the nature and depth of the interactions.

The process of capturing these qualitative insights involved audio recording and transcribing the interviews, ensuring that the richness of the dialogues was preserved for analysis. To further solidify the reliability of the qualitative findings, the transcribed data underwent a rigorous process of inter-coding, where multiple researchers independently coded the data to identify themes and patterns. This step was complemented by cross-checking the coded data with participants, allowing for verification and clarification, thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis.

In sum, the study's methodological framework was designed to address the complexities of measuring language acquisition and intercultural competence in the context of study abroad. By combining quantitative data analysis with a nuanced qualitative inquiry and employing strategies to validate self-reported data, the study aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the participants' experiences. This approach not only offered a detailed picture of their linguistic and cultural integration but also contributed to the broader field of applied linguistics by showcasing the effectiveness of mixed-methods research in capturing the multifaceted nature of language learning abroad.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The execution of this study was firmly anchored in ethical considerations and compliance with the standards set by the Ethics Committee of Mahasarakham University. Ensuring the integrity of the research process and the welfare of the participants were paramount concerns from the outset. To this end, a series of meticulously designed procedural steps were implemented to recruit participants while fully respecting their rights and ensuring informed consent.

The initial step in this ethical journey involved securing the necessary approvals for the study's conduct. The process commenced with obtaining ethical clearance from

the Ethics Committee, a prerequisite for moving forward with any research involving human participants. This approval was instrumental in legitimizing the study and ensuring its design and methodologies adhered to established ethical guidelines. Subsequently, the college director's approval was sought and facilitated by submitting a Participation Information Sheet and a Consent Form for Principals. This document details the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits as a foundation for transparent communication and informed decision-making by the college administration.

Upon receiving the necessary approvals, the recruitment phase began. All potential participants were provided a Participant Information Sheet explicitly designed for them. This document offered a comprehensive overview of the research, including its objectives, the nature of participation required, and assurances regarding confidentiality and the ethical treatment of data. Accompanying this informational sheet was a consent form, a critical document that participants were required to sign if they chose to partake in the study. This consent form served as a tangible expression of their voluntary participation, underpinned by a full understanding of their involvement.

Notably, the study was designed to uphold the principle of voluntariness at every stage. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. This assurance was a cornerstone of the study's ethical framework, emphasizing respect for participant autonomy and the importance of informed consent.

In sum, the recruitment and participation of study subjects were conducted with the utmost attention to ethical principles. The rigorous process of obtaining approvals, providing detailed information to potential participants, and securing informed consent in writing underscored the study's commitment to ethical research practices. By ensuring that participants were fully informed and consenting, the study not only complied with the ethical standards of Mahasarakham University but also fostered an environment of trust and respect between researchers and participants, laying a solid foundation for the research to proceed on ethical grounds.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This study investigates pragmatic development of second language (L2) learners, focusing in particular on pragmatic learning and routines during a study abroad (SA) context. This chapter outlines the research methodology, including the research approach, participants and context, instrumentations, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

4.1 Students' self-reports on language use during study abroad

This research aimed to explore how communicative competence and intercultural competence are interconnected in the context of Thai English language learners. Building on Byram's (2012) work, it focused on interactional communicative competence as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately during intercultural exchanges. Specifically, the study looked into pragmatic competence, which is understanding linguistic expressions and their societal roles in communication. Thomas (1983) distinguished between pragmalinguistic knowledge, or the understanding of language expressions for specific functions, and sociopragmatic knowledge, or the understanding of how these expressions are applied within particular contexts. These knowledge areas are interlinked, necessitating that learners grasp both the linguistic expressions and the contextual nuances where these expressions are used. The study posited that pragmatic knowledge, rooted in sociocultural practices, could be influenced by the extent and nature of one's social interactions and experiences. Thus, it examined the relationship between intercultural competence, pragmatic competence, and social engagement, investigating whether

enhanced intercultural competence among L2 English learners could lead to more social interaction, which in turn could improve their pragmatic knowledge, demonstrated through their ability to engage in spoken conversations effectively.

Table 2 presents an analysis of self-reported data concerning the amount of time Thai students studying abroad spent speaking English outside of class with native or fluent speakers. This research, encompassing 16 participants, aimed to quantify the extent of practical language exposure students received in a naturalistic environment. The findings are organized into three key areas: overall exposure, exposure by interlocutors, and exposure by tasks, providing a nuanced view of language practice outside the formal learning setting.

The overall data analysis revealed that, on average, participants engaged in conversation in English for approximately 13.06 hours, with a notable variability indicated by a standard deviation of 8.25 hours. This variation underscores participants' diverse experiences, with the minimum and maximum reported times spanning 2 to 28 hours. Such a range suggests differences in individual opportunities or inclinations to engage in English conversations.

When examining the time spent speaking English by interlocutors—referring to the different categories of English speakers participants interacted with—the average time notably increased to 40.38 hours. This significant rise, accompanied by a standard deviation of 21.36 hours and a range from 8 to 75 hours, highlights the impact of social interactions on language practice. It suggests that engagements with various interlocutors present substantial opportunities for language exposure beyond the classroom, albeit with wide-ranging experiences among students.

Furthermore, the analysis of time spent engaging in English by tasks illustrates an intermediate level of exposure, with an average of 23.94 hours. The reported times vary significantly, as indicated by a standard deviation of 17.83 hours and a minimum and maximum time of 2 and 60 hours, respectively. This data points to the varied nature of task-based language practice, where the type of activity significantly influences the amount of language use outside formal education.

Overall, the research findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of language exposure during study abroad programs. The data indicates a broad spectrum of experiences practicing English in everyday contexts, influenced by the diversity of interlocutors and tasks. Such insights underscore the importance of encouraging students to seek varied and meaningful language practice opportunities to enhance their proficiency and cultural understanding.

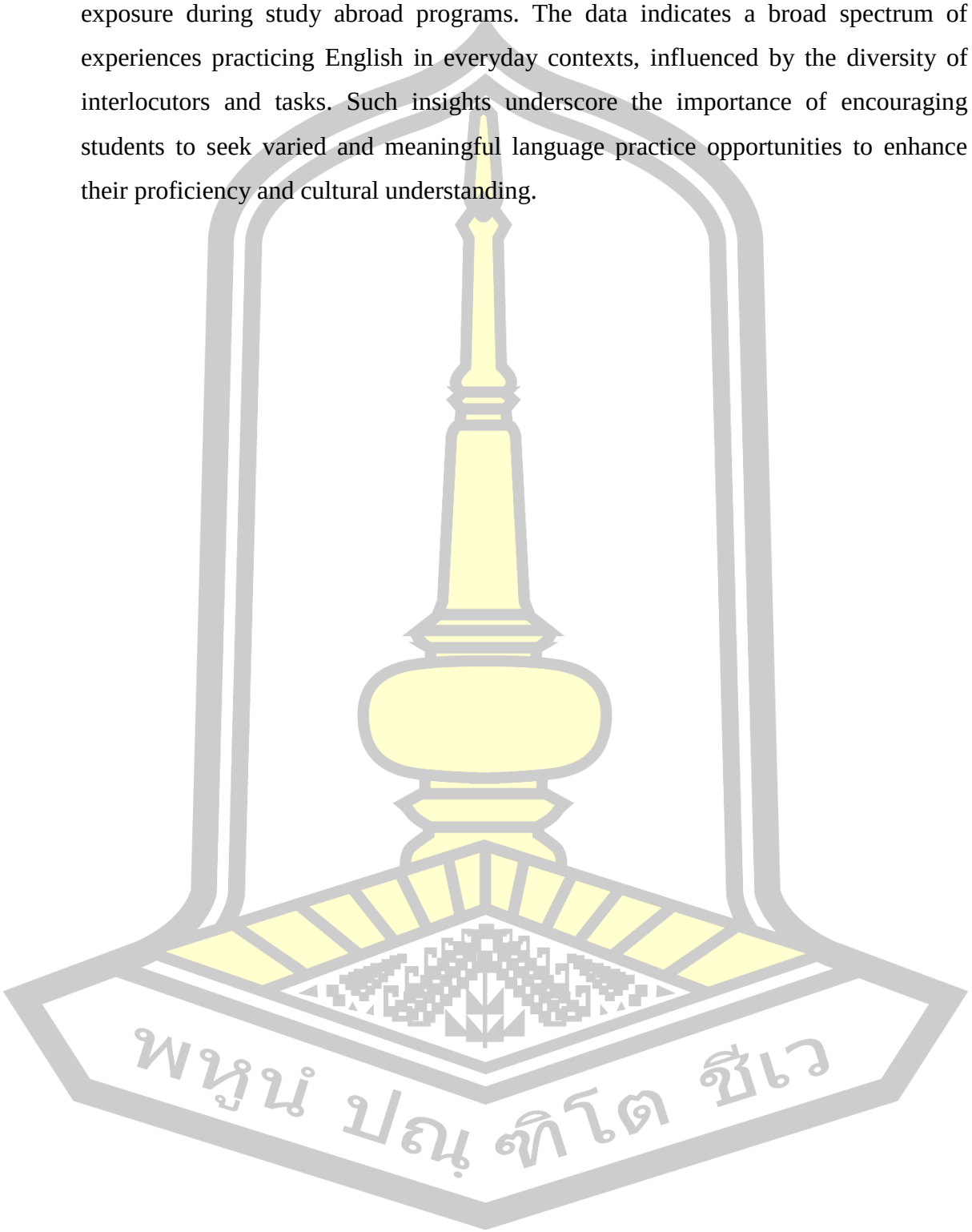

Table 1 Self-reports on the amount of time spent speaking English outside of class with native or fluent English speakers while studying abroad (n=16)

	Mean	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**
Overall	13.06	8.25	2.00	28.00
By interlocutors	40.38	21.36	8.00	75.00
By tasks	23.94	17.83	2.00	60.00

Note n = 16

Table 3 illustrates findings from a study examining the self-reported time Thai participants spent on different English language activities outside of class while studying abroad in Australia. The section aimed to quantify the engagement in various language practices, explicitly reading, listening, and writing, among a cohort of 16 participants. The data is organized into two categories: overall engagement across all activities and detailed engagement by specific tasks.

Participants reported an average of 5.5 hours for reading, with a standard deviation indicating the spread of data around this mean is also 5.5 hours, suggesting a wide variance in reading habits. The minimum and maximum reported times were 0 and 20 hours, respectively. However, when looking at reading as a task, the average time significantly increases to 21.94 hours, with an even wider standard deviation of 18.53 hours and a range from 2 to 66 hours. This suggests that when focused on reading tasks, participants engaged more heavily and with greater variability in their time commitment.

Listening activities showed a higher overall average time spent, with 12.63 hours and a standard deviation of 7.30 hours, indicating a somewhat less variable set of responses than reading, with times ranging from 3 to 30 hours. For listening tasks, the mean time dramatically increases to 32.75 hours, with a standard deviation of 24.68 hours, highlighting a significant investment in listening activities, with participant engagement ranging from 5 to 82 hours.

Writing activities were reported to consume the least amount of time overall, with an average of 4.75 hours and a high level of variability (standard deviation of 6.53 hours), with reports ranging from no time spent writing to 25 hours. On specific writing tasks, the mean time was 8.73 hours, with a standard deviation of 7.31 hours,

showing a range from 2 to 34 hours. This indicates a moderate level of engagement with writing activities, though less than for reading and significantly less than for listening.

These findings highlight the varied nature of language practice engagement among Thai students studying in Australia. The data reflects a tendency for students to invest more time in listening activities outside of class, followed by reading and writing. The wide ranges and standard deviations across all activities indicate diverse personal schedules, learning preferences, and perhaps access to resources or opportunities for practicing these language skills outside the classroom. This study underscores the importance of considering individual differences in language learning activities and suggests that students might benefit from targeted support in engaging more uniformly across different language skills.

Table 2 Self-reports on the amount of time spent doing English language activities outside of class

	Overall				**By tasks**			
	Mean	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**min**	**Max**
Reading	5.50	5.50	0.00	20.00	21.94	18.53	2.00	66.00
Listening	12.63	7.30	3.00	30.00	32.75	24.68	5.00	82.00
Writing	4.75	6.53	0.00	25.00	8.73	7.31	2.00	34.00

Note n = 16

The research findings in Table 4 provide insightful data on the self-reported engagement of Thai students with various English language skills outside of the classroom while studying abroad in Australia. The study, involving 16 participants, sought to understand how students utilized their time outside formal education to practice and enhance their English language proficiency across different competencies: application of learned concepts, reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

The findings reveal that students dedicated a substantial amount of time to applying the concepts taught in class in real-world settings, with an average of 15 hours. The variability in this activity, as indicated by a standard deviation of 10.55 hours and a range from 2 to 42 hours, underscores the diverse approaches and opportunities

students encountered to integrate their classroom knowledge into practical use. This wide range suggests that while some students were highly proactive in finding practical applications for their lessons, others were less so.

Reading in English accounted for an average of 5.5 hours, matched by an identical standard deviation, reflecting a uniform distribution of engagement around the mean. The activity spanned from no engagement at all to a high of 20 hours, highlighting that while practiced by some, reading was not uniformly prioritized among the students.

Listening skills received more attention, with students reporting an average of 12.63 hours spent on listening activities and a standard deviation of 7.30 hours. The time spent ranged from 3 to 30 hours, suggesting that listening to English, whether through media, conversations, or lectures, was a relatively common and valued practice among the participants.

Speaking English outside the classroom also constituted a significant portion of the language practice, with an average of 13.06 hours and a standard deviation of 8.25 hours. The range of 2 to 28 hours for speaking activities indicates participants' varied opportunities and willingness to communicate verbally, reinforcing the importance of spoken English in their immersive experience.

Conversely, writing in English was the least engaged activity, with an average time of 4.75 hours and a standard deviation of 6.53 hours. The engagement ranged from none to 25 hours, pointing to the lower priority or fewer opportunities for students to practice writing than other skills.

Overall, the study illustrates the diverse experiences of Thai students in leveraging their study abroad in Australia to practice English language skills outside the classroom. While listening and speaking were more commonly pursued, indicating a natural inclination towards conversational practice in an immersive environment, reading and especially writing were less emphasized. This diversity in engagement with different language skills suggests varied interests, needs, and opportunities among the students, highlighting the personalized nature of language learning experiences abroad.

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Table 3 Self-reports on the amount of time spent on language skills outside of class while studying abroad (n=16)

	Mean	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**
Use things being taught	15.00	10.55	2.00	42.00
Reading	5.50	5.50	0.00	20.00
Listening	12.63	7.30	3.00	30.00
Speaking	13.06	8.25	2.00	28.00
Writing	4.75	6.53	0.00	25.00
Overall	**35.94**	**20.81**	**6.00**	**82.00**

Note n = 16

The research encapsulated in Table 5 unveils insightful data on the language practices of Thai students studying in Australia, specifically focusing on the amount of time they spend speaking in their native language, Thai, every week. With data collected from 16 participants, the study meticulously categorizes the time spent into two segments: an overall assessment of time dedicated to speaking Thai and a more detailed look at time spent speaking Thai by specific tasks. This dual approach offers a layered understanding of the linguistic behavior of Thai students abroad.

The overall assessment reveals that, on average, Thai students spoke their native language for 30.38 hours per week. The standard deviation of 13.59 hours indicates a significant variation in the time spent speaking Thai among the participants, with the reported time ranging from a minimum of 9 hours to a maximum of 42 hours per week. This considerable time highlights the students' tendency to maintain strong linguistic and cultural ties with their heritage, even while immersed in an English-speaking environment. The range suggests varying degrees of engagement with Thai-speaking communities or a preference for Thai in their daily communications, reflecting diverse individual experiences and the importance of their native language in their social interactions and personal lives.

Delving deeper, the study examines the time spent speaking Thai segmented by specific tasks, revealing an even higher average of 42.44 hours per week. The notably larger standard deviation of 33.94 hours indicates a wide disparity in how students utilize their native language for different activities. The range of time spent, from a

mere 3 hours to an extensive 119 hours per week, showcases the diverse nature of task-driven communication in Thai. This may include a variety of engagements, from academic collaborations to socializing and participating in community events, indicating that when specific tasks are considered, the use of Thai significantly increases.

The research findings offer a compelling glimpse into the complex linguistic landscape navigated by Thai students in Australia. The substantial hours spent speaking Thai illustrate a deliberate effort to preserve their linguistic identity and maintain connections with their cultural roots amidst the challenges and opportunities of studying abroad. Furthermore, the marked increase in time spent on language use for specific tasks underscores the multifaceted role of the native language in the participant's daily lives, highlighting its significance beyond mere communication. These insights emphasize the dynamic interplay between language maintenance and cultural immersion, shedding light on the nuanced experiences of international students.

Table 4 Thai participants' self-reports on the amount of time (hours per week) spent speaking in Thai while studying in Australia (n=16)

	Mean	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**
Overall	30.38	13.59	9.00	42.00
By tasks	42.44	33.94	3.00	119.00

Note n = 16

The research findings from Table 6 offer a comprehensive view of the linguistic behaviors of 16 Thai students studying abroad, focusing on their self-reported hours spent speaking English outside of the classroom. This analysis spans three categories: overall speaking time, hours by interlocutors (whether speaking with native or non-native English speakers), and hours by tasks (types of activities or contexts in which English was used). Such detailed segmentation provides a deep dive into the nuances of English language use among these participants, revealing both the breadth and depth of their engagement with the language in a non-academic setting.

The overall average time reported for speaking English outside of class was 13.06 hours per week, with a standard deviation of 8.25 hours, indicating a moderate level

of linguistic engagement among the students. This variation suggests a wide range of individual experiences and commitments, reflecting the diverse opportunities and personal choices that influenced their exposure to English-speaking environments. Some students reported minimal engagement, such as John and Mod, who spent only 2 hours per week, highlighting a more limited interaction with the language outside of formal education.

When examining the time spent speaking with different interlocutors, the average significantly increased to 40.38 hours per week, showcasing a considerable portion of their week dedicated to interactions with both native and non-native English speakers. The broad standard deviation of 21.36 hours here illustrates the varied nature of these interactions, from casual conversations to potentially more structured exchanges. This high level of engagement with various interlocutors indicates a rich tapestry of social interactions, enabling students to practice and enhance their English language skills in diverse contexts.

The analysis of language use by tasks presents another layer of insight, with students reporting an average of 23.94 hours per week engaging in specific activities in English. This substantial investment of time, alongside a standard deviation of 17.83 hours, points to the multifaceted application of English across different aspects of their lives. Activities could range from academic work to leisure, each offering unique opportunities for language practice. The broad range of hours dedicated to tasks underscores participants' personalized approach towards integrating English into their daily routines, driven by individual interests, academic requirements, and social engagements.

The individual data further elucidates the participants' engagement spectrum, showcasing pronounced differences in their linguistic practices. For instance, Pete, Irene, George, Nutty, Mona, and Manow reported high levels of engagement across various categories, underscoring the dynamic and individualized nature of language learning and usage abroad. These variations highlight students' distinct paths as they balance the challenges of studying in a foreign language with the opportunities it presents for immersive language practice.

In conclusion, the research findings illuminate the complex landscape of English language usage among Thai students studying abroad. Through a detailed analysis of their speaking activities, both in terms of overall engagement and more specific interactions by interlocutors and tasks, the study reveals the diverse strategies and experiences that characterize their pursuit of linguistic proficiency outside the classroom. This nuanced understanding of language practice provides valuable insights into the ways in which international students engage with and benefit from their study abroad experiences.

Table 5 Self-report hours per week speaking English out of class with native/non-native English speakers (n =16)

Participants	**Overall**	**By interlocutors**	**By tasks**
John	2.00	8.00	2.00
Mod	2.00	8.00	2.00
Pete	4.00	33.00	45.00
Jenny	5.00	20.00	18.00
Phil	7.00	27.00	18.00
Paul	10.00	37.00	17.00
Irene	10.00	61.00	40.00
Fai	12.00	20.00	4.00
George	14.00	50.00	42.00
Molly	14.00	23.00	21.00
Nutty	15.00	45.00	46.00
Chris	18.00	50.00	24.00
Ann	20.00	64.00	3.00
Mona	20.00	61.00	60.00
Jane	28.00	64.00	19.00
Manow	28.00	75.00	22.00
Total	**13.06**	**40.38**	**23.94**
S.D.	**8.25**	**21.36**	**17.83**

Note: All (participants and interlocutors) names used here and throughout the thesis are pseudonyms

Table 7 offers an in-depth analysis of the self-reported hours Thai students studying abroad spent on various English language skills outside the classroom, categorized

into reading, listening, and writing. This finding study highlights the overall time spent on these activities and delves into the specifics of engagement by tasks, offering a rich tapestry of data that reflects the students' commitment to enhancing their English proficiency in a naturalistic setting.

The analysis of the findings showed that the overall average time dedicated to reading was 5.5 hours per week, with a significant variance in engagement levels by specific reading tasks, leading to an average of 21.94 hours. The standard deviation for overall reading time was 5.5 hours, mirroring the average, indicating a uniform data spread around the mean. However, the standard deviation for reading by tasks was considerably higher at 18.53 hours, suggesting a wide range of participant experiences. This disparity highlights the impact of task-specific reading activities, such as academic reading or leisure reading, on the total time spent engaging with English texts.

The study also showed that listening activities recorded an overall average of 12.63 hours per week, substantially increasing to 32.75 hours when considering listening tasks. The standard deviation for overall listening was relatively high at 7.30 hours, reflecting diverse listening habits among the students. The deviation further expands to 24.68 hours for listening by tasks, indicating a broad spectrum of listening engagements, from academic lectures and seminars to entertainment and social interactions, underscoring the varied contexts in which students practiced their listening skills.

In addition, the results showed that writing in English showed an overall average of 4.75 hours per week, with a higher task-specific engagement at 8.75 hours. The standard deviation for writing stood at 6.53 hours for overall writing time and 7.73 hours for writing by tasks, revealing significant variability in writing practices. This variation suggests that while some students frequently engaged in writing activities, such as essays, reports, or personal correspondence, others might have found fewer opportunities or felt less inclined to write in English outside the classroom.

The individual data within this table illustrates the unique journeys of each participant in their quest to master English. For instance, Irene's remarkable investment of 66 hours in reading and 74 hours in listening by tasks stands out, reflecting an intensive

engagement with English. Similarly, Mona's commitment, particularly to listening, with 82 hours dedicated to listening tasks, highlights students' diverse strategies and preferences for practicing English.

In sum, the research findings from Table 6 shed light on the multifaceted nature of language acquisition among Thai students in Australia. The detailed breakdown of hours spent on reading, listening, and writing, both overall and by specific tasks, paints a vivid picture of the participants' efforts to immerse themselves in English. The significant variation in engagement across activities and individuals emphasizes the personalized nature of language learning, driven by each student's unique goals, interests, and opportunities.

Table 6 Self-report hours per week language skills English out of class with native/non-native English speakers (n =16)

	Reading		**Listening**		**Writing**	
	Overall	**By tasks**	**Overall**	**By tasks**	**Overall**	**By tasks**
Jenny	.00	11.00	7.00	9.00	.00	7.00
Phil	.00	11.00	7.00	9.00	.00	9.00
John	1.00	9.00	3.00	5.00	.00	2.00
Mod	1.00	9.00	3.00	5.00	.00	2.00
Nutty	1.00	13.00	18.00	38.00	.00	4.00
Irene	2.00	66.00	24.00	74.00	6.00	34.00
Fai	4.00	16.00	14.00	34.00	2.00	6.00
Paul	4.00	16.00	14.00	34.00	2.00	6.00
Molly	4.00	18.00	14.00	44.00	5.00	7.00
Chris	5.00	16.00	7.00	57.00	8.00	11.00
Manow	7.00	2.00	7.00	16.00	12.00	3.00
Ann	7.00	44.00	30.00	25.00	25.00	9.00
Jane	8.00	19.00	14.00	12.00	2.00	7.00
George	10.00	18.00	10.00	21.00	2.00	9.00
Pete	14.00	22.00	14.00	59.00	3.00	13.00
Mona	20.00	61.00	16.00	82.00	9.00	11.00
Total	**5.50**	**21.94**	**12.63**	**32.75**	**4.75**	**8.75**
S.D.	**5.50**	**18.53**	**18.53**	**24.68**	**6.53**	**7.73**

Conversely, Table 8 presents a comprehensive analysis of the self-reported hours per week that 16 Thai students studying abroad in Australia spent speaking in Thai. This exploration is organized into two categories: overall speaking time and speaking time by specific tasks. The data not only quantifies the extent of their engagement with their native language during their study abroad experience but also provides insight into how different activities influence their use of Thai.

The findings reveal that, on average, participants spent 30.38 hours per week speaking Thai. This substantial time investment signifies a solid connection to their native language while navigating an English-speaking environment. The standard deviation of 13.59 hours indicates a wide range of student engagement, reflecting diverse individual circumstances and preferences in maintaining their linguistic and cultural ties.

When delving into the specifics of language use across different tasks, the average time notably increased to 42.44 hours per week, albeit with a much narrower standard deviation of 33.94 hours. This suggests a more uniform distribution of Thai engagement levels regarding task-specific communication. The heightened average underscores the significance of specific activities in prompting the use of Thai, possibly encompassing academic work, social interactions, or cultural engagements that necessitate or encourage speaking in their native language.

The results also highlighted the varied experiences of individual participants. For instance, Ann, Paul, Fai, and Pete reported the highest overall speaking times at 42 hours each. Still, their engagement in task-specific speaking varies dramatically, from Pete's equal balance of 42 hours to Ann's significant leap to 119 hours. Such discrepancies underline the personalized nature of their experiences, influenced by their unique schedules, social circles, and personal preferences.

Conversely, at the lower end of the spectrum, Irene and Mona each reported only 9 hours of overall speaking time, yet Irene's engagement soared to 54 hours when considering task-specific communication. This contrast indicates the complex dynamics in language usage, where specific contexts or responsibilities might drive significantly more interaction in Thai than in others.

In summary, the research findings from Table 7 shed light on the intricate relationship between Thai students studying abroad in Australia and their engagement with their native language. The data illustrates the robust commitment to speaking Thai and the nuanced ways different tasks amplify this engagement. The insights gleaned underscore the importance of task-driven language use in sustaining and nurturing linguistic and cultural identities in an international academic setting.

Table 7 Self-report hours per week spent speaking in Thai while studying abroad in Australia (n =16)

	Speaking in Thai while studying abroad in Australia	
	Overall	**By tasks**
Ann	42.00	119.00
Paul	42.00	85.00
Fai	42.00	85.00
Pete	42.00	42.00
Molly	42.00	28.00
John	42.00	3.00
Mod	42.00	3.00
Manow	35.00	84.00
Phil	35.00	35.00
Jenny	35.00	35.00
Jane	28.00	26.00
Nutty	15.00	28.00
Chris	14.00	16.00
George	12.00	10.00
Irene	9.00	54.00
Mona	9.00	26.00
Total	**30.38**	**42.44**
S.D.	**13.59**	**3.00**

4.2 Developmental patterns of intercultural competence, social contact and pragmatic competence among Thai learners of English over SA experience

4.2.1 Quantitative results

The data from Table 9 provides a clear trajectory of how Thai learners of English utilized the language throughout their study abroad experience in Sydney. Initially,

these learners scarcely engaged with the English language in day-to-day conversations prior to their departure. This baseline establishes that everyday communication in English was not a regular practice for the participants before being immersed in an English-speaking context.

However, once the Thai learners embarked on their study abroad journey, there was a striking increase in the use of English across all the key linguistic skills, as indicated by the data collected at Time 2. This surge suggests that the learners began actively integrating English into their daily lives, using it significantly more than before the program.

As the study abroad experience progressed, moving from Time 2 to Time 3, the duration of English use continued to climb, albeit at a more gradual pace. This ongoing rise in active language use indicates that the learners were not only maintaining but also building upon their initial surge in language practice. It demonstrates an important aspect of language acquisition: sustained and increasing engagement over time can lead to further development of language skills.

Elaborating on this finding, it is evident that immersion in an environment where English is the primary language necessitates and facilitates a deeper interaction with the language. For Thai learners, this necessity likely translated into more opportunities to practice speaking, understanding, and interacting in English, whether it be through social encounters, academic necessities, or day-to-day transactions. As the learners adapted to their new surroundings, the continuous and increasing use of English may have led to enhanced fluency and a more nuanced understanding of the language and intercultural communication, showcasing the profound impact that immersion and consistent practice can have on language learning.

Table 8 Developmental patterns of L2 use during the SA experience of Thai learners of English

Name	Speaking			Reading			Listening			Writing		
	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3
Jenny	0.00	5.00	7.00	0.00	.00	1.00	0.00	7.00	6.00	0.00	.00	1.00
Phil	0.00	7.00	9.00	0.00	.00	1.00	0.00	7.00	9.00	0.00	.00	1.00
John	0.00	2.00	5.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	3.00	5.00	0.00	.00	1.00
Mod	0.00	2.00	7.00	0.00	1.00	3.00	0.00	3.00	5.00	0.00	.00	1.00
Nutty	0.00	15.00	12.00	0.00	1.00	2.00	0.00	18.00	16.00	0.00	.00	1.00
Irene	0.00	10.00	13.00	0.00	2.00	5.00	0.00	24.00	30.00	0.00	6.00	4.00
Fai	0.00	12.00	12.00	0.00	4.00	4.00	0.00	14.00	15.00	0.00	2.00	2.00
Paul	0.00	7.00	8.00	0.00	4.00	3.00	0.00	14.00	13.00	0.00	2.00	3.00
Molly	0.00	14.00	14.00	0.00	4.00	4.00	0.00	14.00	15.00	0.00	5.00	5.00
Chris	0.00	18.00	17.00	0.00	5.00	7.00	0.00	7.00	9.00	0.00	8.00	8.00
Manow	0.00	28.00	23.00	0.00	7.00	9.00	0.00	7.00	13.00	0.00	12.00	10.00
Ann	0.00	20.00	18.00	0.00	7.00	7.00	0.00	30.00	24.00	0.00	25.00	18.00
Jane	0.00	28.00	23.00	0.00	8.00	7.00	0.00	14.00	16.00	0.00	2.00	2.00
George	0.00	14.00	21.00	0.00	10.00	12.00	0.00	10.00	21.00	0.00	2.00	3.00
Pete	0.00	4.00	8.00	0.00	14.00	12.00	0.00	14.00	17.00	0.00	3.00	5.00
Mona	0.00	20.00	21.00	0.00	20.00	14.00	0.00	16.00	19.00	0.00	9.00	10.00
Average	**0.00**	**13.06**	**13.63**	**0.00**	**5.50**	**5.57**	**0.00**	**12.63**	**14.56**	**0.00**	**4.75**	**4.69**
S.D.	**0.00**	**8.25**	**6.17**	**0.00**	**5.50**	**4.23**	**0.00**	**18.53**	**7.03**	**0.00**	**6.53**	**4.65**

Note: T1=Time1 or before SA, T2=Time2 or during SA, T3=Time3 or at the end of SA

Figure 1 showcases the time Thai students dedicate to various English language skills throughout their study abroad program in Sydney. It highlights the evolutionary trajectory of language practice from the commencement of the study abroad journey to its conclusion. Initially, the graph demonstrates a significant surge in the number of hours devoted to language learning as the students immersed themselves in the English-speaking environment of Sydney. This uptick reflects the students' increased engagement with the language in response to their new surroundings. As the program progressed, the graph shows a continued but more gradual increase in language practice hours, indicating steady advancement in language skills as the students became more comfortable and proficient in English. This pattern suggests that the immersive experience not only catalyzed a rapid initial improvement in language skills but also supported sustained development throughout the study abroad period.

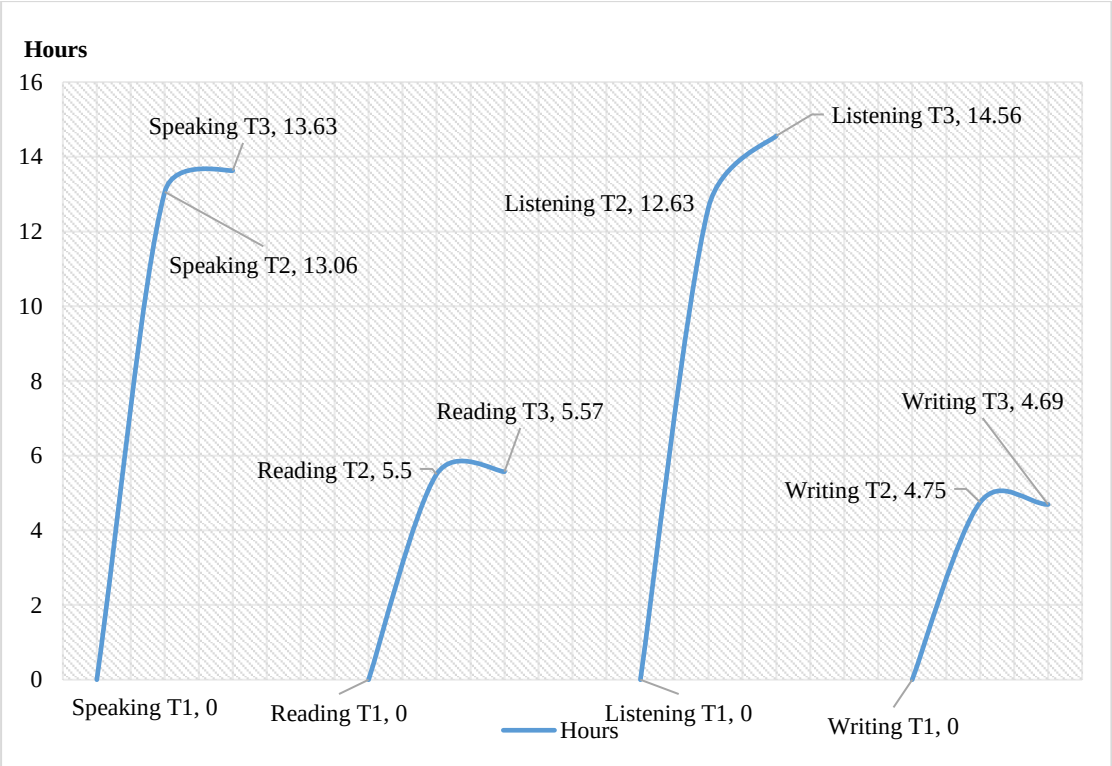

Figure 1 The number of hours spent on language skills by Thai learners of English during study abroad

The data from Table 10 offers a comprehensive look at the English language communication advancements made by participants during study abroad. The scores are divided into four key language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing, each assessed out of 15 points. The overall proficiency is calculated from 60 points, encompassing the sum of the four individual skills.

Starting with listening, the initial English communication, as indicated by the pretest scores, was relatively low, with an average score of 3.75, translating to 25% of the total. The standard deviation at this stage was 2.11, signifying a broad spread in the participants' abilities. However, there was a notable improvement in the posttest, where the average score nearly doubled to 7.94, representing 52.94%. The tighter standard deviation of 1.98 in the posttest suggests that participants' listening skills improved and became more consistent across the group.

Regarding reading, participants began with a slightly higher average pretest score of 5.25, equating to 35%. The posttest scores showed a marked improvement, with the average rising to 7.56 or 50.40%. The reduction in standard deviation from 2.54 to

2.31 from pretest to posttest also indicates that the participants' reading abilities became more aligned as their scores improved.

Speaking skills displayed a similar trend of enhancement. The pretest scores averaged 4.94, a proficiency rate of 32.93%. This figure significantly rose in the posttest, with an average 7.75 (51.67%) score. Again, the standard deviation decreased (from 2.49 to 2.24), reflecting a general upswing in speaking proficiency that narrowed the range of abilities among the participants.

The writing skill, which started at a pretest average of 4.69 (31.27%), displayed growth in the posttest with an average of 7.06, or 40.07%. The decrease in standard deviation from 3.16 to 2.02 is particularly noteworthy, suggesting that while writing skills improved for the group, the individual differences in abilities lessened considerably.

Overall, the combined scores for all language skills at the beginning of the study sat at an average of 18.63 out of 60, equivalent to a 30.05% proficiency level, with a high standard deviation of 8.29, illustrating a wide disparity in the participants' initial language competencies. By the end of the study, the total average score surged to 30.31 (50.52%), with the standard deviation shrinking to 6.48, demonstrating not just individual skill development but also a convergence in language proficiency levels across the participant group.

The aggregate data clearly illustrates that the participants made substantial gains in all English language proficiency skills throughout the study abroad period. The reduced standard deviation across all skills in the posttest indicates a more uniform level of improvement among the participants, suggesting that the study abroad provided effectively enhanced English language skills across the board. These findings reinforce the value of targeted language instruction and the potential for significant language acquisition within an immersive learning context.

Table 9 Participants' English language test scores

Skill	Pretest	%	Std. Deviation	Posttest	%	Std. Deviation
Listening (15)	3.75	25.00	2.11	7.94	52.94	1.98
Reading (15)	5.25	35.00	2.54	7.56	50.40	2.31
Speaking (15)	4.94	32.93	2.49	7.75	51.67	2.24
Writing (15)	4.69	31.27	3.16	7.06	40.07	2.02
Overall (60)	**18.63**	**30.05**	**8.29**	**30.31**	**50.52**	**6.48**

The research conducted over three months abroad has yielded insightful data on study participants' English communication improvements. The analysis is presented in Table 11, which compares pre-and post-test English scores, encompassing four critical language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing, as well as the overall proficiency.

In the listening category, participants showed a marked mean improvement of 4.19. This increment is substantiated by a standard deviation 1.28, indicating relatively small variability among participants' score improvements. The standard error mean at 0.319 signifies a high level of accuracy in the mean score calculation. Moreover, the listening improvements were statistically significant (t(13.123; p =.000), which strongly suggests these improvements were not a product of random chance but rather a result of the study abroad experience.

Reading proficiency revealed an average gain of 2.31 with a lower standard deviation of 0.79, indicating a more consistent performance improvement across participants in this skill area. The precision of this improvement is further supported by a standard error mean of 0.198. The statistical analysis revealed a remarkably high t-value (t=11.662; p=.000), reaffirming the statistically significant enhancement in reading skills.

Concerning speaking abilities, the mean score increase was 2.81, coupled with a higher standard deviation of 1.60. This larger variance indicates a broader spread in the extent of improvement among individuals. Nonetheless, the standard error of the mean was 0.400, and the speaking score improvements were statistically significant (t= 7.023; p=.000). These figures validate the observed enhancements in speaking skills.

Writing skills followed a similar pattern to speaking, with an average score rise of 2.38. The accompanying standard deviation of 1.54 suggests varied levels of improvement across the cohort. With a standard error of the mean at 0.386 and a significant *t*-value of 6.154, the data confirms that the improvements in writing were not only consistent but also statistically significant.

Looking at the overall English proficiency, the study reports a substantial mean increase of 11.69 in the combined language skills score, although with a wider standard deviation of 3.46, reflecting the range of individual improvements. The overall proficiency is supported by a standard error of the mean at 0.865 and a striking *t*-value of 13.517. The significance level stands firmly at .000, indicating that the overall English language proficiency enhancement among the study participants is statistically significant.

In conclusion, the study provides strong evidence that the study abroad program had a significant positive impact on the English language proficiency of the participants. The statistical indicators across all language skill areas demonstrate improvements, with high levels of significance suggesting that such advancements are indeed attributable to the immersive language experience provided by the study abroad program. The consistency and significance of these results underscore the value of immersive learning environments in facilitating language acquisition and proficiency.

Table 10 Analysis of pre-and post-English test scores at the beginning and the end of the study abroad period (3 months apart)

Pair	**Mean**	**Std. deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	***t*-value**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Listening	4.19	1.28	0.319	13.123	.000
Reading	2.31	0.79	0.198	11662	.000
Speaking	2.81	1.60	0.400	7.023	.000
Writing	2.38	1.54	0.386	6.154	.000
Overall	**11.69**	**3.46**	**0.865**	**13.517**	**.000**

Table 12 presents descriptive statistics of pragmatic competence as measured by the speaking scenario test at the beginning and the end of the study abroad period. From Table 12, the pretest scores for pragmatic competence indicate a mean score of 50.19 out of a maximum of 120 points, equating to an average percentage of 40.83%. The

standard deviation was 13.41 points, showing a variance in participants' initial pragmatic abilities. The scores ranged from a minimum of 25 to 68 points. Following the study abroad period, the posttest scores showed significant improvement, with a mean score of 82.50 (68.75%) and a lower standard deviation of 10.27. This finding indicates an overall improvement in scores.

The analysis of the paired-*t* test, presented in Table 13, offers a statistical confirmation of the improvement. The mean increase in test scores from the pretest to the posttest was 32.31, with a standard deviation of 7.80 (t=16.563, p=.000). This result indicates that the participants significantly improved pragmatic competence.

In summary, the study findings robustly demonstrate that the study abroad period significantly positively affected the participants' pragmatic competence in English. The considerable improvement in the speaking scenario test scores, substantiated by the paired-*t* test results, underscores the effectiveness of immersive learning experiences in enhancing practical language skills. The data suggests that the participants' ability to use English in practical, real-world contexts was notably enhanced due to their experience studying abroad.

Table 11 Pragmatic knowledge test scores as measured by speaking scenario test

	Speaking scenario test (120)				
	120	**%**	**Std. Deviation**	**Min**	**Max**
Pretest scores	50.19	40.83	13.41	25	68
Posttest scores	82.50	68.75	10.27	67	102

Table 12 Analysis of paired t-test of speaking scenario test scores at the beginning and the end of the study abroad period

Paired-*t-test*	**Mean**	**Std. deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	***t*-value**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Posttest-pretest	32.31	7.80	1.950	16.563	.000

Figure 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the progress made by Thai learners of English throughout their study abroad (SA) experience in Sydney, charting their advancements across various language skills at two pivotal moments: before embarking on their SA journey and upon its completion. The depicted data reveal

substantial improvements in all areas of language use, underscoring the efficacy of immersion in a native English-speaking environment for language acquisition.

The increase in proficiency levels for each language skill is noteworthy. Listening skills saw a significant jump, with learners starting at a proficiency level of 20% and reaching an impressive 52.94% by the end of their SA experience. Reading skills also experienced a considerable boost, with initial scores of 35% climbing to 50.40%. Speaking abilities also showed remarkable progress, starting at 32% and escalating to 51.67%. Among the language skills assessed, writing demonstrated growth, albeit at a slower pace, advancing from 31.27% to 40.07%. Overall, the collective enhancement in language use is evident, with the aggregate proficiency level of Thai learners progressing from 30.05% at the outset to 50.52% upon the conclusion of their SA experience.

Further analysis, mainly focusing on the speaking scenario test, which evaluates speech act performance, indicates that Thai learners made significant strides in their pragmatic knowledge. This includes both functional knowledge, which pertains to the use of language in context, and sociolinguistic awareness, which involves understanding the social nuances of language use. These findings suggest that the SA experience facilitated the improvement of basic language skills and enriched the learners' understanding and application of English in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

In essence, Figure 2 encapsulates the transformative impact of the SA experience on Thai learners' English language proficiency. The marked improvements in listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills and enhanced pragmatic knowledge underscore the value of immersive learning environments. Through their time spent in Sydney, the learners honed their linguistic abilities and developed a deeper cultural and social understanding of language use, illustrating the multifaceted benefits of studying abroad.

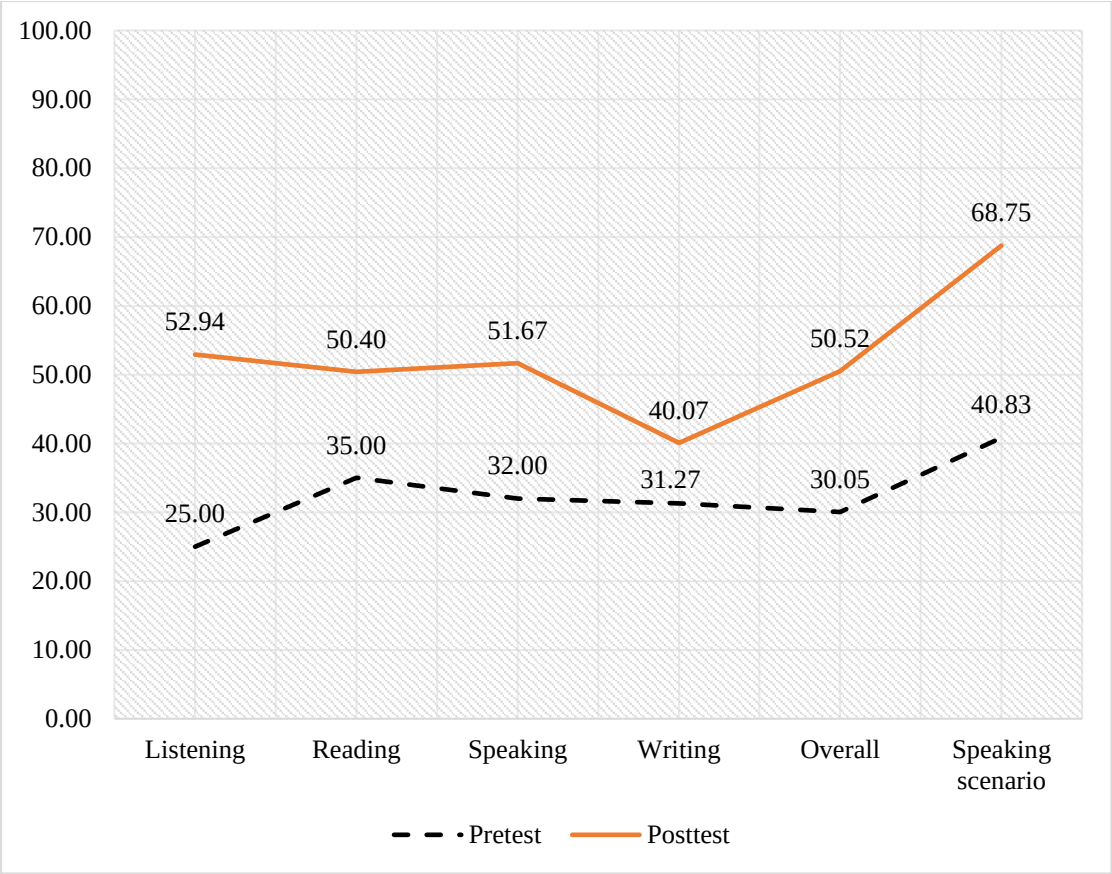

Figure 2 Language use scores of Thai learners of English during SA experience

4.2.2 Qualitative results

Initially designed with a focus on quantitative analysis, the Language Contact Profile (LCP) lacks the capability to delve into the qualitative aspects of reported linguistic interactions. However, this study's qualitative analysis has shown the immense value of understanding these interactions for comparing language development among study-abroad participants. By examining the experiences of two participants, Mona and Irene, it becomes evident that both reported hours of interaction are equivalent. However, the quality of discourse during these interactions significantly differs, making a direct numerical comparison of their language use and development misleading. This insight challenges the reliability of numerical assessments in evaluating language gains, emphasizing the need for a qualitative understanding of interactional dynamics.

The research findings from the qualitative data analysis, mainly focusing on the responses from participants Irene and Mona, reveal insightful nuances in their

reported interactions in English. Despite both participants engaging in superficial or brief exchanges in English for the same frequency of four days a week, as detailed in Table 14, the comparison between the two reveals significant differences in both the duration and the quality of these interactions, challenging the validity of numerical comparisons for assessing language use and development.

Mona reported engaging in brief exchanges such as greetings, requests, and casual conversations during meals or social gatherings with roommates or acquaintances for an average of 2 to 3 hours per day. These interactions, occurring predominantly during dinner or hangouts, indicate a more extended engagement in English, providing her considerable exposure to the language in casual and social settings.

On the other hand, Irene's interactions, spanning four days a week, were shorter, averaging 1 to 2 hours per day. Her exchanges occurred in varied contexts, including conversations with friends before bedtime, during meals, or while shopping. Although the frequency of her interactions mirrors that of Mona's, the lesser duration and possibly different contexts suggest variations in the depth and breadth of language exposure and practice.

This juxtaposition of Mona and Irene's experiences underscores the limitations of relying solely on quantitative metrics to assess language learning outcomes. While numerical data provides a basic overview of language engagement, it falls short of capturing the complexity and richness of language use and development. The time length and discourse quality of interactions, as illustrated by Mona and Irene's experiences, play a crucial role in shaping language proficiency. Their cases exemplify how identical frequencies of language practice can encompass vastly different learning opportunities and outcomes, emphasizing the need for a more nuanced approach that considers the qualitative aspects of language interactions for a comprehensive evaluation of language development.

Table 13 Superficial or brief exchanges

Participants		**Activity**	**Days per week**	**Average hours per day**	**Any relevant comments about this activity**
Mona	How often did you use English outside the classroom for each of the following purposes?	4c. for superficial or brief exchanges (e.g., greetings, "Please pass the salt," "I'm leaving," "ordering in a café or restaurant") with roommates or acquaintances in English	4	2-3 (about two hours)	*I talked to my friends and acquaintances during dinner or hangouts*
Irene			4	1-2 (around one to two hours daily, depending on conversation partners)	*With my friends before bed and during a meal or shopping*

The findings from Table 15 highlight the patterns of extended conversations in English outside the classroom for two participants, Paul and Pete, focusing on their engagement with fluent English speakers, including friends and acquaintances. Both participants have reported similar patterns regarding the average daily hours spent in conversation, ranging from 0 to 1 hour, albeit with a difference in the frequency of these interactions per week.

Paul reported having extended conversations in English for the specified activities two days a week. His interactions primarily occurred with his English-speaking roommates, friends, or acquaintances residing in an English-speaking dormitory, including native Thai speakers with whom he chose to speak English. The context of these interactions was casual, as indicated by his additional note that these conversations typically took place with friends in an apartment setting.

On the other hand, Pete engaged in similar activities for an average of 0 to 1 hour per day, but with a higher frequency, occurring four days a week. His interactions were also with international friends and acquaintances, specifically those living in the same dormitory. Pete's comment adds a layer of specificity to his engagement, noting that these conversations usually lasted around half an hour each day.

This comparison reveals nuanced differences in how Paul and Pete utilized opportunities for extended conversations in English outside of formal educational settings. In contrast, both participants reported a similar range of conversation lengths, but the frequency of their interactions diverges, illustrating varied approaches to integrating English into their daily lives. Paul's interactions, though less frequent, suggest a preference for engaging in meaningful conversations a few times a week. In contrast, Pete's more regular conversations indicate a consistent effort to maintain daily English language practice. These findings contribute to our understanding of how individual preferences and living arrangements can influence the extent and manner of language practice among students studying abroad.

Table 14 Extended conversations in English outside the classroom

Participants		**Activity**	**Days per week**	**Average hours per day**	**Any relevant comments about this activity**
Paul	How often did you use English outside the classroom for each of the following purposes?	4d. extended conversations with my host family, English roommates, friends, or acquaintances in an English-speaking dormitory, native speakers of Thai with whom I speak English	2	0-1	*I just talked with my friends in an apartment*
Pete			4	0-1	*Around half an hour a day with my international friends and acquaintances who live in the same dormitory building*

The analysis of Paul's and Pete's use of English for extended conversations outside of the classroom initially appeared to display a similarity in terms of frequency and duration. However, a deeper examination incorporating data from interviews and interactions with conversation partners revealed significant disparities in the nature of their engagements.

Pete's recounting of his experiences highlighted that his primary use of English was with friends and, to a greater extent, with a conversation partner named Andy. His interactions with friends were characterized as routine and formulaic, centering around casual check-ins upon returning to their shared living space or during

communal meals approximately four times a week. During these dinner gatherings, opportunities for more prolonged and varied discussions occasionally arose. Pete detailed sharing travel experiences, including showing pictures and narrating events, discussing family matters and daily routines back in Thailand, and exchanging thoughts on their academic lessons. Despite the breadth of topics, Pete categorized these exchanges as "trivial," implying that while the conversations covered a range of topics, they might not have delved deeply into complex language use or fostered significant personal connections.

This nuanced understanding of Pete's engagement with English reveals the complexity of language use outside the academic setting. It underscores the importance of considering the quantity of language practice and its quality and depth of interaction. The description of Pete's interactions as "trivial" suggests that even extended conversations might not always equate to meaningful linguistic or cultural exchange, highlighting the variability in language learning experiences among individuals studying abroad.

Excerpt 1: Interactions with a friend (Pete, Interview)

Interviewer:	So what do you talk about?
Pete:	umm, usually it's trivial or generally superficial
Interviewer:	Okay
Pete:	my friend is quite talkative.
Interviewer:	um…okay
Pete:	so..um.. he likes talking a lot to me about his plans and stuff.
Interviewer:	Okay.
Pete:	or we talk a lot about the stuff I do in Thailand.
Interviewer:	Like what?
Pete:	He asked me a lot about Thai food, the weather, or places to visit

The analysis of Pete's conversational dynamics revealed a predominance of descriptive and narrative elements, mainly focusing on routine activities, travel experiences, and notable locations. This communication pattern closely mirrors the type of language practice Pete regularly encountered in his L2 English classroom in Sydney, where oral discussions and weekly written assignments often centered around similar themes. As Pete's conversational approach continued to reflect classroom discourse throughout his stay, it became apparent that his ability to diversify his interactive repertoire in English remained constrained. This observation supports the notion proposed by Miller and Ginsburg (1995), suggesting that students may inadvertently transfer the structured environment of their language classes into their real-world interactions with proficient speakers, thereby extending the classroom's boundaries into various cultural contexts.

Conversely, Paul's experience paints a different picture. Despite beginning his course with a relatively lower level of English proficiency—attributable to limited prior exposure and education in English in Thailand—Paul's conversational engagements evolved significantly by the end of his stay. His interactions, primarily with a few proficient speakers, included discussions on more abstract topics, such as philosophical ideologies and cultural disparities. This shift indicates that, even with a constrained linguistic toolkit and occasional reliance on English, Paul successfully navigated and sustained dialogues on topics of personal significance. This progression underscored a notable departure from merely reproducing classroom discourse, demonstrating Paul's ability to engage deeply and meaningfully with complex and abstract content in his second language.

Paul's experience highlights the potential for language learners to exceed the initial limitations of their linguistic capabilities, engaging in rich and substantive conversations that extend beyond the scope of their formal learning. Despite starting with limited English proficiency, his ability to discuss abstract topics exemplifies the growth that can occur when learners actively seek and embrace opportunities for genuine, interest-driven communication in a second language.

Excerpt 2: Interactions with a friend (Paul, Interview)

Interviewer: How did you start learning English in Sydney?

Paul: At first, I just listened and tried to simple English.

Interviewer: What do you talk about?

Paul: I talk about everyday things first. Like what I did in a day or talking about food and shopping, I slowly tried to talk about what I thought and felt about different things.

Interviewer: Do you do anything special to talk about more things?

Paul: I just listened to others. I'm not scared to make mistakes when I talk.

Interviewer: Is it hard to talk about things with a little bit of English?

Paul: Yes, it's very hard. Sometimes, I don't know the words. But my friends help me. They wait for me to find my words and help me say what I want to say.

Interviewer: Do you think talking to other friends helps you improve your English?

Paul: Yes…. It helped a lot.

The qualitative data analyses showed the immense value of understanding these interactions for comparing language development among study-abroad participants. By examining the experiences of four participants, George, Chris, Paul, and Jane, it becomes evident that the reported hours of interaction are equivalent. However, the quality of discourse during these interactions significantly differs, making a direct numerical comparison of their language use and development misleading. This insight challenges the reliability of purely numerical assessments in evaluating language gains, emphasizing the need for a qualitative understanding of interactional dynamics.

The findings from Table 16 shed light on the frequency and duration with which participants utilized English outside the classroom for general services, such as purchasing food, shopping, and ordering drinks. Each participant, George, Chris, Paul, and Jane, reported using English every day of the week for these activities, albeit for varying durations within the range of 0 to 1 hour per day. This consistent daily engagement highlights the integral role of English in facilitating everyday transactions and interactions during their time abroad.

George noted that he typically spent about 30 minutes in the evening acquiring food and drinks. This specific time allocation suggests a routine engagement with English

in service-related contexts, pointing towards a targeted use of the language for essential daily activities.

On the other hand, Chris reported spending approximately 20 minutes daily on similar activities, such as ordering food, coffee, and drinks. The brief duration implies efficient, focused interactions, likely revolving around straightforward transactions in English.

Paul detailed a slightly broader range of activities, including window shopping and ordering food and drinks, spending about 40 minutes to an hour on these activities. Paul's report indicates a more extensive use of English, possibly involving more complex interactions or negotiations than merely purchasing food and drinks.

Lastly, Jane characterized her engagement with English as part of her "everyday life activities," estimating about half an hour daily for such tasks. This perception underscores the normalization of English use in her daily routine, seamlessly integrating language practice into her regular activities.

These findings illustrate the practical application of English in navigating daily life abroad, with the language as a crucial tool for carrying out routine tasks. Despite the relatively short durations reported, the daily frequency of these interactions underscores their significance in providing continuous, practical exposure to English. This everyday use of English for general services facilitates day-to-day living and contributes to the participants' overall language proficiency, offering real-life contexts for language application and development.

Table 15 Using English outside the classroom for general services

Participants	**Activity**		**Days per week**	**Average hours per day**	**Any relevant comments about this activity**
George	How often did you use English outside the classroom for each of the following purposes?	3b. general services (e.g., buying foods, shopping, foods or drinks)	7	0-1	*Around 30 minutes in the evening for food and drinks*
Chris			7	0-1	*I spent about 20 minutes on general services such as ordering food or*

				coffee and drinks
Paul		7	0-1	*About 40 minutes to an hour doing window shopping or ordering food, coffee or drinks*
Jane		7	0-1	*It's everyday life activities, so I spent about half an hour.*

Table 17 presents the amount of time participants spent on classroom-related work during their study abroad in Sydney. The results offer insightful revelations about integrating language learning with educational tasks. It was found that participants consistently engaged in conversations related to classroom work four days a week, highlighting a structured approach to academic collaboration in an English-speaking environment. Despite this uniform frequency, the duration of these discussions varied, providing a nuanced view of how students allocated their time to academic conversations in English.

Pete stood out by dedicating an average of one to two hours for each discussion session, indicative of thorough, in-depth conversations with classmates about classroom-related work. This extended engagement suggests a significant investment in understanding and collaborating on academic content, likely facilitating a richer linguistic and educational experience. In contrast, Manow, Irene, and Fai reported spending about an hour or less on similar discussions. Manow's and Fai's discussions typically occurred in the immediate aftermath of classes or during lunch breaks, reflecting a practical use of available time slots within their daily schedules to clarify assignments and collaborate on schoolwork. This practical application of English in academic discussions underscores the language's role beyond mere communication, serving as a critical tool for educational success.

Irene's experience, however, highlights the constraints imposed by external commitments, such as work, on the availability of such discussions. With only about 20 to 30 minutes available for each session due to her friends' work schedules, the discussions were likely more concise and focused, emphasizing efficiency in

communication about group assignments. This scenario underscores international students' challenges in balancing academic, personal, and work-related responsibilities while striving to enhance their language skills.

Collectively, these findings illuminate the significance of outside-the-classroom academic discussions in reinforcing classroom learning and facilitating practical language use among international students. The engagement in academic-related conversations in English reflects a strategic approach to language practice, where the necessity for academic collaboration encourages applying English language skills in context-specific scenarios. Moreover, the study emphasizes students' adaptability in finding opportunities for language practice within the constraints of their schedules and commitments. Ultimately, these academic discussions serve as a crucial component of the study abroad experience, offering a blend of language learning and academic reinforcement that is pivotal for the holistic development of international students in an English-speaking environment.

Table 16 Using English outside the classroom to discuss classroom-related work during study abroad in Sydney

Participants	**Activity**		**Days per week**	**Average hours per day**	**Any relevant comments about this activity**
Pete	How often did you use English outside the classroom for each of the following purposes?	3a. to clarify classroom-related work	4	1-2	*I spent around one hour and a half talking to my classmates*
Manow			4	0-1	*We usually spent about an hour after class to talk about our assignments.*
Irene			4	0-1	*My friends are very busy working in a restaurant as a waitress. So, we had little time to discuss our group*

			assignments. We had a quick chat about 20-30 minutes each time.
Fai	4	0-1	*I usually discuss schoolwork during lunch with my friends during school days. Less than an hour each time.*

According to Excerpt 3, George reported the profound impact of immersive learning environments on language acquisition and cultural integration. That is, George realized that learning English extended beyond mere vocabulary and grammar; it encompasses understanding and adapting to the cultural nuances of communication. This revelation came about through his daily interactions in Sydney, where conversations with diverse people provided him with practical insights into the subtleties of English usage in various social contexts.

Furthermore, George points out the significant role that social engagement played in his learning journey. Participating in group activities, casual chats, and even routine tasks like ordering coffee exposed him to the "real-life side of English" — an experience he found vastly different and more enriching than traditional classroom learning. These interactions improved his English proficiency and deepened his appreciation for cultural diversity and the importance of effective communication in fostering understanding and relationships.

George advised others to embark on a similar journey, emphasizing the value of active participation and the willingness to embrace mistakes as learning opportunities. He encourages diving into the local culture, engaging with residents, and participating in community activities to enhance language skills and cultural awareness. According to George, success in intercultural communication and pragmatic competence comes from stepping outside one's comfort zone, engaging directly with the host culture, and viewing every interaction as a chance to learn and grow.

In summary, George's study abroad experience in Sydney facilitated his English language proficiency and equipped him with key intercultural communication skills and a deeper understanding of social nuances. His journey exemplifies how study abroad programs can significantly contribute to developing well-rounded, culturally competent individuals capable of navigating diverse social landscapes.

Excerpt 3: Face-to-face interview with George

Transcription	**Translation**
ผู้สัมภาษณ์: จอร์จจะใช้เวลาในซิดนีย์ช่วยพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษของจอร์จได้อย่างไร? **จอร์จ**: โอ้ มันเป็นอะไรที่เปิดหูเปิดตามากเลยครับ ผมได้เรียนรู้ว่าไม่ใช่แค่เรื่องการพูดภาษาอังกฤษเท่านั้น ยังรวมถึงวิธีที่การพูดภาษาอังกฤษ อะครับ การที่ผมได้อยู่ในซิดนีย์และพูดคุยกับผู้คนทุกประเภท มันแสดงให้ผมรู้ว่าจะเข้าหาคนและจะมีวิธีการพูดและทำสิ่งต่างๆ ได้ดีขึ้นได้อย่างไร **ผู้สัมภาษณ์**: ดี ดีเลยครับ การที่จอร์จ ออกไปเที่ยวกับคนอื่นๆในซิดนีย์สร้างความแตกต่างให้กับจอร์จมากไหมครับ **จอร์จ**: แน่นอนครับ ทุกแชทหรือบทสนทนา ทุกครั้งที่ทำงานกลุ่ม ทั้งการสั่งกาแฟทาน ทำให้ผมได้เรียนรู้สิ่งใหม่ๆ มันเหมือนกับว่าผมได้เรียนรู้ในเรื่องการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในชีวิตจริง นอกเหนือจากการเรียนในห้องเรียน **ผู้สัมภาษณ์**: จอร์จมีเคล็ดลับสำหรับคนอื่นๆ ที่ต้องการพัฒนาความรู้ภาษาอังกฤษและวัฒนธรรมของตนไหมครับ **จอร์จ:** แค่พูดมันออกไปเลยครับ พูดคุยกับคนในท้องถิ่นใครก็ได้ เข้าร่วมกับกิจกรรม activities หรือสิ่งที่เกิดขึ้นรอบตัวเรา และอย่ากังวลกับความผิดพลาดเล็กๆ น้อยๆ ทั้งหมดนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของเกมการเรียนรู้ครับ	**I**: How would your time in Sydney help you improve your English? **G**: Oh, it was eye-opening! I learned it's not just about speaking English. It's how you speak English. You know? Being in Sydney, talking to all sorts of people, it really showed me how to fit in better with their ways of talking and doing things. **I**: Good, good. So hanging out with people in Sydney made a big difference for you? **G**: Definitely. Every chat, every group work, including ordering coffee, taught me something new. It's like I got to see the real-life side of English, way beyond the classroom stuff. **I**: Do you have any tips for other people wanting to improve their English and cultural knowledge? **G**: Just dive in, krub. Talk with locals, join in on what's happening around you. And don't sweat the small mistakes. It's all part of the learning game.

In Excerpt 4 about her study abroad experience in Sydney, Mona shared valuable insights into how the journey profoundly impacted her English language skills and cultural understanding. Initially feeling anxious about constantly using English and adapting to a new environment, Mona found that her time in Sydney was

transformative. The immersion in an English-speaking setting allowed her to practice the language in practical, everyday situations far removed from the constraints of a classroom.

Mona emphasized the significant role that social interactions played in her language-learning process. Building friendships with people from diverse backgrounds, she engaged in conversations that stretched beyond superficial exchanges, helping her become more adept at using English in a variety of daily contexts. This exposure not only boosted her linguistic confidence but also broadened her cultural perspectives, making her more adept at navigating intercultural communication.

Mona highlighted the shift in her confidence, particularly in situations like ordering at a café or initiating conversations. Before her study abroad experience, the thought of speaking English in real-life scenarios was daunting. However, the necessity to communicate in such settings during her stay in Sydney fostered a newfound confidence and fluency in English.

Mona's reflections underscore the value of immersive learning experiences in enhancing language proficiency and cultural competence. Her ability to grasp humor idiomatic expressions and initiate dialogues in English by the end of her journey illustrates her significant strides in both linguistic and sociocultural domains. Her story is a testament to the profound impact of studying abroad on developing pragmatic language skills and intercultural communication abilities.

Excerpt 4: Face-to-face interview with Mona (Mona (M) and Interviewer (I)

Transcription	**Translation**
I: Mona ช่วยเล่าประสบการณ์การเรียนที่ซิดนีย์ให้ฟังหน่อยได้ไหมครับ? มันเป็นยังไงบ้าง?	**I**: Can you share a bit about your study experience in Sydney? How did it go?
M: คือ มันดีมากเลยค่ะ ตอนแรกหนูรู้สึกกังวลเล็กน้อยเกี่ยวกับการปรับตัวและเรื่องการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษตลอดเวลา แต่จริงๆ แล้วการใช้ชีวิตในซิดนีย์ทำให้ทุกอย่างเปลี่ยนไป หนูมีโอกาสได้ฝึกฝนภาษาอังกฤษในชีวิตจริง ที่ไม่ใช่แค่อยู่ในห้องเรียน	**M**: Oh, it was fantastic! At first, I was a bit nervous about fitting in and using English all the time. But honestly, living in Sydney changed everything. I got to practice English in real life, not just in a classroom.
I: ฟังดูแล้ว มัน amazing มากเลยนะครับ การมีเพื่อนใหม่และพบปะเจอผู้คนช่วยในการเรียนภาษาของหนูหรือไม่?	**I**: That sounds amazing! Did making friends and meeting people help with learning the language?
M: ช่วยได้แน่นอนค่ะ หนูรู้จักเพื่อนจากทั่วทุกมุมโลก และเราก็คุยกัน	**M**: Definitely! I made friends from all over the

ทุกเรื่อง มันทำให้หนูรู้สึกคุ้นเคยกับภาษาอังกฤษในชีวิตประจำวันจริงๆ และหนูก็ได้เรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกันด้วย **I**: ชอบวัฒนธรรมอะไร? เช่นอะไรบ้าง? **M**: ประมาณว่า "สวัสดี" เป็นภาษาอังกฤษว่ายังไง ไม่ใช่แค่พูดว่า "สวัสดี" "สวัสดี" หรือ "สวัสดีตอนเช้า" หรือ "บ่าย" กับผู้คนหรือสถานการณ์ประเภทต่างๆ จริงๆ หนูว่า หนูมีความมั่นใจมากขึ้น อาทิเช่น การสั่งกาแฟหรืออาหาร ซึ่งเมื่อก่อนหนูกังวลมาก ไม่รู้จะพูดอะไรเริ่มต้นยังไง ตอนนี้ หนูคิดว่า หนูมีความมั่นใจมากขึ้นที่จะใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของหนูเอง **I**: เยี่ยมมากเลยครับ หนูคิดว่าประสบการณ์นี้ช่วยให้หนูเข้าใจและใช้ภาษาอังกฤษได้ดีขึ้นอย่างไร **M**: มีความมั่นใจในการพูดและเข้าใจภาษาอังกฤษมากขึ้น ตอนนี้หนูว่าหนูสามารถจับมุกตลกได้บ้าง สำนวนต่างๆ หรือแม้แต่เริ่มบทสนทนาด้วยตัวเองได้บ้างแล้ว การได้ซึมซับวัฒนธรรมจริงๆ ทำให้เกิดความแตกต่างอย่างมากสำหรับหนูเองนะค่ะ	world, and we'd chat about everything. It really helped me get comfortable with everyday English, and I learned about different cultures, too. **I**: like what cultures? Any example? **M**: something like how to say "Sawasdee" in English. Not just say, "hi' "hello" or good "morning" or "afternoon" to different sorts of people or situations. I'm even more confident to order food in a café or restaurant. I think I have more confidence to use my English. **I**: Great! How do you think this experience has helped you understand and use English better? **M**: It's like I've become more confident in speaking and understanding English. I can catch jokes and expressions more easily and even start conversations on my own now. Being immersed in the culture made a huge difference.

4.3 Summary of the Chapter

This section summarizes the study's main outcomes, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative results. It initiates an initial analysis of these findings. The next chapter will explore how these findings align with established theoretical frameworks and relate to prior research.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter synthesizes the study's outcomes within the context of its underlying theoretical frameworks and compares these findings to those of previous research. It systematically distills the core insights derived from the investigation, delineating their broader implications for both theory and practice. Additionally, the chapter acknowledges the inherent limitations of the study, offering a candid reflection on the constraints that might affect the generalizability or interpretation of the results. Building on these reflections, the chapter proposes future research directions, suggesting avenues further to enrich our understanding of the phenomena under study. Doing so aims to contribute to a continuous dialogue within the academic community, fostering a deeper exploration of the intricate dynamics of language learning and cultural integration in study-abroad contexts. This comprehensive approach consolidates the study's contributions to the field. It sets the stage for subsequent inquiries, advocating for an ongoing scholarly engagement with the complex processes underpinning effective intercultural communication and pragmatic competence development.

5.1 Influence of Intercultural Communication and Social Contact on Pragmatic Competence among Thai Learners of English during Study Abroad

The study's findings provide compelling evidence of the relationship between intercultural communicative competence, social contacts, and the development of pragmatic competence among students studying abroad. By examining the time students spent engaging in their native language and English with native/non-native speakers through various activities, the research highlights how these interactions contribute to enhancing their pragmatic competence, an essential aspect of effective communication in a second language that involves the ability to use the language appropriately in social contexts.

Intercultural communicative competence is demonstrated through the students' engagement in speaking Thai and English during their study abroad. The significant hours spent speaking Thai, especially in task-specific contexts, reflect a deep-rooted connection to their cultural identity and a continuous interaction with their native

culture. This engagement likely provides a comparative backdrop that enhances their understanding of cultural nuances, which is critical for developing pragmatic competence. For instance, the differences in conversational norms, politeness strategies, and non-verbal cues between Thai and English could be more readily identified and navigated by students who actively maintain their native language practices while immersed in an English-speaking environment.

Similarly, the time devoted to speaking English with native and non-native speakers, as detailed in the findings, indicates the students' immersion in the target language environment. This immersion facilitates opportunities for authentic linguistic exchanges, where the subtleties of English use in various contexts can be observed and learned. Such interactions are invaluable for acquiring pragmatic competence, as they allow students to directly experience and adapt to the social norms, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references inherent to effective English communication.

Moreover, the variance in hours spent on different tasks in English points to the diverse contexts in which students apply their language skills. This diversity is crucial for developing pragmatic competence, as it exposes students to a range of communicative situations, from formal academic settings to casual social gatherings. Through these experiences, students learn to adjust their language use according to the demands of the situation, a key component of pragmatic competence. The adjustments might include varying levels of formality, choosing appropriate topics of conversation, and employing language strategies that facilitate cooperation and mutual understanding.

The study's evidence underscores the intricate interplay between intercultural communicative competence and pragmatic competence. By engaging in a wide range of social contacts and maintaining active use of both their native language and English, students enrich their linguistic repertoire and deepen their cultural understanding. This dual engagement fosters a nuanced awareness of the cultural and contextual factors that shape effective communication, enhancing their pragmatic competence. In conclusion, the findings from this study illuminate the vital role of social interactions and cultural immersion in the development of pragmatic

competence among students studying abroad, highlighting the importance of intercultural experiences in language learning and communication.

The intricate relationship between communicative competence, intercultural competence, and social engagement among Thai learners of English in a study-abroad context presents a fertile area for exploration, drawing significantly on the foundational work of Byram (2012) and Thomas (1983). Byram's conceptualization of interactional communicative competence as the ability to engage effectively and appropriately in intercultural exchanges provides a critical backdrop for understanding the development of pragmatic competence within this study. As delineated by Thomas (1983), Pragmatic competence encompasses pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, requiring learners to navigate not only the linguistic expressions needed for specific communicative functions but also the societal norms that dictate their use in varying contexts.

This study posits that the development of pragmatic competence is not an isolated linguistic achievement but is intrinsically linked to the learner's social interactions and experiences in the host culture. This hypothesis is rooted in the notion that enhanced intercultural competence fosters greater social engagement, characterized by a deep understanding of and ability to function within new cultural settings. This, in turn, provides rich opportunities for the practical application of language in diverse contexts, potentially leading to significant improvements in pragmatic knowledge (Byram, 2012; Thomas, 1983).

The examination of self-reported data concerning the time spent by Thai students speaking English outside of class underscores the practical implications of these theoretical underpinnings. On average, participants reported engaging in English conversations for approximately 13.06 hours per week, with a noted increase in hours dedicated to speaking with various interlocutors and in task-specific contexts. This variation in language use and exposure, as indicated by a standard deviation of 8.25 hours, underscores the diverse experiences and opportunities encountered by the participants in their daily interactions (Byram, 2012).

Notably, conversing with different interlocutors saw a remarkable average increase to 40.38 hours, highlighting the significant role of social interactions in facilitating

language practice outside the classroom. This finding suggests that engagements with various English speakers offer substantial opportunities for language exposure and practice, a critical component in developing pragmatic competence, as Thomas (1983) outlined.

Furthermore, the task-specific analysis of language use reveals an average of 23.94 hours spent on English-related tasks, pointing to the impact of specific activities on language practice. This intermediate level of exposure through varied tasks illuminates the practical aspects of language use, emphasizing the importance of engaging in activities that foster the application of both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge (Thomas, 1983).

In conclusion, the study's findings elaborate on the theoretical assertions of Byram (2012) and Thomas (1983), illustrating the dynamic interplay between intercultural competence, social engagement, and the development of pragmatic competence. The data not only showcases the diverse experiences of Thai learners in practicing English in real-world settings but also emphasizes the critical role of social interactions and task-specific engagements in facilitating language acquisition and cultural immersion. This research underscores the importance of fostering varied and meaningful language practice opportunities for learners to enhance both their proficiency and cultural understanding, aligning with the broader goals of intercultural communicative competence.

5.2 Developmental Patterns of Intercultural Communication, Social Contact and Pragmatic Competence among Thai Learners of English over SA Experience

This comprehensive study on the development of intercultural communication, social contact, and pragmatic competence among Thai learners of English during their study abroad experience in Sydney offers profound insights into the multifaceted nature of language acquisition and cultural immersion. Bridging quantitative findings with qualitative narratives, this research illustrates the transformative journey these learners undergo, deeply rooted in the theories of Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1993), which emphasize the importance of cultural learning and communicative competence in language acquisition.

The quantitative analysis reveals a significant trajectory of linguistic growth among the learners. Initially, these learners scarcely engaged with English in day-to-day communications, indicating limited use of the language in practical scenarios before their immersion in an English-speaking context (Byram, 1997). However, the data from Time 2 of their study abroad experience shows a notable increase in English usage across all essential linguistic skills (Table 9). This surge suggests that immersion in an environment where English dominates daily interactions necessitates an active integration of the language into learners' lives, corroborating findings by Dewey, Belnap, and Hillstrom (2013).

As the program progresses, the duration of English use continues to rise, albeit at a more gradual pace from Time 2 to Time 3. This pattern indicates a sustained engagement and an incremental building of language practice, resonating with the concept of 'language socialization' discussed by Duff (2007), where learners progressively acquire language skills through increased social interactions.

The qualitative component of this study enriches the quantitative data by providing personal narratives that depict the complexity of language learning in a cultural immersion context. George's reflection (Excerpt 3) on his learning journey illustrates a deeper understanding of the cultural dimensions of language use, highlighting the importance of adaptive communication strategies in intercultural settings (Kramsch, 1993). His proactive engagement in diverse social interactions underscores the significance of experiential learning in developing both linguistic and cultural competencies.

Mona's experience (Excerpt 4) further emphasizes the transformative impact of immersive learning. Her narrative showcases the transition from apprehension to confidence in using English, facilitated by her active participation in the host culture. This aligns with Kinginger (2009), who notes that successful language learning abroad involves navigating and embracing cultural differences through meaningful interactions.

This study's findings underscore the critical role of immersion and active engagement in facilitating significant linguistic and intercultural development. It demonstrates that while structured language learning opportunities are crucial, informal interactions

within the immersive environment are indispensable for enhancing pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative skills (Byram, 1997; Kinginger, 2009).

Moreover, the variability in individual learning experiences highlighted by this research suggests that personal initiative and openness to cultural experiences significantly influence learners' overall development. This calls for the design of study abroad programs that prioritize cultural immersion and active engagement with the host community, supporting the recommendations by Dewey et al. (2013) and Kinginger (2009).

In conclusion, the integration of quantitative and qualitative insights from this study vividly illustrates the dynamic interplay between language learning and cultural immersion. It advocates for a holistic approach to language education that incorporates immersive experiences and fosters a deep understanding of and appreciation for cultural diversity (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). This approach not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also equips learners with the intercultural competencies necessary for navigating and thriving in a globalized world.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

This study has provided comprehensive insights into the impact of study abroad experiences on Thai learners of English, with a focus on the development of intercultural communication, social contact, and pragmatic competence. By integrating quantitative data with qualitative narratives, the research has illuminated these learners' transformative journey regarding linguistic growth and cultural integration.

The study's findings reveal a significant trajectory of linguistic improvement among Thai learners, characterized by increased use of English in daily interactions and an enhanced understanding of cultural nuances. Quantitative data showed a notable rise in language use across various skills throughout the study abroad period, indicating the vital role of immersion in facilitating language acquisition. Qualitative narratives from participants like George and Mona provided depth to these findings, illustrating how immersion not only improves language proficiency but also fosters intercultural competence and a nuanced understanding of cultural differences.

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant benefits of study abroad programs in enhancing language proficiency and intercultural competence among Thai learners of English. It calls for a holistic approach to language education that embraces cultural immersion as a vital component of the learning process. By addressing the limitations and incorporating suggestions for future research, we can continue to refine our understanding of how best to facilitate language learning and cultural integration through study-abroad experiences.

5.4 Implications

These findings strongly support the value of immersive learning environments in acquiring a new language, suggesting the critical need for learners to not just be physically present in a new country but to deeply immerse themselves in its culture and society. This involves more than passive observation; it requires active participation in the everyday life of the host community. For those involved in education and program development, this insight is a call to action to design study abroad experiences that extend well beyond the confines of the traditional classroom setting.

Effective programs should facilitate cultural immersion by encouraging interactions with local residents, offering opportunities for genuine social engagement, and providing platforms for learners to participate in local customs and activities. This could mean arranging homestays, community service projects, or internships with local organisations, all of which can serves as powerful catalysts for language practice and cultural integration.

Moreover, the SA programs should empower students to step out of their comfort zones, fostering an environment where making mistakes is part of the learning process. Reflection is another key component; encouraging students to think critically about their experiences helps consolidate learning and enhances personal growth. Ultimately, by embedding cultural immersion and direct engagement with native speakers into the fabric of study abroad programs, educators can significantly boost learners' language proficiency and their understanding of the host culture, enriching their overall educational journey.

5.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

While this study provides valuable insights, it has several limitations. The sample size is relatively small and specific to Thai learners in Sydney, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The study relies heavily on self-reported data, which could introduce biases in reporting language use and experiences. Although rich in detail, the qualitative component is based on a limited number of participant narratives, which may not fully capture the breadth of experiences among all learners.

Future research could address these limitations by including a larger and more diverse sample of learners from different backgrounds and study-abroad destinations. Longitudinal studies that track language development and cultural integration over time would provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of study-abroad experiences. Additionally, employing a mixed-methods approach that combines self-reported data with objective measures of language proficiency and cultural competence could enhance the reliability of the findings. Exploring the role of specific factors, such as the duration of the study abroad program, the intensity of interaction with native speakers, and the learners' initial language proficiency, would further our understanding of the conditions under which study abroad experiences are most effective.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

This comprehensive study on Thai learners of English undertaking a study abroad program in Sydney has provided valuable insights into how such experiences significantly contribute to enhancing linguistic proficiency, pragmatic competence, and intercultural communication skills. The integration of quantitative data and qualitative narratives has offered a rich, multifaceted understanding of the language learning journey experienced by these individuals.

Quantitative results indicated a marked increase in the use of English across all linguistic skills throughout the study abroad period, underscoring the vital role of immersive environments in language acquisition. Qualitative analyses revealed that beyond linguistic improvement, learners experienced substantial growth in their ability to navigate cultural nuances and utilize language in contextually appropriate

ways. Personal narratives highlighted the transformative impact of engaging with the host culture on learners' confidence and communicative competencies.

For implications, the study emphasizes the importance of incorporating cultural immersion and active engagement with the host community into language education programs. It suggests that such experiences are crucial for developing language skills and intercultural competence. Program designers are also encouraged to create opportunities that facilitate academic engagement, social interaction, and cultural immersion. This holistic approach to study abroad can maximize the benefits for language learners.

In conclusion, this study affirms the significant positive impact of study abroad experiences on language learning and intercultural communication, offering valuable insights for educators, program designers, and language learners alike. By highlighting the importance of cultural immersion and active engagement, it provides a compelling case for the role of study abroad in fostering comprehensive language education. Future research in this field can build on these findings to further our understanding of the most effective strategies for enhancing language learning and cultural integration through study abroad programs.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix I: Pretest version of the language contact profile

PRETEST VERSION OF THE
LANGUAGE CONTACT PROFILE

PROJECT: ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The responses that you give in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. This cover sheet is to allo the researcher to associate your responses with your name if needed. However, only the people entering your responses into the computer will see this name. an identification number will be used in place of your name when referring to your responses in publications. Every effort will be made to keep your responses confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation. The information that you provide will help the researcher to better understand the backgrounds of students who are studying English in SA context. Your honest and detailed responses will be greatly appreciated.

Name _____

Part 1: Background information

1. Gender: Male / Female
2. Age: _____
3. Country of birth: _____
4. What is your native language? 1) Central Thai 2) Regional Thai (please specify: _____) 4) English 5) Other _____
5. What language do you speak at home? 1) Central Thai 2) Regional Thai (please specify: _____) 4) English 5) Other _____

   5a. If more than one, with whom do you speak each of these languages? _____
6. In what language (s) did you receive the majority of your pre-university education?

   1) Thai 2) English 3) Other _____

   6a. If more than one, please give the approximate number of years for each language _____

7. Have you ever been to an English-speaking country *for the purpose of studying English*?
   Circle one: Yes / No
   7a. If yes, when? _____ 7b. Where? _____
   7c. For how long? _____ 1 semester or less _____2 semesters _____more than 2 semesters
8. Other than the experience mentioned in Question 7, have you ever lived in a situation where you were exposed to a language other than your native language (e.g., by living in a multilingual community; visiting a community for purposes of study abroad or work; exposure through family members, etc.)? Circle one: Yes / No
   If yes, please give details below. If more than three, list others on back of this page.

	Experience 1	Experience 2	Experience 3
Country/region			
Language			
Purpose			
From when to when			

9. In the boxes below, rate your language ability in each of the languages that you know. Use the following ratings: 0) Poor, 1) Vood, 2) Very good, 3) Native/nativelike.
   How many years (if any) have you studied this language in *a formal school setting*?

Language	Receptive skill		Productive skills		Number of years of study
	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing	
Thai					
English					
Chinese					
Japanese					
Other					

10. Have you studied ***English*** in school in the past at each of the levels listed below? If yes, for how long?
    a) Elementary school: Yes / No: ___ less than 1 year, ___1-2 years, ___ more than 2 years
    b) Junior high school: Yes / No: ___ less than 1 year, ___1-2 years, ___ more than 2 years
    c) Senior high school: Yes / No: ___ less than 1 year, ___1-2 years, ___ more than 2 years
    d) University/college: Yes / No: ___ less than 1 year, ___1-2 years, ___ more than 2 years
    e) Other (Please specify) _____.
11. What year are you in school? (circle one):
    Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
    Graduate student Other _____
12. What is your major? _____

Part 2: All of the Questions that Follow refer to your use of English, not your native language, unless the question says otherwise

13. On average, how often did you communicate with native or fluent speakers of ***English*** in ***English*** in the year prior to the start of this semester?
    0) Never 1) a few times a year 2) monthly 3) weekly 4) daily
14. Use this scale provided to rate the following statements.
    0) Never 1) a few times a year 2) monthly 3) weekly 4) daily
    Prior to this semester, I tried to speak ***English*** to:
    ___a. my instructor outside of class
    ___b. friends who are native or fluent speakers of ***English***
    ___c. classmates
    ___d. strangers whom I thought could speak English
    ___e. a host family, if living in an ***English***-speaking area
    ___f. service personnel (e.g., bank clerk, cashier)

15. For each of the items below, choose the response that corresponds to the amount of time you estimate you spent on average doing each activity in ***English*** prior to this semester.

    a. Reading ***English*** language newspapers

    0) Never 1) a few times a year 2) monthly 3) weekly 4) daily

    b. Reading novels in ***English***

    0) Never 1) a few times a year 2) monthly 3) weekly 4) daily

    c. Reading ***English*** language magazines

    0) Never 1) a few times a year 2) monthly 3) weekly 4) daily

    d. Listening to songs/music in ***English***

    0) Never 1) a few times a year 2) monthly 3) weekly 4) daily

    e. Watching ***English*** language television

    0) Never 1) a few times a year 2) monthly 3) weekly 4) daily

    f. Watching movies or videos in ***English***

    0) Never 1) a few times a year 2) monthly 3) weekly 4) daily

16. List any other activities that you commonly did using ***English*** prior to this semester: _____

17. Please list all the ***English*** courses you are taking this semester. This includes ***English*** language courses as well as content area courses taught in the ***English*** language.

Course name	Course number	Brief description
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Appendix II: Posttest version of the language contact profile

POSTTEST VERSION OF THE
LANGUAGE CONTACT PROFILE

PROJECT: ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The responses that you give in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. This cover sheet is to allow the researcher to associate your responses with your name if needed. However, only the people entering your responses into the computer will see this name. an identification number will be used in place of your name when referring to your responses in publications. Every effort will be made to keep your responses confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation. The information that you provide will help the researcher to better understand the backgrounds of students who are studying ***English*** in SA context. Your honest and detailed responses will be greatly appreciated.

Name _____

Please indiate all the ***English*** courses you are taking this semester:

Course name	Course number	Brief description
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

1. Which situation best describes your living arrangements in ***Australia*** during the past semester?
   a. ___ I lived in the home of an ***English****-speaking* family.
      i. List the members of the family (e.g., mother, father, one 4 year-old daughter, one 13-year-old son).
      ii. Did they speak ***Thai***? Circle one: Yes / No
      iii. Were there other non-native speakers of ***English*** living with your host family? Circle one: Yes / No
   b. ___ I lived in the study dormitory.
      i. ___ I had a private room.
      ii. ___ I had a roommate who was a native or fluent ***English*** speaker.
      iii. ___ I lived with others who are NOT native or fluent ***English*** speakers.
   c. ___ I lived alone in a room or an apartment.
   d. ___ I lived in a room or an apartment with native or fluent ***English*** speaker(s).
   e. ___ I lived in a room or an apartment with others who are NOT native or fluent ***English*** speakers.
   f. ___ Other. Please specify _____.

   For the following items, specify:
   (i) How many ***days per week*** you typically used ***English*** in the situation indicated, and
   (ii) On average how many ***hours per day*** you did so.

Circle the appropriate numbers:

2. On average, how much time did you spend speaking, in ***English***, outside of class with native or fluent ***English*** speakers during this semester?
   Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7
   On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

3. This semester, outside of class, I tried to speak ***English*** to:

3a. my instructor
   Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

3b. friends who are native or fluent ***English*** speakers

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

3c. classmates

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

3d. strangers whom I thougth could speak ***English***

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

3e. a host family, ***English*** roommate, or other ***English*** speakers in the dormitory

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

3f. service personnel

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

3g. other; specify: _____

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

4. How often did you use ***English*** outside the classroom for each of the following purposes?

4a. to clarify classroom-related work

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

4b. to obtain directions or information (e.g., “Where is the restaurant?”, “What time is the train to …?”, “how much are stamps?”)

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

4c. for superficial or brief exchanges (e.g., greetings, "Please pass the salt," "I'm leaving," "ordering in a café or restaurant") with my host, ***English*** roommate, or acquaintances in ***English***-speaking dormitory

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

4d. extended conversations with my host family, ***English*** roommate, friends, or acquaitances in an ***English***-speaking dormitory, native speakers of ***Thai*** with whom I speak ***English***

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

5. How much time did you spend doing the following activities?

5a. How often did you try deliberately to use things you were taught in the classroom (grammar, vocabulary, expressions) with native or fluent speakers outside the classroom?

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

5b. How often did you take things you learned outside of the classroom (grammar, vocabulary, expressions) back to class for question or discussion?

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

6. How much time did you spend doing the following each week?

6a. speaking a language other than ***Thai*** or ***English*** to speakers of that language (e.g., **Chinese**, with a **Chinese**-speaking friend)

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

6b. speaking ***English*** to native or fluent speakers of ***English***

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

6c. speaking ***Thai*** to native or fluent speakers of ***English***

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

6d. speaking ***English*** to non-native speakers of ***English*** (i.e., classmates)

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

6e. speaking ***Thai*** to non-native speakers of ***English*** (i.e., classmates)

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7. How much time did you spend doing each of the following activities outside of class?

7a. overall, in reading in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7b. reading ***English*** newspapers outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7c. reading novels in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7d. reading ***English*** language magazines outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7e, reading schedules, announcements, menus, and the like in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7f. reading e-mails or Internet web pages in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7g. overall, in listening to ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7h. listening to ***English*** television and radio outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7i. listening to ***English*** movies or videos outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7j. listening to ***English*** songs or music outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7k. trying to catch other people's conversations in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7l. overall, in writing in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7m. writing homework assignments in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7n. writing personal notes or letters in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7o. writing e-mail in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

7p. filling in forms or questionnaires in ***English*** outside of class

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

8. On average, how mich time did you spend speaking in ***Thai*** outside of class during this semester?

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

9. How often did you do the following activities in ***Thai*** during this semester in ***Australia***?

9a. reading newspapers, magazines, or novels or watching movies, television, or videos

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

9b. reading e-mail or Internet web pages in ***Thai***

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

9c. writing e-mail in ***Thai***

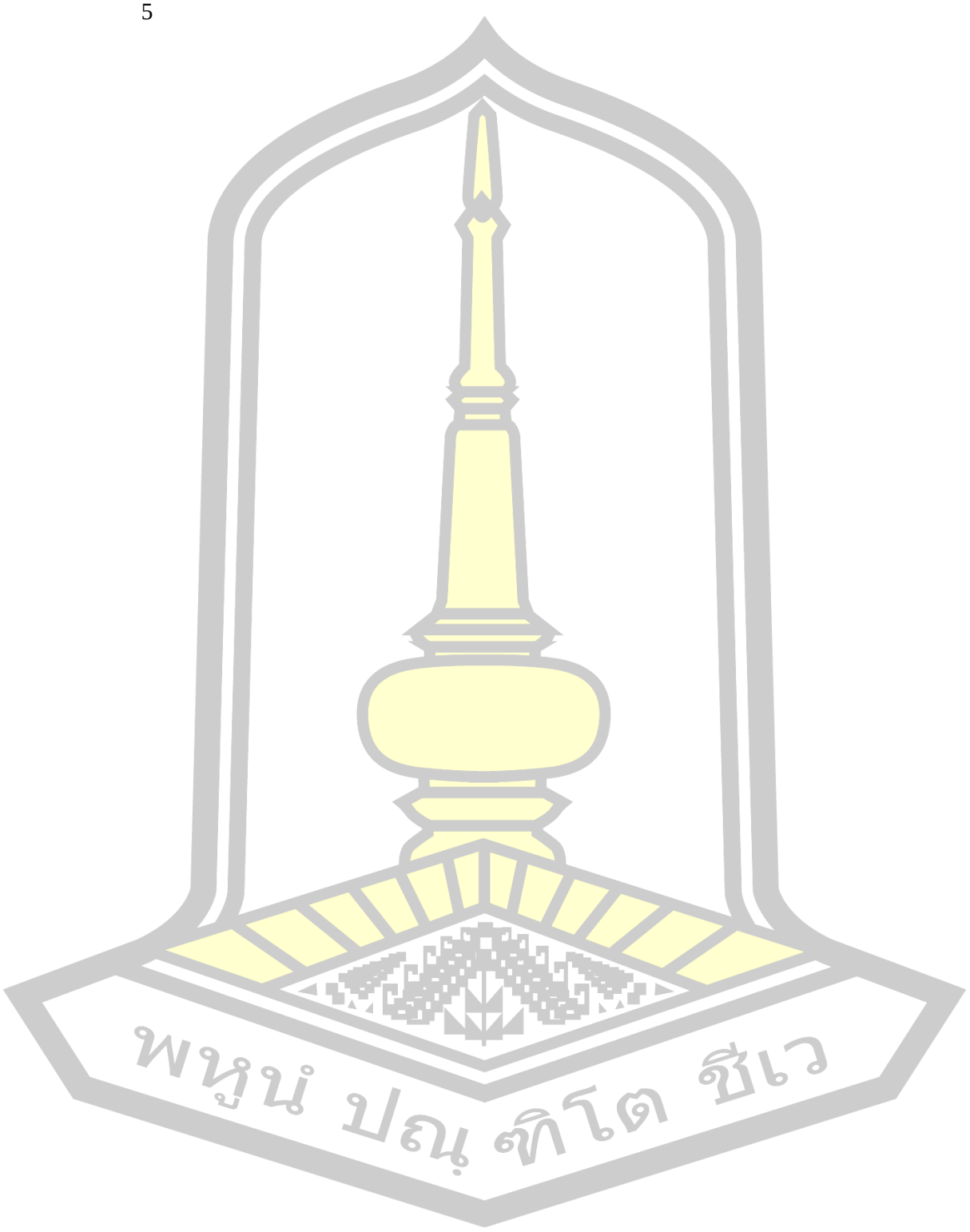
Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5

9d. writing personal notes and letters in ***Thai***

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

On those days, typically many *hours per day*? 0-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | more than 5



Appendix III: Speaking Test Scenarios

Speaking Test Scenarios

These items were slightly adapted from Taguchi, Xiao and Li (2016).

1. It is very crowded in the college cafeteria. You see two people sitting at a table. There is still one seat available. You want to sit there. What would you say to them?
2. You are walking in the street. Several people are standing in your way, but you want to pass by. What would you say to them?
3. In a restaurant, you want to take the leftovers with you. What would you say to the waiter?
4. In a shopping mall, a shop assistant asks whether you would like to buy anything. You do not intend to buy anything. What would you say to her?
5. At a shopping mall, you cannot find where the cashier is. You want to ask a shop assistant for this. How would you ask him?
6. In a market, you want to buy a jumper but you want to try it on first. What would you say to the retailer?
7. At a bank, you want to withdraw 200 dollars. What would you say to this bank teller?
8. A bus is coming to a bus stop where you are waiting. You want to go to Sydney University but you are not sure whether the bus stops there. How would you ask this bus driver?
9. In a market, you want to buy a T-shirt but you think it's a bit expensive. You want to ask the salesperson to lower the price. What would you say to him?
10. You and your friend are talking on the phone. It seems that you both have said all you want to say, so you would like to end your conversation. What would you say to him?
11. You meet you friend Adam in the lobby. Adam sees your newly purchased shoes and says: "Are these your new shoes? They look really beautiful!" How would you respond to Adam?

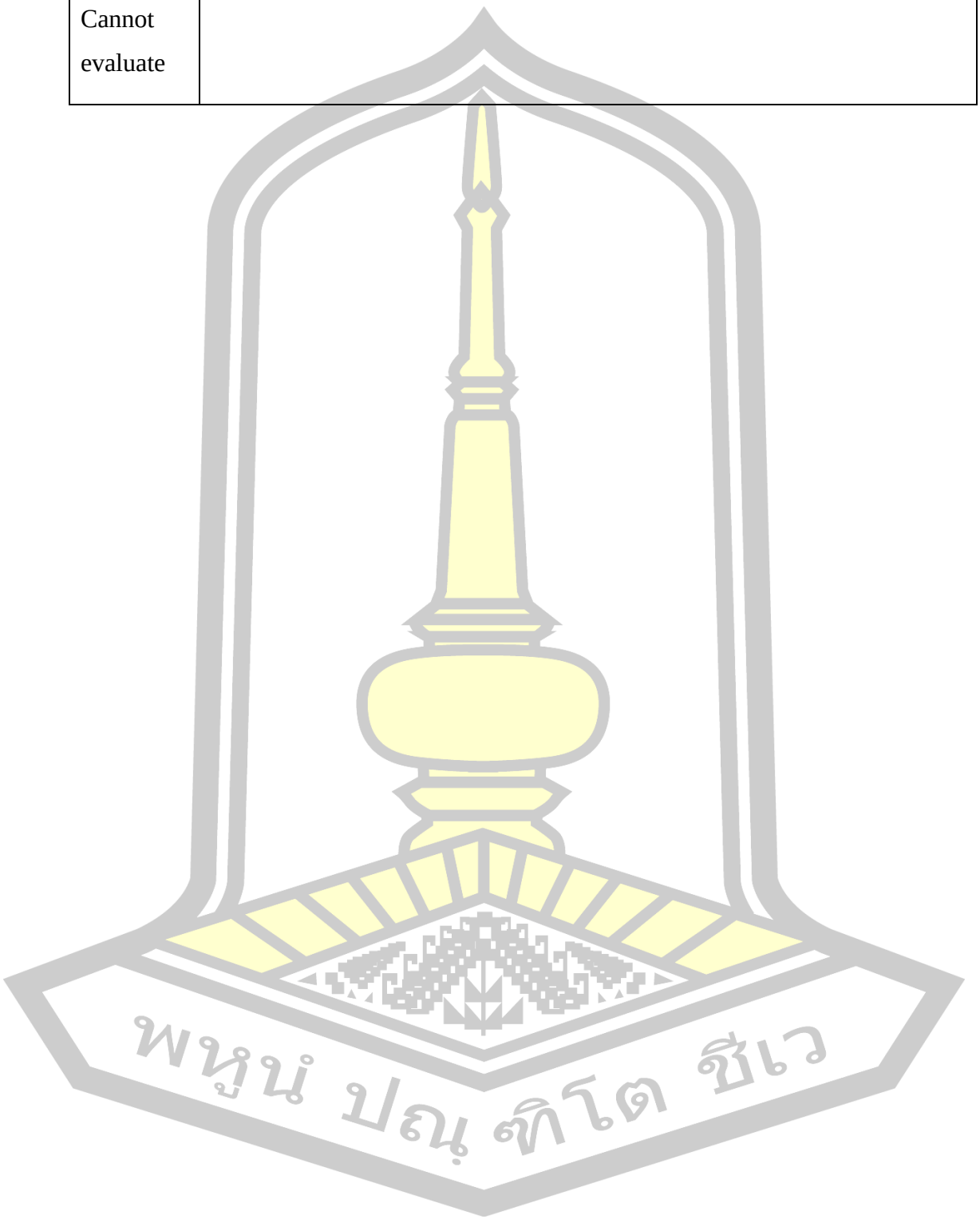
12. You wrote an essay about your travel experience and submitted to Professor Phil's class. Today, you meet him in a cafe and you start to talk to each other. During your conversation, Professor Phil says: "Oh, by the way, I read your essay and it is really interesting." What would you say to him?
13. Your teacher, Professor Simon, meets you at the train station after class. He hands you back your homework assignment and says: "Well done! And you did very well!" What would you say to him?
14. You meet you friend after class. Your friend invites you to a dinner with her friend but you don't want to go. What would you say to her?
15. Your friend has helped you a lot with your English. She has asked you to help her boss's daughter learn Thai. You don't want to do it. Now your friend meets you at the bus stop and asks you when you will start tutoring. What would you say to your friend?
16. You come to Professor Steve's office to discuss a few questions with him. Before you leave, he invites you to a dinner party on New Year's Eve, but you cannot go. What would you say to Professor Steve?
17. You come to Professor David's office to ask a few questions. Before you leave, he asks you to do your presentation one week earlier than you originally scheduled. However, you don't want to do that. What would you say to Professor David?
18. It's a bit hot in the classroom. You want to ask your friend Peter, who is sitting next to the air conditioner, to turn on the air conditioner. What would you say to Peter?
19. You cannot attend a chapter exam tomorrow in Professor Steve's course because you have got something really important to do. You want to ask him for rescheduling your exam. You come into Professor Steve's office. What would you say to him?
20. Today is the deadline for submitting your term paper, but you don't have it finished because you were sick. So, you want to ask Professor David for an extension. Now you come to Professor David's office. What would you say to him?

Appendix IV: Rating Scales for Speaking Test Scenarios

Rating Scales for Speaking Test Scenarios

Score	**Descriptors**
6 excellent	• Communicative function fully realized • Expression fully appropriate for a given scenario as judged by the native speaker rater • No or almost no syntactic/lexical errors
5 Very good	• Communicative function mostly realized • Expression mostly appropriate for a given scenario as judged by the native speaker rater • Limited syntactic/lexical errors (i.e., errors in peripheral lexical items, minor syntactic errors) that do not interfere with meaning
4 Good	• Communicative function somewhat realized • Expression somewhat appropriate for a given scenario as judged by the native speaker rater (e.g., verbosity, somewhat more direct and/or indirect than needed, use of uncommon semantic formula) AND/OR • Syntactic and/or lexical errors tend to interfere with meaning and/or appropriateness
3 Fair	• Communicative function somewhat realized • Expression clearly inappropriate (in terms of directness, formality, or semantic formula) for a given scenario as judged by the native speaker rater • Notable syntactic and/or lexical errors (i.e., code switching, key lexical items) that clearly interfere with meaning and/or appropriateness
2 Poor	• Communicative function not realized • Expression incomprehensible (due to serious phonological, syntactic/lexical error) or • Expression totally irrelevant to a given scenario (expression in this case may contain no, almost no, or some syntactic/lexical errors) or • Expression is too limited for judgement

1 Cannot evaluate	• No response (opt out)



BIOGRAPHY

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