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**Impacts of Homestay on Language Acquisition**

by

Melissa Joy Lewis

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in English: Teaching English as a Second Language

November, 2016

Thesis Committee:

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to look at differences in language outcome and cultural integration for adult sojourners outside of the university context. 131 participants responded to an online survey; 58% completed a homestay as a part of language and/or culture learning and 42% did not engage in a homestay. When these two groups were compared using an Independent sample *t*-test, it showed that homestay participants received statistically significant higher scores in final language achievement and final cultural integration. Within the homestay group, there was no statistical difference in these areas, except for those who engaged their homestay after three months of language learning, but before four months of language learning. This group performed worse than all other groups on final cultural integration. This study did not identify an optimal time for a homestay, although the participants recommend a basic level of language before engaging a homestay in order to achieve more language growth while in the homestay.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **Why Explore Homestays?**

*"Living with a host family is the best way to learn language. That's what I did in Macedonia, and now I speak the language fluently."* Circulation of stories like these attract the attention of the intentional language learner. Homestays have been used by high school and college programs for decades, with increasing research dedicated to their effectiveness and outcomes. Little research, however, has focused on homestays pursued by adult language learners who pursue language learning outside of the University setting.

The purpose of this study is to look at non-university sojourners engagement in culture and language learning and to identify any differences among those who do and do not engage in homestay in order to progress in language proficiency and cultural understanding. Specifically, is there any difference in language gains and cultural integration with the host culture between those who do a homestay and those who don't? Does timing of the homestay make any difference on language and culture gains?

### **Research Questions**

The goal of the researcher is to more clearly understand what difference a homestay makes for adults working in second language environments. Evaluating these differences will assist language learners in deciding whether and when to engage in homestay as a means to more advanced language skills and cultural integration. In conversations with language learners outside of the USA, there is a division of those who engage in homestay as soon as they arrive in a new country, and those who wait until they have grasped some language. Some choose to never to do a homestay, some attempt to, but are unable to find locals willing to host them. The study looks at these adult learners to evaluate whether there is any difference in outcome



between engaging in a homestay and engaging in the language and culture without doing a homestay. Additionally, does doing a homestay at different points in the language learning process make any difference? These are the research questions that are explored in this paper:

1. Is there any difference in language outcome for those who do a homestay compared to those who do not?
2. Is there any difference in cultural integration outcome between those who do a homestay and those who do not?
3. In regards to language and culture learning, is there an optimal time in the language learning process to do a homestay?
4. What is the nature of the homestay and what can we learn from it?

### **Rational for Study**

Much of second language acquisition research is dedicated to the classroom environment. Most of the homestay research to date is dedicated to language learners in university and high language programs. In addition, studies that have looked at language difficulties in the homestay have mostly focused on learners who have had prior language study before moving in with a host family. In our increasingly global economy, with technology that makes both staying connected over long distances and travel easier, more and more individuals and families are leaving their home countries for a time, becoming sojourners. Some of these prioritize language learning. Exploring the homestay environment for those sojourners who use homestay as a way to learn language and bond with the culture will both add to the body of research and lend credibility to recommendations related to homestays.

## Definition of Terms

Important terms and concepts used in this study are identified as follows for clearer understanding of the readers.

**Bonding:** a concept that goes beyond identifying on some levels with people in the host culture, but also implies feeling at home with the host people. (Brewster, 2010)

**Communities of Practice:** A group of people with shared purposes and a shared understanding of who belongs and who doesn't. (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

**Growth Zone:** Related to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, this refers to the area where a language learner can communicate with help from a native speaker, but could not otherwise do so without help. (Thomson, 2012)

**Homestay:** an immersive experience where an individual lives with a host family for the purpose of language and culture learning. (Richardson, 2003)

**Hosts:** those who speak the target language as their native language.

**Languaculture:** coined by anthropologist Michael Agar. It encompasses the idea that language and culture cannot necessarily be separated. To acquire language and proper language use in a second language environment is to acquire that culture. Implicit in this idea is that language is communication; appropriate nonverbal actions and unspoken understandings are also involved in communication. (Thomson, 2012)

**Sojourner:** a person who lives outside of his or her home country for a temporary time period of a few months to several decades. The target population of this study consists of non-student sojourners who are also not permanent immigrants to their host country.

**Target Language:** This refers to the language to be intentionally learned or acquired.

## **Chapter II: A Review of the Literature**

### **Introduction**

Homestay impact on language acquisition is certainly debatable (Barron, 2003; Lynch, 2000; Rivers, 1998; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). Homestays are often used while abroad in order to better acquire language, and “implicit in this view of the homestay environment is that a continuous immersion environment provides far greater authentic target language input” (Rivers, 1998). The expectation is that language acquisition will be more authentic. Not only is language acquisition enhanced, but cultural communication is positively impacted: as Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2004) show, their subjects felt that the homestay enhanced the entire study abroad experience, not limited to language study alone. Another study addresses the belief that living abroad is the only way to effectively acquire functional language skills (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995).

Part of the argument for doing a homestay stems from a widely-held belief that simply being around native speakers is enough to advance language and culture acquisition. Studies that look more closely at language learning processes, language learner environments and language learner identity, however, indicate a more complex picture.

### **Interference in the Learner Environment**

Native speaker expectations on the sojourner as well as learner expectations and the internal and external dialogue that results weigh heavily into language acquisition. These may be the result of folklinguistic theories that the student holds about language and how it is learned (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995), types of interactions (Wang, 2010), group acceptance or marginalization (Jackson, 2008), or language learner identity (Aveni, 2005; Jackson 2008).

Sometimes sojourners' own concepts of language learning can interfere with language acquisition. Miller and Ginsberg (1995) identify folklinguistic theories, defined as "ideas students have about language and language learning" (p. 294) and review journal entries to see how students think about language and progress in language. Their study indicates that because of students' folklinguistic theories, language learners try to recreate classroom type interactions in informal settings, ignore features of language that are uniquely accessible in the study abroad context and miss special opportunities for learning. Specifically, cultural competence, pragmatic awareness and sociolinguistic features are left out of student journal entries on learning, and syntax and vocabulary are emphasized. Additionally, students strive for the "one correct way to say things" (p. 298) and highlight speaking over listening as learning.

Iino (2006) supports these conclusions, finding that American students in Japan struggle in similar ways. Study abroad students who stay with host families have preconceived ideas of what is Japanese and what is not Japanese and these ideas interfere with interactions and relationship building in the home stay environment. In this case, wanting to speak "proper" Japanese negatively affects host family interactions and language learning beliefs prevent them from using activities, such as the Japanese art form of paper folding, to be language learning opportunities. In this study, students are wary of learning new words from their hosts, because they believe they will be learning a dialect or an impure form of Japanese.

Wang (2010) argues that it is both frequency and quality of interactions in the target language that affect language growth. Indeed since, the term *communities of practice* was first coined by Lave and Wenger (1991), there has been increased exploration of the social and situational environments of language learning. A more recent shift in second language research immerses from the field of cross-cultural psychology and examines the shifts in identity for

language learners in the study abroad context (Aveni, 2005; Ehrman, 1996; Jackson, 2008). Feeling misunderstood or the inability to express oneself in the new language environment can negatively impact language growth. The fear is that language learners fall into a cycle of bad experiences that feed into more bad experiences.

A homestay environment would provide an environment of authentic language input, but would it provide an environment for effective language growth? With an expectation that homestay would most likely lead to improved listening and speaking skills, Rivers (1998), is surprised to discover that those in the homestay environment were more likely to improve their reading skills and less likely to improve listening and speaking skills. This study compared students learning Russian and living in a dormitory with those placed in a homestay. An ethnographic look at the homestay environment suggests that rather than engaging hosts in dialogue, students were more likely to stay in their rooms and study, or to sit in front of the family television. Thus, for study abroad students in Russia, being in a home environment is not enough to make a difference in oral/aural language proficiency.

Jackson (2008) examines the social dimension of language learning, suggesting that, in a similar vein to the concept of communities of practice, sojourners need to learn to participate in the activities of their host family in order to be viewed as a full-fledged member and not be ignored or marginalized. Thus, language learning becomes more possible through increasing shared experiences, irrespective of the experience appearing to be a language learning activity. Being accepted by the group means more people in the group will reach out to try to bring the sojourner into the dialect of the group. (Jackson, 2008, pp. 42-44).

Aveni (2005) investigates the ways that learners use the language they do have, especially in regards to learner identity. Her findings suggest that constructing the self in the

foreign environment can lead to periods of anxiety. She argues that because using the second language restricts a person's ability to present their real self there is increasing discrepancy between one's real self and ideal self. Language use is not only inhibited by how much language one has acquired, but also by the level of risk one feels comfortable taking in concurrence with self-preservation. She categorizes threats to identity into four types that fit under social distance to language speakers and social hierarchy in the society. She states:

The scale of social distance represents the intimacy and acceptance experienced by participants in a relationship. To maintain a sense of security along this scale, learners strive to foster a sense of *validation* through social interaction, that is, a sense that their presence is welcome, even sought after, as well as a sense of *safety*, that they will not be physically or emotionally harmed by the other member(s) of the relationship. For successful language use, the learner must also remain secure in the social hierarchy by maintaining an appropriate *status* among the interaction participants, as well as a feeling of *control* over the interaction and their own destiny. When learners sense a loss of security in these four areas, suggesting that the "real" self they can present is significantly inferior to the "ideal" self they desire, they opt to take no further risks to the self by speaking. The result of this conflict is a sense of "anxiety," a factor often identified as connected to reduced foreign language use, although typically presumed to be a *cause* of inhibited speech, not a symptom, as it is identified here. (pp. 18-19, emphasis Aveni)

This perspective on the relationship between language growth and identity issues is reinforced by Jackson's (2008) study of four English students from Hong Kong who engage in homestay learning in England. This qualitative study suggests that when self-ascribed identities of language learners are not recognized by their host family, bonding is inhibited. Additionally,

the study points out that learners who fear losing their identity are less willing to engage in social activities of the host culture. Both of these resulting behaviors impede opportunities for language practice and therefore inhibit language growth.

Living with a host family can provide the most immersive environment, but it can also be a means for more threats to identity, conflicts with the host culture, deeper culture shock and restrictions on interactions with non-family members. On the other hand, the right family could provide a culture-bridge, be supportive in attempts to use the new language and introduce the learner to wider networks for social interactions.

### **Language Progress in the Homestay Setting**

The composition of the family and risk taking nature of the language learner are important factors in the effectiveness of the homestay experience. Freed (1995) analyzes literature to conclude that there are optimal kinds of social activities with natives for differing levels of language acquisition. For beginners, argues Freed (1995), informal contact may not help and may even hurt language acquisition, intermediate level students benefit from interactive time with native speakers, and advanced level students benefit from non-interactive time with native speakers. This review suggests that optimal time for a language homestay would be after one has acquired intermediate or advanced levels of language.

Thomson (2012) adopts a similar approach of shifting interactions with native speakers, approaching language acquisition as a process where the sojourner is a growing participator in a new languaculture. When individuals are new to a languaculture, very few native speakers are willing to interact at a level that would be meaningful and meet the learner in his or her growth zone. Based on language acquisition research, he recommends that homestays would be more optimal for language growth once language learners are able to converse on a basic level, which

is defined as talking about a wide range of topics, even new ones, and being able to tell simple stories (Thomson, 2007). For fulltime language learners, this could happen after 350 hours (14-18 weeks) of language sessions. Once a learner has reached this point, but not before a homestay could be beneficial for language growth (Thomson, 2007). This is because the language learner would be able to present more of his or her self in interactions and engage host family members in their world, clarifying concepts and ideas using the target language (Thomson, 2012).

Language learning environment can vary for the sojourner. Study abroad students can be placed in classes with other language learners, mostly separated from native speakers, or they can take an entire load of classes with native speakers. They may stay in a homestay setting with a host family, stay in the dorms with local students or live with other foreigners. Peace Corps volunteers may find themselves entirely within the community they are working in and have very little contact with foreigners. Or they may be near a metropolis and get drawn into the network of foreign communities. Social Business Entrepreneurs and sojourners who work for non-government organizations (NGOs) may find themselves living among other foreigners, but working entirely using the target language. Still others may live with nationals, but use a mix of English and local languages or just English in their working interactions. Is there an ideal combination of formal instruction and living arrangements for learning language? In her look at language acquisition in the Peace Corps experience, Guntermann (1995) states:

Thus far it appears that formal instruction in conjunction with a home stay can provide adults the necessary preparation for successful acquisition in an immersion setting. They seem also to learn the necessary strategies and skills for continuing to learn independently. Living and working in the culture lends authenticity to the experience and constant motivation to learn more and understand better. In over thirty years of



experience the Peace Corps has not found a more effective mix of contexts for language learning. (p. 167)

Her study looks at specific forms of language acquisition and compares acquisition of forms as well as fluency levels with students in study abroad contexts. Although Peace Corps language training is limited to eleven weeks at the beginning of their time in country, with an additional 1-2 weeks over two years, she finds their use of proper syntax to be no worse and in many cases better than the study abroad students who have more direct, formal training.

The literature reinforces the concept of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. Specifically, the homestay environment that is most conducive to language learning is one where the learner can engage host family members in dialogue that will lead to increased language understanding and use. Conventional wisdom places the onus of language growth on the sojourner, but the literature presents a complex picture of homestay environment, identity issues, mismatched expectations and cultural deterrents.

### **Homestay Trends**

Homestays are becoming more popular worldwide. Malaysia has instituted homestays as part of its tourism services (Ibrahim, 2004). Small scale farmers and villagers played the role of host families and were assisted by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism with minimal funding. As of 2009, 29,782 domestic tourists and 11,729 foreign tourists had participated in Malaysia's homestay program (Jamaludina, Othman & Awanga, 2012). Homestays are a part of community based tourism that has been increasing in Asian countries, such as Thailand, Cambodia, Mongolia, Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as countries in Africa and Latin America. The idea of homestays in these environments is to offer an alternative accommodation to the typical tourist experience that will allow the tourist to experience the local culture and also create

opportunities for cultural exchange (Jamaludina et al., 2012). These types of homestays are for limited amounts of time, the length of a conventional vacation.

The international education industry has also grown over the past 20 years and has become one of Australia's major exports (Richardson, 2003). By 2025 Australia expects to host more than 560,000 international students. Regardless of reaching this level, the need for student accommodation is likely to continue to increase. New Zealand has seen similar growth (Bruederle, 2010). Often these types of homestays are limited to one semester or one academic year.

Clearly, homestays are typically associated with either high school or university study abroad programs, or a type of tourism. With Malaysia's homestay tourism increasing, a recent study that examines what occurs in the homestay suggests that participants are focused on cultural experience and not language learning. Jamaludina et al. (2012) suggest these programs would improve by having the hosts learn some English and producing activity brochures in English for the guests to understand entertainment given them.

But what of the sojourner who works abroad and uses the homestay as part of their language learning activities? Guntermann (1995) suggests that an immersion situation, like a homestay environment with some formal intensive language input would be an ideal language learning environment with language gains equal to or greater than those who primarily engage in academic language learning. Not enough research, however, examines language learners who use this approach, learning language outside of formal, classroom settings.

### **Length of Homestays**

Length of homestays vary across the board, although they typically last longer than a week or two. Rowlett studied a group of junior high school students who lived abroad with a

host family for roughly one month (Rowlett, 2007). Robert (2003) observed the reaction of two groups of international travelers – one group that spent three weeks in the host country and one group that spent six weeks in the host country. Interestingly, the six week group self-reported more modest results than the group involved in the three week homestay. However, due to high correlation Robert determined that each program was unique and that functions, topics and situations depend deeply on the participants themselves (Robert, 2003). Indeed, from my own experience I can say that culture shock can set in at different times – sometimes earlier and sometimes later – and that may impact results as well.

Iino (2006) studied the results from American students that spent a full eight weeks in Japan (Iino, 2006). Crealock, Derwing and Gibson (1999) observed international students in a school-year length homestay. Their results showed that homestay preferences were impacted negatively by the fact of high fees with unknown benefits, and compounded by lack of understood expectations of the homestay and generally poor experiences. Bachner and Zeuschel (2008) looked at data of homestay length of four week, two month and year long lengths.

Finally, Bruederle studied groups of international students who spent anywhere from one week to four years in homestays. If the times were longer, every six months the situation was checked up on to ensure that expectations were being met (Bruederle, 2010). Older travelers typically wanted their freedom sooner, and some changed their minds to leave earlier than expected. Things went the other way as well, and some decided to spend more time with their host family than initially planned. In general, the typical homestay lasted three to twelve months (Bruederle, 2010).

In personal conversations with language learners, I have learned that length of stay can also depend on the culture and host family situation. One friend, working in Kyrgyzstan shared

that staying with a host family was the only option for accommodation. The village she worked in did not have empty houses or apartments that could be rented, so she and her colleagues all stayed with separate families. In contrast, friends working in India have had much more difficulty arranging homestays as hosts feel that they do not have the appropriate space to host a foreigner. I personally experienced this in June, 2013. My family and I were invited to be guests in Lucknow, but when we arrived we learned they had arranged for us to stay in a hotel as they felt their home to be inadequate.

Indeed, homestay lengths vary based on need of the student, preferences of the host family, program allowance and changing preferences along the way. Often times the government may be involved in the process of matching host families with travelers, or sometimes an NGO may do the match up at more of a micro level. Based on this review of the literature, it seems that any variation in the amount of time spent with a host family will have an effect on language and culture growth.

### **Language and Culture**

Cultural differences become most visible in homestays because of the continual interactions between host family and learner participants. Becoming a temporary member of a host family exposes the learner to cultural situations, such as hosting with the added advantage of correction. While there is no disagreement that language and culture are interwoven, studies disagree on how immersed in the host culture a language learner can get with different levels of language acquisition.

The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) concludes that cultural competency in language use is only attainable with some level of immersion in the languaculture (Interagency, 2012). Although extralinguistic elements, such as values and beliefs, make up a large part of

cultural competency, the ILR states that a corresponding level of language proficiency is needed to gain cultural competency. Davidson (2007) states, "it has long been understood that language acquisition at the highest levels of proficiency is generally not possible without a substantial immersion experience in the target culture" (p. 276). Davidson points out that being in the country where the target language is spoken is not enough to acquire the language. When Hernandez (2010) examines the impact of the study abroad experience on speaking proficiency, he notes that many students did not "participate in the kind of speech acts that foster L2 proficiency" (p. 603). Many students in his study identified difficulty meeting and interacting with native speakers as a factor leading to fewer interactions with native speakers.

Indeed, interactions with native speakers are considered an integral part of language learning during study abroad so much so that university programs are developing new strategies to get their students to interact with native speakers. Cadd (2012) finds that requiring students to interact with native speakers not only leads to perceived gains in speaking ability but also improves their self-confidence and thus their willingness to use the language.

In order to keep language learners from staying too long in the protective environment of a foreigner community, Brewster and Brewster (1986) advocate living with host people in the first two weeks of arrival in a new country. Encouraging a communication perspective of language learning, they stress pursuing relationships with nationals, relying on host people and adopting a learner position in the new culture. They argue that this will result in bonding with the host culture and allow for increasing involvement in national life instead of increasing involvement in the foreigner communities. Learning to use the language authentically, means spending time with the people. Rather than ignore the stress and anxiety this will put on the

language learner, they suggest that it is a stage that quickly passes if the learner focuses on involvement strategies. Brewster (2010) states,

During his first couple of weeks, the newcomer is uniquely able to cope with and even enjoy the newness of a foreign country and its language. There have been months or even years of planning, and his anticipation, excitement and adrenalin are now at a peak.

The newcomer who is immediately immersed in the local community has many advantages. If he lives with a local family, he can learn how insiders organize their lives, how they get their food and do their shopping and how they get around with public transportation. During the first couple of months, he can learn much about the insiders' attitudes and how they feel about the ways typical foreigners live. As he experiences an alternative lifestyle, he can evaluate the value of adopting it for himself and his own family. (p.7)

This communication model and bonding strategy of language learning may establish the intentional language learner in a host community who will help them to live and speak like the national rather than the foreign community.

In contrast, Knight and Schmidt (2010) found that adaptation was significantly easier for students who had more language background. Thomson (2007) advocates waiting to do a homestay until further along in language, but adopting a language learning approach that advocates increasing interaction with the host languaculture and engaging in interactions that will further cultural understanding and language together.

Damen (2003) describes the culture shock pattern and summarizes that current practice for culture learning prescribes that learners experiment with cross-cultural encounters in a protected and nonthreatening environment. These techniques include "practice in discovering

appropriate behavior in the target culture and in handling cross-cultural experiences in a protected and nonthreatening environment" (pp. 80-81). He describes communication as much more than just words, but also nonverbal codes; manner, purpose and intention of the speaker; interaction with the social environment; and communicative patterns, styles and purposes.

Spenader (2011) presents a picture of risk-taking, sense of humor and assertiveness that leads to cultural understanding and language growth. Her study examined the relationship between acculturation—defined as "adapting to a new culture by adopting the customs of that cultural group" (p. 394)—and language learning. The case study follows four high school age students who arrive in Sweden as beginner language learners and evaluates their progress in language proficiency and acculturation. She finds that level of proficiency reached is not based on prior knowledge, but rather personality of the students, language goals, assertiveness and host family environment. Language learners with higher levels of acculturation had higher levels of language proficiency.

Saville-Troike (2003), argues that while there may be some impact on language and culture growth in an immersive second language environment, adults have already formed beliefs and values integral to identity that interfere with cultural understanding. While she says that learners can be helped to understand communicative differences, it is much less likely that they can adapt their own behavior.

Language and culture growth are thus impacted by intentionality of the sojourner to overcome communication difficulties, to attempt to get involved in host culture, to move out of personal comfort zones, to hold values and beliefs loosely, and to find hosts who are willing to get involved in his or her growth zone. It may be that there is an optimal timing for homestay that is fueled by the personality and whim of the language learner.

## **Rewards and Challenges of the Homestay**

Numerous magazine articles, online blogs and host program websites deal with the challenges of living with a host family. Many describe a typical host family experience and lay out pros, cons, and suggestions on how to survive and succeed in this type of environment. Warnock (2008) encapsulates the main challenge stating, "All students will at some point feel like an idiot." This relates to the difficulty in saying things in a new language as well as the numerous opportunities for cultural misunderstandings.

In her study on study abroad and second language use, Aveni (2005) identifies four areas that a learner must develop for a sense of security in the new language: status in a social interaction, control over environment, validation of their own self-worth and physical and emotional safety. A homestay will confront these areas, perhaps forcing a language learner to adopt a humble perspective of self and a willingness to give environmental control to the hosts. The main challenge in this type of situation is to not give up on communication with hosts.

The looked for rewards of a homestay are progress in language growth (Brewster & Brewster, 1984; Rivers 1998), increased acculturation or cultural understanding (Spenader, 2011; Thomson, 2007), and increased number of relationships with host people (Brewster & Brewster, 1984; Jackson, 2008)

## **Question Development and Analysis**

Likert proposes scale-able questions to be used in surveys, often listed from 1-5 or 1-10, and the survey respondent chooses to what extent he or she agrees with the question or statement (Likert, 1932). Each Likert item offers the survey respondent a chance to evaluate a statement by selecting a quantitative value. It is understood that this response is subject to each person's own understanding of the scale.



Cronbach's alpha is used to estimate the results of psychometric tests specifically to determine if there is correlation of two tests that measure the same construct (Cronbach, 1951). As a result, missing data negatively impacts the capability of the test. Results closer to 1 indicate more robust correlation; results closer to 0 indicate less correlation.

### **Conclusion**

Homestay participants are choosing to put themselves in an environment where they can interact with native speakers on a continual, daily basis. But is there much difference between intentional language learners who engage in a homestay and those who do not? Many factors feed into language learning. These may be internal, such as shifting identities, risk-taking abilities and motivation. They may also be external, such as receptiveness from native speakers, and an immersive language environment. While there is growing research in areas of learner identity and the impact of the language learning environment, there is a gap in literature that looks at adult language learners who engage in homestay outside the academic environment.

## Chapter III: Methodology

### Participants

Adults who were learning a language and may or may not have completed a homestay as a part of this process were invited to participate in an online questionnaire (see Appendix A) via Survey Monkey. A link to the survey was posted on several Facebook groups the author is a part of, including one for alumni from an international school in Kazakhstan, one for expats living in India and a group for mothers living overseas. The author also contacted previous colleagues who work overseas and invited them to complete the survey and pass on the link to others in similar contexts.

The total number of surveys returned was 131. Of these, 58% participants completed a homestay as a part of language and/or culture learning and 42% did not engage in a homestay. The home stay length for participants varied from 3 days to several years, with the median homestay length at 80 days. The age of participants at the time of their homestay ranged from 18 to 54, with a median age of 30. The majority were in their 20s (45%) and 30s (40%), but 3% were in their late teens, 7% were in their 40s, and 4% were in their 50s.

Most participants (83%) identified as native English speakers, and 2% identified themselves as bilingual, but other native languages included Dutch (4%), Afrikaans (1%), Korean (1%), German (6%), Swiss German (2%), Spanish (1%), French (1%), and Chinese-Cantonese (1%). Participants engaged 40 different languages, with the most common being Arabic (21%), Urdu/Hindi (16%), Russian (8%) and Tajik (6%). See Appendix B, Table 12, for a complete list of languages and a breakdown between languages studied for homestay and non-homestay participants. A majority of participants were female (65%) and 35% were male.

During their language learning period, 44% of participants were single, 15% were married with no children, 35% were married with young children and 6% were married with older children.

At the time of the study, participants had achieved a variety of language levels in their focus language, identifying as Novice (1%), Intermediate (20%), Advanced (29%), Superior (39%), and Distinguished (11%). 98% identified as continuing to improve their focus language throughout their time abroad. Participants engaged in a variety of study methods, with 74% identifying a self-study approach and 51% attending some formal language school. 36% described other methods engaged in language learning. These percentages imply some overlapping, meaning, for many, language school was not the sole form of language acquisition. Methodologies also overlap among categories. For example, the Growing Participant Approach (GPA) established by Thomson (2012) was identified as the method/program of study in each of three categories: 35% listed GPA under Self-study, 17% listed GPA under formal language school and 22% listed GPA under the 'Other' category.

## **Materials**

The questionnaire was developed based on four areas: (1) my review of the literature pertaining to home stays, study abroad and language learning factors, (2) conversations with other language learners, (3) discussion with other language learning advisors and with a language program director in India, and (4) my own experience with language learning outside my native country. The questionnaire included 25 Likert-scale items and 10 open response items to gather background information of participants and to account for language learning factors that also affect language progress.

The organization and type of questions included are based primarily on Dornyei's (2010) guidelines for developing questionnaires for second language research. This questionnaire took

participants about ten minutes to complete. Homestay participants were invited to fill out further sections of the survey that included 20 Likert-scale questions and 32 open response questions.

This took an additional 25 minutes.

### **Analysis**

In the present study, data analysis used Pearson correlations, Independent sample *t*-tests and ANOVA as relevant to the data. Pearson correlation was used on all the data to check for any potentially confounding relationships among questions. The results for this are in Table 13, Appendix B. Independent sample *t*-tests were used to analyze the differences between homestay and non-homestay participants. For these analyses, the 25 Likert-scale questions from section 1 were put in their respective categories and sums for each category were used. These 7 categories and the questions that fall under them are included in Appendix B, Table 10.

The second step was to look at independent sample *t*-tests to compare different homestay groups to see if doing a homestay with three months or more of language made any difference and to assist in answering the research question, "is there an optimal time in the language learning process for doing a homestay?" In addition to the 7 Likert-scale categories mentioned previously, 5 homestay specific Likert-scale categories were looked at to check for differences in homestay groups. A list of these categories is included in Appendix B, Table 11. Additionally, an ANOVA was used to analyze the differences among subgroups of participants within the homestay group. Finally, Pearson correlations for just the homestay participants were looked at to see how the relevant homestay factors interacted with each other.

The third step was to look at homestay participants' assessments of and advice from the experience to provide a description of the homestay environment.

Cronbach Alpha, 0.81 ( $N = 119$ ), for all numeric data indicated that the data is consistent. Similarly, Chronbach Alpha, 0.84 ( $N = 58$ ), for all numeric data pertaining just to homestay participants indicated that the homestay data is consistent. Two questionnaires were removed from data analysis as the first did not fit the target participant profile, and the second one answered 'yes' to doing a homestay but did not fill out any homestay specific questions to support this claim.

## Chapter IV: RESULTS

### Introduction

The first part of the results section explores the differences between homestay and non-homestay participants. Research question 1 is addressed first, examining the language outcomes for homestay and non-homestay participants. The next section addresses research question 2, which compares participants' self-evaluation of cultural integration.

The second part of the results section reviews responses solely from homestay participants. Independent sample *t*-test analysis and ANOVA statistical analyses are used to see what comparisons exist for homestay timing, breaking homestay participants into subgroups based on timing of the homestay. This addresses research question 3.

The last two sections address research question 4. First, statistical analysis is used to explore how different homestay factors interact with each other using Pearson correlations. Second, the open response questions from the survey are explored and summarized. This answers research question 4, looking at the various homestay environments and highlighting drawbacks and benefits experienced by the participants.

### Language Outcome for Homestay and Non-Homestay Participants

An independent sample *t* test was performed with home stay participants and non-homestay participants as independent variables. Because the analysis was comparing groups of unequal numbers, the Satterthwaite approximation was used to form these calculations. The following table shows the results for the language specific Likert-scale categories and self-reported ACTFL language scale level.

Table 1

*T-test: Comparison of Homestay and Non-homestay Participants' Language*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>t-test statistic</b>	<b>Homestay Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Non-Homestay Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
Language Ability Supports Integration	.117	1.579	16.313 (1.653)	67	15.787 (1.817)	47
Emphasis on Language Growth	.312	1.015	14.791 (2.107)	67	14.340 (2.478)	47
Language Growth	.165	1.398	16.970 (1.403)	67	16.574 (1.542)	47
Local Assistance in Language Learning	.441	6.772	24.044 (2.899)	67	23.574 (3.392)	47
ACTFL language scale values	.027*	2.241	6.701 (1.938)	67	5.851 (2.032)	47

\*significance at  $p < .05$

Although Homestay participants had higher means than Non-homestay participants in all language categories that were looked at in this study, most of them were not statistically significant. Table 1 (above) indicates a statistically significant difference (at  $p < .05$ ) between the two groups in final language (ACTFL language scale) scores only.

It shows that both groups of participants in this study were proactive in languaculture growth and felt similar levels of local assistance to meet their language goals. There was no statistically significant difference in how participants evaluated their language experiences on the Likert-scale questions designed to reflect these experiences.

Given these differences and similarities, the t-test results suggest that the homestay environment spurs participants onto some further language achievement that is otherwise not met. This difference is slight, with the mean score indicating a difference in language achievement as "advanced" for non-homestay participants and "advanced plus" for homestay

participants. Perhaps this can be explained through the idea that those who did so would find themselves with a more solid community of practice, more exposure to language and more opportunity to practice language. Considering the communicative approach to language growth, engaged by researchers such as Davidson (2007), the homestay environment would certainly provide a rich variety of interactions that are leading to this difference.

The findings can be further explained through a sociolinguistic approach to language that explores the connections between language and culture learning, and evaluates language in the context of communication. Cadd (2012), Davidson (2007), and Hernandez (2010), previously discussed in the literature section of this paper, each suggest that interacting with native speakers is an important part of language growth. A homestay provides the context for a variety of interactions with native speakers that would encourage risk-taking and provide natural and spontaneous activities in the target language.

### **Cultural Integration for Homestay and Non-Homestay Participants**

To answer research question 2, an independent sample *t* test was performed with homestay participants and non-homestay participants as independent variables. As in the previous analysis, the Satterthwaite approximation was used to form these calculations and adjust appropriately for the uneven numbers. The following table shows the results for the cultural integration specific Likert-scale categories.



Table 2

*T-test: Comparison of Responses to Cultural Integration*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>t-test statistic</b>	<b>Homestay Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Non-Homestay Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
Emphasis on Cultural Integration	.096	1.683	10.816 (1.032)	67	10.446 (1.348)	47
Language Ability Supports Integration	.117	1.579	16.313 (1.653)	67	15.787 (1.817)	47
Cultural Integration Growth	.262	1.126	15.253 (1.869)	67	14.872 (1.714)	47
Final Cultural Integration	.047*	2.006	26.402 (2.796)	67	25.319 (2.867)	47

\*significance at  $p < .05$

Just like the language differences, it was participants' final cultural integration scores that showed a statistically significant difference for the two groups. Table 2 (above) indicates higher mean scores for Homestay participants than for Non-Homestay participants, a statistically significant difference value of  $p < .05$ . Homestay participants had higher means than Non-homestay participants in all cultural integration categories that were looked at in this study, but most of them were not statistically significant.

This indicates that there was no significant difference in how both groups approached cultural integration, but rather that it was equally emphasized and both groups felt that they grew in this area. The correlations suggest that those who participate in a homestay do achieve higher final cultural integration, adapting their lifestyle to fit more with locals. Like the language learning outcome, it may be that the homestay contributes to the kinds of activities that correlate with final cultural integration, such as emphasizing cultural integration and using language to get deeper into cultural understanding. Saville-Troike (2003, p. 12) explains that "interpreting the

meaning of linguistic behavior requires knowing the cultural meaning in which it is imbedded". While she goes on to argue that adopting new values and beliefs is not likely for adult language learners, it could be that the homestay environment brings some cultural insight to adult language learners that allows for cultural integration that does not happen outside this setting. Indeed the connection between language and culture is well-established and it is not surprising that participants who grew in language also grew in cultural integration.

### **Is There an Optimal time to do a Homestay?**

To address research question 3, which pertains to the impact of Homestay timing on language results and cultural integration, a series of Independent Sample  $t$  - Tests were performed. The timing of homestay and its impact on Likert-scale category scores is addressed first. Following this, other binary factors that could impact results were looked at to check for interferences. These included cultural training, gender, marital status and additional shared language with the host family.

**What difference does 3 months of language make?** Because three months of full time language was generally considered to be foundational for language study, an independent sample  $t$ -test was performed to compare homestay participants who engaged three or more months of language with those who had less than three months of language prior to the homestay.

Table 3

*T-test: Comparison of Initial Language Level Impact on Homestay*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>t statistic</b>	<b>Less than 3 months of language Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>3 months or more of language Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Integration Growth	.000*	4.711	10.156 (3.173)	32	13.565 (2.191)	23
Homestay Cultural Integration Growth	.550	-.601	25.5 (3.005)	32	25.043 (2.602)	23
Final Cultural Integration	.033*	-2.196	27.375 (2.562)	32	26.608 (3.187)	23
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Language Growth	.000*	3.549	9.812 (3.658)	32	12.478 (1.830)	23
Host Family Assistance in Learning Language	.260	1.137	13.312 (3.373)	32	14.304 (3.051)	23
Homestay Language Growth	.883	.146	29.062 (7.156)	32	29.347 (7.062)	23
Final ACTFL Language Scale Values	.890	-.138	6.812 (1.925)	32	6.739 (1.935)	23

\*significance at  $p < .05$

This independent sample *t*-test supports the idea that having some language before going into a homestay helps prepare language learners to grow in both cultural integration and language ability. This is supported by previous studies (Freed, 1995; Guntermann, 1995; Knight & Schmidt, 2010; Thomson, 2007) mentioned in the literature section, who argue that language learners will be better able to cope and grow with a foundation of language in a more protected environment.

What is surprising is that those who did a homestay earlier on reported higher levels of cultural integration, at a significance level of  $p = .033$ . This supports the Brewsters' claim

discussed in the literature section that bonding with the culture is best able to happen if participants engage a homestay early on, before immersing themselves in an expat environment.

Looking at those who did their homestay at the 3 month mark, however undermines this claim. The independent samples were reassessed to compare final cultural integration for several groups: (1) Those who did a homestay at less than 3 months of language (N = 32) were compared to those who did one after more than three months of language (N = 15). (2) Those who did a homestay at 3 months (N = 8) with a combination of those who did a homestay earlier than 3 months and those who did one later than 3 months (N = 47). (3) Those who did a homestay at 3 months of language (N =8) with those who did not participate in a homestay (N = 47).

Table 4

*T-test: Final Cultural Integration Values for Homestay Groups*

<b>P-Value</b>	<b>t-statistic</b>	<b>Homestay began at less than 3 months of language Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Homestay began after more than 3 months of language (removed those who began home-stay at 3 months) Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
.265	-1.144	27.375 (2.562)	32	26.2 (3.569)	15
<b>P-Value</b>	<b>t-statistic</b>	<b>Homestay began at 3 months of language Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Homestay at less than 3 months of language and more than 3 months of language Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
.012*	-2.948	24.5 (2.070)	8	27 (2.934)	47
<b>P-Value</b>	<b>t-statistic</b>	<b>Homestay began at 3 months of language Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Did not participate in a homestay Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
.267	-1.163	24.5 (2.070)	8	25.489 (2.962)	47

\*significance at  $p < .05$

This revealed a statistically significant difference (at  $p = .012$ ). The 3 month group mean for this variation was at 24.5, and the mean for all other homestay participants, was at 27. Although not statistically significant, it is interesting that the final cultural integration score for those who did a homestay at 3 months was also lower than non-homestay participants, who scored 25.489 in this category. In other words, the final cultural integration of the survey respondents that did a homestay at about 3 months more than accounted for the difference between early and late homestays discovered by the earlier analysis.

From this data, it appears that there was no significant difference in cultural integration in doing a homestay early on instead of waiting ( $p = .265$ ). This suggests that rather than doing a homestay early on being optimal for cultural integration gains, it may be better to avoid the 3 month mark. Based on the argument made by Damen (2003) in the literature review, it is probable that culture shock plays a role in this. Perhaps participants dipped into some level of culture shock, defined as "fear of and/or distaste for the new and unknown" (p. 80). This unconscious or conscious resistance to the culture may have negatively impacted the homestay experience, in turn impacting the participants overall ability to integrate in the culture.

An ANOVA was used to see if other differences existed for the three groups in the cultural integration and language categories. These confirm the results from the t-test, showing that participants felt, at a statistically significant level that it is better to have some language foundation in order to grow in language and cultural integration during the homestay.

The ANOVA, however weakens the argument for optimal homestay timing and final cultural integration achievements. With no statistically significant differences in final language or cultural integration scores, it suggest that those who wish to engage in a homestay may do one

at a time that is optimal for their lifestyle rather than striving to engage in one sooner or later in the language learning process.

Table 5

*ANOVA: Timing Based 3-way Comparison of Homestay Participants*

Variable	P-Value	Less than 3 months of language Mean (SD)	N	3 months of language Mean (SD)	N	More than 3 months of language Mean (SD)	N
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Integration Growth	.000*	10.1 (3.262)	32	13 (2.905)	8	13.6 (1.723)	15
Homestay Cultural Integration Growth	.983	25.333 (2.986)	32	25.4 (2.412)	8	25.2 (2.932)	15
Final Cultural Integration	.377	27.133 (2.445)	32	25.8 (3.326)	8	26.2 (3.569)	15
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Language Growth	.001*	9.5 (3.559)	32	12.4 (2.118)	8	12.8 (1.698)	15
Host Family Assistance in Learning Language	.182	13.1 (3.376)	32	13.7 (3.713)	8	15 (2.390)	15
Homestay Language Growth	.901	28.8 (7.279)	32	29.9 (7.078)	8	29.466 (7.008)	15
Final ACTFL Language Scale Values1	.890	-.138	32	6.812 (1.925)	8	6.739 (1.935)	15

\*significance at  $p < .05$

Given that the sample size is very small, it is difficult to draw a firm conclusion from the impact of timing on homestays. This may also account for the variances between the ANOVA and t-test results.

**Does cultural training impact the homestay experience?** Participants were asked if they received training in appropriate cultural behavior or manners before the homestay. The

majority affirmed that they had received some cultural training. Using Independent Sample *t*-test, this group (N = 44) was compared to those who did not receive any training (N = 11) to see if there was any difference in homestay outcome.

Table 6

*T-test: Cultural Training Effect on Homestay Variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b><i>t</i> statistic</b>	<b>Cultural Training Prior To Homestay Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>No Cultural Training Prior to Homestay Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Integration Growth	.685	.414	11.704 (2.849)	44	11.090 (4.700)	11
Homestay Cultural Integration Growth	.532	-.638	25.181 (2.805)	44	25.818 (2.993)	11
Final Cultural Integration	.393	-.881	26.431 (2.773)	44	27.454 (3.587)	11
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Language Growth	.777	.287	11 (3.169)	44	10.636 (3.880)	11
Host Family Assistance in Learning Language	.608	.525	13.863 (3.069)	44	13.181 (4.020)	11
Homestay Language Growth	.251	1.205	29.954 (5.929)	44	26.090 (10.212)	11
Final ACTFL Language Scale Values	.921	.099	6.795 (1.899)	44	6.727 (2.053)	11

no significance at  $p < .05$

Based on this analysis, one cannot make a definitive statement that having some cultural training affects homestay outcomes in any of the areas addressed in this study.

**Impacts of a shared language other than the focus language.** Because it was expected that having a shared language other than the focus language would impact language results,

participants who did their homestay in that sort of environment were compared with those who did not share a language with their host family.

Table 7

*T-test: Shared Language Effect on Homestay Variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>t statistic</b>	<b>Shared language other than focus language Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>No shared language Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Integration Growth	.301	-1.045	11 (3.585)	22	11.969 (3.015)	33
Homestay Cultural Integration Growth	.587	.545	25.545 (2.109)	22	25.151 (3.241)	33
Final Cultural Integration	.850	-.189	26.545 (2.755)	22	26.696 (3.107)	33
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Language Growth	.657	-.445	10.681 (3.371)	22	11.090 (3.272)	33
Host Family Assistance in Learning Language	.444	-.771	13.318 (3.107)	22	14 (3.363)	33
Homestay Language Growth	.530	-.634	28.363 (9.063)	22	29.727 (5.409)	33
Final ACTFL Language Scale Values	.097	-1.700	6.795 (1.899)	22	7.151 (1.660)	33

no significance at  $p < .05$

This independent sample *t*-test does not support a claim that having a shared language disrupts language growth. The two groups had very similar means, with those without a shared language scoring slightly higher in every category except Homestay Cultural Integration Growth.

**What are the differences between men and women in the homestay?** Greater numbers of women responded to the survey. This may be because of disproportionate numbers of male



and female workers in the target population, or simply that the author had more connections with women. Nevertheless, it is worth looking at how they received the homestay experience and impacts on their final outcomes.

Table 8

*T-test: Male and Female Responses to the Homestay*

Variable	P-Value	t statistic	Male Mean (SD)	N	Female Mean (SD)	N
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Integration Growth	.169	-1.400	10.764 (2.586)	17	11.947 (3.487)	38
Homestay Cultural Integration Growth	.841	.201	25.411 (2.237)	17	25.263 (3.081)	38
Final Cultural Integration	.762	-.303	26.470 (2.477)	17	26.710 (3.161)	38
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Language Growth	.302	-1.047	10.235 (3.269)	17	11.236 (3.291)	38
Host Family Assistance in Learning Language	.880	.150	13.823 (3.066)	17	13.684 (3.370)	38
Homestay Language Growth	.324	.995	30.352 (4.622)	17	28.657 (7.902)	38
Final ACTFL Language Scale Values:	.223	1.246	7.294 (2.143)	17	6.552 (1.781)	38

no significance at  $p < .05$

This independent sample *t*-test supports the idea that there is no significant statistical difference in outcome for men and women who engage a homestay.

**Differences between singles and couples/families.** Generally singles are considered to have more free time and are able to engage more fully in language and culture as a result. Couples and families are likely to have more responsibilities and distractions, but also more

emotional support. The independent sample *t*-test was used to see if these differences led to any statistically significant differences in the homestay experience.

Table 9

*T-test: The Impact of Being Single on the Homestay Experience*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b><i>t</i> statistic</b>	<b>Single Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Couples/Families Mean (SD)</b>	<b>N</b>
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Integration Growth	.603	-.523	11.366 (2.976)	30	11.84 (3.613)	25
Homestay Cultural Integration Growth	.113	1.611	25.866 (2.661)	30	24.64 (2.928)	25
Final Cultural Integration	.713	-.369	26.5 (2.825)	30	26.8 (3.135)	25
Language Ability at Start of Homestay led to Language Growth	.856	.181	11 (3.581)	30	10.84 (2.967)	25
Host Family Assistance in Learning Language	.452	.757	14.033 (3.178)	30	13.36 (3.365)	25
Homestay Language Growth	.016*	2.510	31.366 (4.366)	30	26.56 (8.703)	25
Final ACTFL Language Scale Values	.626	.489	6.9 (1.748)	30	6.552 (1.781)	25

\*significance at  $p < .05$

This independent sample *t*-test suggests an idea that being single leads to more homestay language growth. However, this group also spent more time than couples and families in the homestay, which is the most likely cause for this difference.

### **What is the Nature of the Homestay?**

The previous findings indicate that doing a homestay leads to higher language and cultural outcomes than not doing a homestay. Nevertheless, there may be no significant gains in

doing one earlier or later. But what is going on within the homestay group, and how are these factors of language focus and cultural attitude influencing each other?

Table 14 in appendix B presents the Pearson correlations for the five Likert-scale categories completed by homestay participants and other factors related to language learning and homestay environment. The first section presents how initial homestay language ability correlates with other categories. The next section discusses the relationship between language and culture growth. The last section addresses additional correlations that pertain to the homestay environment.

**Language ability at the start of the homestay.** Likert scale categories 1 and 2 correlated significantly (at  $N = 57, p < .0001$ ). That is, those who felt that their language level going into the homestay set them up to grow in cultural integration correlated with those who felt that their language level going into the homestay set them up to grow in language. This is consistent with previous studies that indicate there can be little separation between culture and language in a second language environment (Damen 2003, Davidson 2007, Spenader 2011). As Damen (2003) writes, "To ignore the interplay between language and culture is to play the language game without knowing the rules" (p73).

Feeling like one's language ability going into the homestay set one up to grow in language correlated significantly (at  $N = 57, p < .05$ ) with days of language study prior to homestay as well as language level at the start of the homestay. This establishes the relationship that having some language at least corresponds to feeling better set up to make language and culture gains. It also supports the findings of previous studies on the topic, which argue for some language background before engaging in a homestay (Freed, 1995; Guntermann, 1995; Thomson 2007).

A possible trend ( $p = .094$ ) existed between participants who felt like their language level set them up to grow in language and receiving assistance from their host family in doing so (Likert-scale category 3). Although not at a significant level ( $p = .182$ ), the ANOVA test in table 5 above showed a similar trend with those who engaged a homestay after the three month period having a higher mean 15(2.390) than those who engaged one at 3 months of language, 13.7 (3.713), or earlier than 3 months, 13.1 (3.376).

Interestingly, no significant correlation was found between feeling like language level at the beginning of the homestay led to cultural integration and language growth, and final cultural integration and final language ability. Similarly, days of language study prior to homestay did not correlate significantly with final cultural integration or final language ability. However, language level at the start of the homestay and final language outcome correlated significantly (at  $N = 57, p < .05$ ), suggesting that there may be a connection between having some language going into the homestay and achieving higher levels of language.

**Homestay language and culture growth.** Likert-scale category 4, language growth during homestay, correlated significantly ( $p < .05$ ) with category 5, cultural integration growth during the homestay, and category 3, receiving assistance from the host family in learning language. This establishes that host families who understood the purpose of homestay participants to be language and culture learning, assisted more in achieving those purposes.

While there was no significant correlation between growing in language and culture during the homestay, a possible trend is that those who grow in language or culture during their homestay achieve higher final language. Final language ability correlated with homestay language growth at  $p = .088$  and homestay cultural integration growth at  $p = .083$ .

**Additional factors on the homestay.** There were several factors that did not have significant correlations with final language and cultural integration outcomes and the Likert-scale categories. These included doing the homestay with other expats, length of homestay, homestay setting and host family's previous experience with foreigners. The only significant correlation occurred (at  $N = 57$ ,  $p < .05$ ) between homestay setting and receiving assistance from the family in learning language. This indicates that a rural setting is most helpful.

### **What Can We Learn from Participants' Homestay Experiences?**

In section 5 of the questionnaire, participants evaluated their homestay experience, looking at good and bad aspects in response to language, culture and personal growth and listing recommendations for others. Overwhelmingly, these responses were characterized by a positive viewpoint on the homestay, although some clarified that it was more of a cultural growth experience than a language growth experience.

**Aspects of the homestay participants liked.** The most commonly mentioned aspect of homestay that participants liked was their experience with the culture. This is consistent with earlier analysis that showed greater final cultural integration for homestay participants.

We bonded with a local family who we are still very close to and actually with a whole village. We have a village we refer to as "our" village, just like the locals. We also felt the covering of a well-respected local family. We didn't realize it at the time, but we got to know a very unique, kind and wise [Central Asian] man (our dad). We didn't know how valuable it would be to us to know a local man who was kind to his wife, was educated, and knew about the world. It has helped fend off the cynicism that tries to creep in. I also really liked making local food with our mom and my sisters-in-law.

Even participants who struggled more during the homestay appreciated that they were able to engage their family and gain cultural insight, as one person states: "'Really liked' is generous, but didn't totally hate was that I got a good glimpse of life inside a local home."

The second largest response after cultural experiences was the host family itself. Almost half of the homestay participants specifically mentioned their family as a positive aspect of the homestay, with several feeling like they were adopted into the family and others gaining long-lasting friendships with the host family and community as a result of the homestay. One person sums it up: "I just loved being part of the hosting family 24/7. I made great friends during that time, they still feel like family to me."

Language learning and environment was another positive aspect for many participants, with a third of participants identifying this as something they liked from the homestay. One person points out how joining the family in daily activities lends itself to growing in specific conversations of the language, writing:

I loved those times when we were just sitting in the kitchen talking about whatever, all in my target language. I remember the day I had the revelation like "wow, I am understanding everything she is saying, and I can respond in a normal way... this is incredible!"

Joining in these daily activities, as well as other shared activities was an aspect appreciated by many homestay participants, with most seeing the time spent even doing chores with the family as a positive component. Responses on accommodation were mixed, with some people appreciating setups where they could retreat from the family and others feeling okay with less space, as one person explains: "I liked that the home was actually quite small, so I was forced to spend a lot of time with them. I liked sharing all my meals with them."

Overall, these aspects of the homestay are consistent with studies on high school and university students that explain how the attitude of the students and how they feel integrated with the host family can indicate how they are able to grow in language and culture. As Jackson (2008) explains in the literature review, it is when learners engage in activities, regardless of type of activity, that one reaches group acceptance and growth into the community and language.

**Aspects of the homestay participants disliked.** In the literature, several studies explained struggles that can take place in the homestay environment (see Aveni, 2005 and Rivers, 1998 in the literature review). Although 3 participants stated there was nothing they didn't like about the homestay, the majority responded with a variety of issues. These included difficulties in the culture and language, but also lack of privacy, powerlessness, difficulty adjusting to the accommodations, trouble with the host family, being disconnected from other foreigners, and in some cases even boredom!

Cultural difficulties were the most common aspect that participants disliked, and these ranged from difficulty adapting to new gender roles, being misunderstood or doing things incorrectly by local standards. In some cases, trying to be culturally sensitive made navigating basic needs or preferences difficult, as one participant reflects on difficulties in the homestay:

...I see these negative things as parts of the whole package and unavoidable. I don't think there's a way to have a good host family stay where these things DON'T happen. The only thing I would change is that if I did it again, I wouldn't hesitate to ask for a few personal accommodations and express my opinion a bit more about some practical things. Such as preferring to drink coffee in the morning instead of tea. But then, I needed more cultural awareness before learning that it would have been acceptable to ask for some of

these small things that would have (for me) made the host family stay more comfortable.

But these are small things, in the big picture!

17 participants felt that having a low level of the language contributed to difficulties in the homestay. In some cases this was complicated by the host family knowing several languages, or by doing the homestay with someone who shared a common language. Although this seemed helpful in the beginning, one person reflected that it ended up hurting language growth after some time:

My roommate could also understand English, she couldn't speak it very well, but this allowed me to be able to speak English if I couldn't say what I wanted in [my target language]. At first this was great, but as it became a habit, it ended up hurting me in the long run because my comprehension skills greatly increased, but my actual ability to say what I wanted to say was stunted.

For others, trouble communicating because they simply did not have language skills was a difficulty during the homestay. One participant summed this up, stating: "Lack of language meant it was hard to spend much time with them, we couldn't ask cultural questions or even how to do things."

Not all participants felt close to the host family, with 9 people evaluating that the family did not relate to them in a helpful way-- either they were viewed as a guest and not included in family life as a result, or the family dynamics were not a healthy environment. One person reflected that the family was not entirely to blame, writing: "They didn't try to actively include us enough, and we didn't try hard enough to be involved."

Lack of privacy was another commonly identified difficulty of the homestay. In situations where homestay participants were given a separate room, the host family still used that



space or entered it without being invited. Powerlessness over space, time, relationships and food seems to be a common difficulty. Participants felt that they could not eat as they liked, either being forced to eat more than they were comfortable with, or not being provided enough food. Additionally, their time and belongings were shared with the family, in a way that was stretching. Some of this can be explained by the vast difference in standard of living of the two cultures, but some of it is perhaps the insecurity of the sojourner in the new culture, and lack of language or insight to address the family. One person described this initial difficulty, stating: "It took me 2 weeks to figure out how one could take a shower or bath at their house :-). Somewhat poor living and hygiene conditions came a bit as a shock to me."

Because the overall cultural integration levels were higher for the homestay participants than for those who didn't engage in a home stay, it seems like this group of people was, for the most part, able to overcome difficulties, regardless of difficult beginnings.

**Language progress and difficulties.** Participants were asked how they felt their language progressed as a result of the homestay. Many who did it earlier in their language learning journey described it as a good way to get cultural insight and relationships, but not necessarily good for language growth. One person sums up their language experience during the homestay like this:

Staying with that first host family, I felt from about the 3rd to the 6th month it was most useful for language learning. Because from the 3rd month I could talk ABOUT things more and ask real questions and not just repeat the same few phrases, or understand the same few words. After six months it became less useful in THAT same family because they were not moving on with my progression in the language. But moving to a different

family could give language learning a new push again at that point, because you'll be having more 'normal' conversations.

In some cases, participants didn't view language learning as part of the reason for doing the homestay, with their main goal as gaining cultural insight and relationships in the community. This may account for the difference in final cultural integration discussed earlier, where homestay participants had a statistically significant higher final cultural integration score compared with those who did not do a homestay. One respondent wrote:

I'm glad I did it, but mainly from cultural observation benefits rather than language learning. I didn't feel it was worth it from a language learning perspective because I made so little progress, but if I did it again I'd want to combine it with a formal language program in order to get more benefit from it. All in all, it was a really tough 2 months, and I was glad when it was over.

For this same reason, many participants feel that they gained a lot from the homestay experience in terms of relationships and cultural insights, but it didn't contribute to their language growth either because the host family wasn't prepared to help with language or the participant didn't have the necessary skills to grow in language during the homestay. One person explained this difficulty:

Although it did give us more exposure to the language, I didn't feel that the homestay contributed much to my language learning and I got a lot more out of time spent in language lessons than with homestay. I think this is because of the stage of language learning I was at (first stage), especially during the 'honeymoon' of being with a local family. If that honeymoon stage had happened later when I had more language under my belt it would have been of greater benefit.

Another participant described feeling unprepared to learn language, writing:

Lack of a formal language learning program during [the homestay] meant I didn't have much framework to use for putting new learning into, so the things I was able to learn weren't properly consolidated or built on, it was just very scattergun and hence probably ineffective.

Not all respondents had this difficulty, with several writing that being in an immersive environment forced them to learn and use the language and that they had no choice but to grow in the language. When they felt supported to do this in their family, it went well, as one participant reported: "I was forced to use language so even when it was uncomfortable, I would keep trying. It was also a safe environment to be able to learn, the community was very encouraging and sympathetic to my effort."

But many participants also found themselves in multilingual environments, or a shared language. In these cases, they experienced interference in their language learning, either because it was easier to slip into the other language when hitting difficulties in communication or because the family really wanted to grow in their English. One person wrote:

... they really wanted to work on their English. It definitely added to the culture shock and exhausted me more. Which is why I think a home stay later in the language learning process is so much more beneficial to language.

On the same subject, another person stated: "Because many people know English, it was hard at times to keep them speaking the host language. If something wasn't understood, it was too easy to go to English.

Being in the homestay environment also led to discouragement when host family were unhelpful, impatient or expected that participants would progress faster. In many cases,

participants describe being very tired, as one person clarifies this difficulty: "Most local people have no idea what it's like to travel a long way with small children, what jet-lag is like or how exhausting language-learning is initially and many were surprised that we weren't fluent in 1 month."

Despite these difficulties, a large number of people responded that the homestay environment was good for their language growth. Some specific areas that were identified were in terms of production-- being able to respond more quickly and fluently in daily conversations, increasing vocabulary, and much better listening comprehension. This is very different from the university students described by Rivers (1998) in the literature review, whose homestay participants tended to retreat and grew more in reading and writing during their homestay.

**Willingness to engage another homestay.** In partial effort to assess how participants valued their homestay experience, they were asked if they would do another homestay in the future. The majority (50 respondents) answered "yes", with some mentioning that they had already completed additional homestays and that they found later homestays to be more beneficial to their language growth. Additionally, 11 said they would do another homestay if it were in a different language or culture, clarifying that they had reached satisfactory language and culture levels at the time. Only 10 said that they would not do another homestay, some because of their family situation, some because they were satisfied with their language and only two evaluating the experience as too hard. Despite unwillingness to engage another homestay, one person continues to recommend it for others, writing: "It was too strange in the urban setting ... but doable for a couple without kids or for singles. We have only done that short week ourselves but kept recommending the experience to newcomers."

These positive responses confirm that overall, homestay participants believe there is much to be gained in the homestay experience and are willing to let themselves be stretched linguistically and culturally at the expense of their personal comfort.

**Current relationship with the host family.** The relationship with the family is another way to evaluate the participants' response to the homestay. 18 participants mentioned having lost contact with the family because they moved away and could no longer visit them easily. In some cases it seems that both the family and the participant didn't pursue a relationship after the homestay. One explanation given by a participant was: "We no longer live in the country now. But after the three weeks of homestay, we left on good terms and visited them occasionally afterwards."

Others, perhaps, did the homestay just to satisfy a requirement and didn't feel obligated to keep the relationship going: "When I moved out, we had built no meaningful relationship, so there was almost no ongoing contact with them - much like before I lived there, when we hadn't yet met." Four participants felt that their relationship with the family had gotten worse and that they finished the homestay disliking some of the family members. But the majority, 49 respondents, felt close to their host family. Many describe their relationship after the homestay as "stronger", qualifying an ongoing friendship. And there are a few who felt like they gained a family in the process, as one participant explains the relationship:

[The relationship is] better since we didn't know them prior. We are part of the family.

Their oldest kids lived with us during their prep school and college. Their son is a partner in our business. They are buying our house from us. Their son is like a son to us.

While an ongoing relationship is not a necessary gain, it is a strong outcome from the homestay and it would be interesting to see what impact this has on length of stay for sojourners.

**Advice to others considering a homestay.** Participants were invited to give advice for colleagues preparing for a homestay. These responses could be categorized as culture learning, language learning, taking care of personal needs, setting boundaries, establishing personal space, compensating the family, establishing an advocate, setting a positive attitude of involvement, timing, identifying expectations, and selecting the right family.

Participants recommended entering the homestay with awareness of one's beliefs values and a willingness to ask questions and engage in understanding the new culture. This includes observing outward habits, but also exploring why the host family thinks and does things through asking questions. While they recommended observing the culture, it seems that the general consensus is to be an active participant, joining in activities when presented with them. Also, expending one's own values and not making judgments of the new culture was identified as important.

There are a variety of approaches participants recommended to help get the language. One person suggested having an English speaker as a resource for clarifying questions. Another suggested that it is helpful to have language lessons outside of the homestay. Several recommended taking precautions to keep using the target language and establishing it as the main way of communicating. Risk-taking was another important component that participants identified—not being afraid to talk or ask questions, but using the opportunity to learn. Another person identified the need to keep adding to vocabulary and to use a notebook to make note of new words when they come up. A couple people suggested that having a language foundation is helpful for language growth, so the homestay should be done later on in the language learning process, or one could consider pursuing a second homestay for language growth.

Learning to take care of personal needs can be difficult when everything is new and different. Participants advised casting felt needs in a positive way, such as telling the family which foods one *does* like. Because the homestay can be exhausting, participants recommended negotiating a comfortable sleeping arrangement, but also finding ways to rest during the day. Staying healthy may be a concern going into the homestay, so they recommended making sure one has access to clean water and arranging sanitation needs ahead of time. Finding a way to relax is also important, especially for longer homestays. For those who were doing the homestay with children, participants recommended having low expectations about children's responses, establishing boundaries especially in regards to sweets and junk food, and not putting pressure on mothers to do more than observe and engage the host family in conversation.

Establishing boundaries was important for some. One person did this by having breakfast alone, and then joining the family for other activities. Others suggested doing a trial period before committing to staying with the family for a long time. Certainly establishing boundaries with the host children is important.

There were numerous suggestions on how to find personal space in the homestay. This included everything from taking a mental break through journaling to having a regular place to go outside of the homestay, either on a daily or weekly basis, to having a separate room with a lock on the door. Part of this was finding ways to rest and pace oneself to keep learning and engaging the family.

Although several mentioned compensation for the homestay experience, the advice is limited. One person recommended being careful not to pay too much, another suggested that you make sure you compensate the family and a third person advised to clearly establish compensation. This question was addressed earlier in the survey, with most respondents

volunteering that they paid room and board, either directly or through an intermediary, such as a language school or a mutual friend. In very few cases, shorter homestays were compensated through friendship or gifts of food, but most had some sort of monetary compensation.

As well as setting up a clear way to compensate the family, several people recommended going into the homestay with some sort of intermediary. This was to have a way out if things got difficult, or to have someone explain cultural differences to either side to avoid long-lasting offences. An outside person could help with establishing guidelines for the homestay and negotiating with the family.

Most of the advice centered around having the right kind of attitude. Many people advised being flexible and engaging with a sense of humor, laughing at oneself when the host family laughs at mistakes. Additionally, they recommended being a learner, and not caring about former identity or strengths, but letting oneself be pulled into the culture as a humble learner and being willing to make mistakes. Along with this, they recommended saying "yes" when the family suggests something, going along with the flow, and being proactive in helping out with daily chores so as to participate more fully in life and ease the burden on the host family. One person recommended, "Do not be afraid to make yourself truly at home, that's what you're paying them for." Being proactive in learning and engaging the family in conversation is another important part of having the right attitude. One participant said to remember that they are doing you a favor by taking them into their home and sharing their life, so keep an attitude of respect and thankfulness.

There were mixed responses on the right time to do a homestay. Five respondents suggested that for cultural gains, the homestay should be engaged soon after arrival in a new country. 16 suggest waiting to have a foundation in the language before engaging a homestay.



There was no clear suggestion on appropriate length, although one person said two weeks, another said at least three months and a third recommended, "stay as long as you can".

Participants recommended evaluating one's own expectations before going into the homestay, and clarifying these with the host family as much as possible at the beginning. While one person said, "prepared to be bored", another's advice countered this with, "have ready materials that facilitate conversation". Another advised thinking through routine and setting up an activity outside the homestay from the beginning.

Advice on the right kind of host family varies from "find new families who haven't hosted loads of foreigners before" to "it helps to use a family who are somewhat used to foreigners and know what to expect". Cultural appropriateness, such as not letting single females do a homestay where there are unmarried young men, was another consideration addressed by a participant. Furthermore, many felt a family that is respected in their community, friendly and outgoing and able to help someone grow in language would be ideal. Some suggested that a village setting would be better than urban, as they may be more interested in outsiders. This is consistent with this study's finding that more rural homestay settings correlated (at  $N = 57$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with receiving assistance from the family in learning language.

There certainly are a lot of things to consider when going into a homestay, and much can be learned by those who have done one successfully.

## Chapter V: Conclusion

### Research Aims and Findings

The focus of this research was to look at adult sojourners outside of the university setting who were actively engaged in learning language and to see if there were any differences between those who had a homestay experience as a part of this and those who didn't. The findings indicate that those who did a homestay had both a statistically significant higher final cultural integration score and a statistically significant language score. One may conclude that doing a homestay is a valuable investment towards achieving those goals.

A secondary goal of the research was to see if there was any difference in timing of the homestay. Although it initially appeared that doing one earlier on in the language learning process led to a higher final cultural integration score, a closer look showed that there was actually no significant gain in doing one later on, but rather called for more exploration for those who did a homestay at three months into language learning, as that seemed to result in significantly lower levels of cultural integration compared with those who did a homestay before or after three months of language learning.

When exploring the homestay itself, a clear picture emerged of different purposes for the homestay, with some engaging it for cultural insight, others to grow in the language and some to do both. While there is no clear optimal timing for the homestay, a look at respondents' evaluation of the experience suggests that for better language outcomes one should engage a homestay later on in the language learning process, or establish outside language classes during the homestay period.

### **Examination of the Research Process**

To answer these questions, a survey was used, but as it is self-reported, it gives a limited picture of the homestay environment. For some participants, the homestay period was quite a while ago, and for others it was more recent. This may have tainted results as participants had to rely on long-term memory of the experience. Additionally, cultural integration is nuanced and it may be that the questions did not accurately target measurements of cultural integration. Certainly, the short answers provided by the homestay participants provided much insight into their views on language and culture learning, but the survey did not receive the same data from language learners who did not do a homestay.

While the survey was useful in identifying differences, it may be that interviews and outside language exams would provide a more accurate picture of these differences.

### **Focus for Further Research**

Based on the findings of this research, there are some related areas for possible focus for further research:

1. The study could be replicated, either with the same target population or with different target population to verify the findings of this study.

2. More qualitative studies could be carried out to explore the findings of this study.

Specifically, one could explore how language learners are engaging the second language culture and see what activities are the same and different between groups.

3. A separate study could look at lengths of host family stay to evaluate differences between short stays and long stays.
4. This study found a statistically significant reduction in final cultural integration among those who performed a homestay after about 3 months of language learning when compared with all other groups. More research should be made into the source of this variance, with special attention to the homestay participant's initial experience with both the culture and the language.
5. Although there was a statistically significant difference in language and cultural integration scores for homestay and non-homestay participants, the margin between scores was small. Further studies that look at community engagement by both groups would clarify differences and similarities for the groups.
6. This study found that those who had some cultural training in behavior and manners did not lead to better outcomes in any of the areas of language achievement or language growth and in the areas of cultural integration. More research would need to examine the types of homestay preparedness that affect language and cultural integration outcomes.

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## **Appendix A: Homestay and Language Learning Questionnaire**

### **Language and Culture Learning: *Staying with a Host Family***

Many programs advocate staying with a host family in order to advance your language and culture learning. The purpose of this survey is to explore the language learning and cultural experience of adult language learners. The results will be used to partially fulfill Master's degree credit requirements in Applied Linguistics at Saint Cloud State University, Minnesota, United States.

This questionnaire is meant for people who have travelled overseas and studied a foreign language. The results will be used to compare and contrast those who included a home stay in their language acquisition, with those who did not. For purposes of this survey, a home stay is defined as an amount of time of at least 3 days in which the student spent living in the household of a national with the purpose of enhancing his or her understanding of the language and culture of the host country.

Sections one and two are for all respondents to fill out, and will take roughly 10 minutes to complete. Sections three through six are designed only for respondents who participated in a home stay.



**Section One: 25 Questions for all Respondents**

In Section One, please describe how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a number from 1 to 6 using the scale definitions below. Reflect on the time and experience you spent in the host country as a whole, not specific to home stay. Please do not leave out any items.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	It was important to me to bond (to feel a sense of connection and understanding) with the local culture				1 2 3 4 5 6
2.	As my language improved, I was able to do things more like locals				1 2 3 4 5 6
3.	Overall I felt comfortable in the local culture				1 2 3 4 5 6
4.	I came to understand how many things are done in their local culture				1 2 3 4 5 6
5.	I had many good friends among the local people				1 2 3 4 5 6
6.	My local friends adopted some of the ways I do things in my own culture				1 2 3 4 5 6
7.	I usually used the same kind of local transportation as most of my local friends				1 2 3 4 5 6
8.	Language learning helped me feel more connected to the local culture				1 2 3 4 5 6
9.	I tried to adapt to the local culture, doing things in the same way as my local friends				1 2 3 4 5 6
10.	I adjusted my activities to make sure I continued to progress in the language				1 2 3 4 5 6
11.	I needed space to get out of the local community on a regular basis				1 2 3 4 5 6
12.	I set aside daily time for formal and/or informal language learning				1 2 3 4 5 6
13.	Locals explained cultural practices to me in their own language				1 2 3 4 5 6
14.	I tried to always make note of new words I was learning				1 2 3 4 5 6
15.	The local people helped me speak the target language better from the beginning				1 2 3 4 5 6
16.	Local people have made me feel embarrassed about my language ability				1 2 3 4 5 6
17.	Local people were patient in trying to understand me during conversations				1 2 3 4 5 6
18.	I felt encouraged to keep speaking the new language with my local friends				1 2 3 4 5 6
19.	Local people mostly ignored me or left me alone when I visited them at their homes				1 2 3 4 5 6
20.	My ability to initiate conversations significantly improved throughout my time in the country				1 2 3 4 5 6
21.	Every week, I made progress towards the objective of understanding the culture				1 2 3 4 5 6
22.	I regularly gained insight into cultural practices				1 2 3 4 5 6
23.	Relative to other foreigners, living in the country was difficult for me and I had a hard time accepting local practices				1 2 3 4 5 6
24.	My ability to understand locals when they talked to me in their language significantly improved during my time in the country				1 2 3 4 5 6
25.	My ability to understand and reply to questions in the language significantly improved during my time in the country				1 2 3 4 5 6

**Section Two: 10 Questions for all Respondents**

In Section Two, please respond to the ten questions whether or not you completed a home stay. Please provide some general information about you.

**26. Are you male or female?**

\_\_\_\_\_ male  
\_\_\_\_\_ female

**27. What was your marital status during your language learning period?**

\_\_\_\_\_ single  
\_\_\_\_\_ married, no children  
\_\_\_\_\_ married, young children (infant-preschoolers)  
\_\_\_\_\_ married, older children (school-aged children)

**28. What is your native language? \_\_\_\_\_****29. What was your focus language? \_\_\_\_\_****30. Current level of ability in focus language (circle one)**

0      0+      1      1+      2      2+      3      3+      4      4+      5

ILR Scale	ACTFL Scale	Definition
0	Novice-Mid Novice – Low 0	Able to operate in only a very limited capacity Unable to function in the spoken language No ability whatsoever in the language
0+	Novice – High	Able to satisfy immediate needs with learned utterances
1	Intermediate – Mid Intermediate – Low	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements
1+	Intermediate – High	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands
2	Advanced	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
2+	Advanced Plus	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics
3+ 3	Superior	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations
4+ 4	Distinguished	Able to speak with a great deal of fluency, grammatical accuracy, precision of vocabulary and idiomaticity
5	Native	Able to speak like an educated native speaker

Source: <http://gapschool.net/faq/how-much-can-i-learn/> Retrieved Aug. 6th 2013

**31. Did you continue to improve your language throughout your time in the host country?**

\_\_\_\_\_ yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ no

**32. How did you study the target language? (Please specify the name of any program or method used)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Self-study approach: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Formal Language School: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

**33. On average, how many hours per week did you spend on intentional language acquisition?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**34. Did you complete a home stay as part of your language learning? (A home stay is defined as living with a local family, or with one or more local roommates, for at least three days)**

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

**35. How old were you at the time of the homestay? \_\_\_\_\_**

=====

**NOTE!!!! Please answer the questions in the following sections only if you completed a home stay.**  
**These sections should take 25 minutes to complete**

=====

**Section 3: Twenty scaled questions**

In this part, we would like you to tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your homestay experience by simply circling a number from 1 to 6 according to the scale below. Please do not leave out any items.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6
36.	My host family understood that I was there primarily to learn language				1 2 3 4 5 6
37.	My host family actively helped me to learn their language				1 2 3 4 5 6
38.	I found the home stay very helpful in moving my language ahead				1 2 3 4 5 6
39.	My host family viewed me as just a renter				1 2 3 4 5 6
40.	My ability to initiate conversations significantly improved throughout my time in the homestay				1 2 3 4 5 6
41.	I felt that I did not progress much more in my language ability as a result of the home stay				1 2 3 4 5 6
42.	My homestay was a good investment of my time towards the objective of growing in language ability				1 2 3 4 5 6
43.	I found the homestay very helpful in adjusting to the local culture				1 2 3 4 5 6
44.	My homestay was a good investment of my time towards the objective of understanding and/or appreciating the culture				1 2 3 4 5 6
45.	During my homestay, I regularly gained insight into cultural practices				1 2 3 4 5 6
46.	My homestay was very difficult				1 2 3 4 5 6
47.	I had a hard time accepting local practices as a result of my homestay				1 2 3 4 5 6
48.	My ability to understand locals when they talked to me in their language significantly improved throughout my homestay				1 2 3 4 5 6
49.	My ability to understand and reply to questions in the language significantly improved during my homestay				1 2 3 4 5 6
50.	I felt like my language level going into the homestay set me up to readily progress in the language with my host family				1 2 3 4 5 6
51.	I felt like my language level going into the homestay set me up to readily gain cultural insights from the host family				1 2 3 4 5 6
52.	I felt like my language level going into the homestay set me up to readily develop relationships within the host family				1 2 3 4 5 6
53.	I would have progressed more in language learning during the homestay if I had done it at a later stage in my language learning				1 2 3 4 5 6
54.	My language ability made it easier to engage in language learning in everyday situations in the host family's world				1 2 3 4 5 6
55.	My lack of language ability made it difficult for me to make sense of what was going on around me				1 2 3 4 5 6

**Section 4.**

The following questions will help us better understand your host family situation.

**56. How did you meet your host family?**

**57. Who first made the suggestion that you stay with this host family?**

- You  
 Another Foreigner  
 A friend of your host nationality  
 Your host family  
 Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**58. The host family was the same age as me?**

- yes  
 older  
 younger

**59. The host family children were the same age as me?**

- yes  
 older  
 younger

**60. How well did you know the family before staying with them?**

- Not at all  
 Acquaintances  
 Very well  
 Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**61. During your stay did you:**

- have your own room  
 have a room that you shared with other language learners  
 have a room that you shared with members of the host family  
 other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**62. Did you eat with the family?**

- never  
 sometimes  
 usually  
 always

**63. List any household chores or activities you did with the family.**

**64. What community activities or social events you did you do with the family? (check all that apply)**

- attend a host family member's job  
 attend a wedding  
 attend religious meetings or events  
 other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**65. Did the family use any other languages besides your target language during your stay?**

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

**If yes, how was it used during your home stay?** \_\_\_\_\_

**66. Could your host family speak to you in a language you understood other than your target language?**

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

**If yes, how frequently did you use this language to communicate?** \_\_\_\_\_

**67. What was the home stay setting like?**

\_\_\_\_\_ urban city

\_\_\_\_\_ town

\_\_\_\_\_ village

\_\_\_\_\_ rural

**68. How did you compensate your host family for this experience?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**69. Did your host family have previous experience with foreigners?**

\_\_\_\_\_ none

\_\_\_\_\_ some

\_\_\_\_\_ extended contact, but had never hosted foreigners

\_\_\_\_\_ hosted foreigners previously

**70. During your homestay, how much time did you spend per week in formal language study?**

**Section 5.**

In this part, we would like you to evaluate your homestay experience.

**71. List aspects of the home stay you really liked:**

**72. List aspects of the home stay you really disliked:**

**73. In what ways did you feel like your language progressed as a result of the homestay?**

**74. Would you like to do another home stay? Why or why not?**

**75. If your colleagues were preparing to do a home stay, what 3 pieces of advice would you give?**

**76. What difficulties did you encounter while learning language during your home stay?**

**77. How would you describe the quality of your relationship with your host family today? Is your relationship better or worse now than it was prior to the homestay?**

**Section 6.**

Please provide some information about your situation going into the homestay.

**78. Who joined you for this homestay?**

- I did this by myself  
 I had another roommate who was also learning the language  
 My spouse joined me  
 My spouse and young children joined me  
 My spouse and older children joined me  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**79. Prior to your home stay, how many months did you stay in regions where the target language was spoken?**

**80. How many months of structured language study did you complete prior to your home stay?**  
*(Structured language study would include classes or any time spent with a native speaker deliberately acting as a tutor, teacher, or "nurturer".)*

**81. Why did you choose to do your home stay at this point in your language learning?**

- recommended by my language program  
 recommended by colleagues  
 Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

**82. If you were using the Growing Participator Approach (GPA)/Six phases method, what phase were you in at the time of your home stay?**

- Not Applicable  
 Phase 1 (Here and Now)  
 Phase 2 (Story building phase, with wordless pictures books)  
 Phase 3 (Shared story phase)  
 Phase 4 (Deep life sharing)  
 Phase 5 (Native to Native Discourse)



**83. According to the following scale, what level of language do you think you were at when you started your homestay?**

0    0+    1    1+    2    2+    3    3+    4    4+    5

ILR Scale	ACTFL Scale	Definition
0	Novice-Mid Novice – Low 0	Able to operate in only a very limited capacity Unable to function in the spoken language No ability whatsoever in the language
0+	Novice – High	Able to satisfy immediate needs with learned utterances
1	Intermediate – Mid Intermediate – Low	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements
1+	Intermediate – High	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands
2	Advanced	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
2+	Advanced Plus	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics
3+ 3	Superior	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations
4+ 4	Distinguished	Able to speak with a great deal of fluency, grammatical accuracy, precision of vocabulary and idiomaticity
5	Native	Able to speak like an educated native speaker

Source: <http://gapschool.net/faq/how-much-can-i-learn/> Retrieved Aug. 6th 2013

**84. Were you given any training in culturally appropriate manners/ behavior before your home stay?**

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

**85. How long did you stay with your host family? (Specify in x number of days, weeks and months)**

**86. Were you (or your children) sick any of the days you were there?**

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

If yes, what percentage? \_\_\_\_\_

**87. Is there anything else you would like to add about this home stay experience?**

## Appendix B: Additional Tables

Table 10

### *Likert-Scale Question Categories for all Participants*

<b>1. Learner Emphasis on Integration</b>	<b>questions 1,9</b>
	1. It was important to me to bond (to feel a sense of connection and understanding) with the local culture 9. I tried to adapt to the local culture, doing things in the same way as my local friends
<b>2. Language Ability Supports Integration</b>	<b>questions 2,8,13</b>
	2. As my language improved, I was able to do things more like locals 8. Language learning helped me feel more connected to the local culture 13. Locals explained cultural practices to me in their own language
<b>3. Final Integration</b>	<b>questions 3,4,5,7 and reverse coding questions 6,11</b>
	3. Overall I felt comfortable in the local culture 4. I came to understand how many things are done in their local culture 5. I had many good friends among the local people 7. I usually used the same kind of local transportation as most of my local friends 6. My local friends adopted some of the ways I do things in my own culture 11. I needed space to get out of the local community on a regular basis
<b>4. Emphasis on Language Growth</b>	<b>questions 10,12,14</b>
	10. I adjusted my activities to make sure I continued to progress in the language 12. I set aside daily time for formal and/or informal language learning 14. I tried to always make note of new words I was learning
<b>5. Local Assistance in Learning Language</b>	<b>questions 15,17,18 and reverse coding questions 16,19</b>
	15. The local people helped me speak the target language better from the beginning 17. Local people were patient in trying to understand me during conversations 18. I felt encouraged to keep speaking the new language with my local friends 16. Local people have made me feel embarrassed about my language ability 19. Local people mostly ignored me or left me alone when I visited them at their homes
<b>6. Language Growth</b>	<b>questions 20,24,25</b>
	20. My ability to initiate conversations significantly improved throughout my time in the country 24. My ability to understand locals when they talked to me in their language significantly improved during my time in the country 25. My ability to understand and reply to questions in the language significantly improved throughout my time in the country
<b>7. Cultural Integration Growth</b>	<b>questions 21,22 and reverse coding question 23</b>
	21. Every week, I made progress towards the objective of understanding the culture 22. I regularly gained insight into cultural practices 23. Relative to other foreigners, living in the country was difficult for me and I had a hard time accepting local practices.

Table 11

*Likert-Scale Question Categories for Homestay Participants*

<b>1. Language Ability Entering Homestay Supports Integration</b>	<b>questions 51,52,55</b>
	51. I felt like my language level going into the homestay set me up to readily gain cultural insights from the host family
	52. I felt like my language level going into the homestay set me up to readily develop relationships within the host family
	55. My lack of language made it difficult for me to make sense of what was going on around me
<b>2. Language Ability Entering Homestay Supports Homestay Language Growth</b>	<b>questions 50,53,54</b>
	50. I felt like my language level going into the homestay set me up to readily progress in the language with my host family
	53. I would have progressed more in language learning during the homestay if I had done it at a later state in my language learning
	54. My language ability made it easier to engage in language learning in everyday situations in the host family's world
<b>3. Homestay Local Assistance in learning language</b>	<b>questions 36,37 and reverse coding question 39</b>
	36. My host family understood that I was there primarily to learn language
	37. My host family actively helped me to learn their language
	39. My host family viewed me as just a renter
<b>4. Homestay Language Growth</b>	<b>questions 38, 40, 42, 48, 49 and reverse coding, 41</b>
	38. I found the homestay very helpful in moving my language ahead
	40. My ability to initiate conversations significantly improved throughout my time
	42. My homestay was a good investment of my time towards the objective of growing in language ability
	48. My ability to understand locals when they talked to me in their language significantly improved throughout my homestay.
	49. My ability to understand and reply to questions in the language significantly improved during my homestay.
	41. I felt that I did not progress much more in my language ability as a result of the Homestay
<b>5. Homestay Cultural Integration Growth</b>	<b>questions 43,44,45 and reverse coding 46,47</b>
	43. I found the homestay helpful in adjusting to the local culture
	44. My homestay was a good investment of my time towards the objective of understanding and/or appreciating the local culture
	45. During my homestay, I regularly gained insights into cultural practices
	46. My homestay was very difficult
	47. I had a hard time accepting local practices as a result of homestay

Table 12

*Languages Engaged by Participants*

Language	All Participants	Homestay	Non-Homestay
<b>European</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
Danish	1	1	
Albanian	1	1	
English	1		1
French	2	2	
Spanish	1	1	
Ukrainian	1	1	
Italian	1		1
Portuguese	1		1
Romanian	1		1
<b>Cacauses</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>
Russian	10	6	4
Turkish	6	2	4
Azeri	2		2
<b>Central Asian</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>
Kazak	3	3	
Uzbek	6	6	
Kyrgyz	1	1	
Tajik	8	8	
Uighur	4	3	1
<b>North African and the Middle Eastern</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>
Arabic (unspecified dialects)	25	8	17
Berber (tashelhit)	3	2	1
Hassaniya	1	1	
Kurdish	2	2	
Moroccan Arabic	2	2	
Moroccan French	1		1
Pulaar	2	2	
<b>South Asian</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
Burushaski	1	1	
Kashmiri	1	1	
Sylheti	1	1	
Urdu/Hindi	20	12	8
Bengali	1		1
Dari	2		2
Dhivehi	2		2
Malyalam	1		1
<b>Southeast Asian</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
Bahasa Indonesian	6	5	1
Cebuano	1	1	
Kuman	1	1	
Burmese	1		1
Cambodian	1		1
<b>East Asian</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Japanese	1	1	
Chinese (unspecified dialect)	1		1
Korean	1		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>53</b>

Table 13

*Pearson Correlations for all Participants*

		1.EIC	2. LASI	3. FCI	4. ELG	5. LLA	6. LG	7. CIG	8. LA	9. WLH	10. M/F	11. MS	12. H
1. Emphasis on Cultural Integration (EIC)	P. Correlation Significance	1 .	.419** .000	.399** .000	.313* .001	.300* .001	.309* .001	.425** .000	.121 .218	.017 .856	.027 .783	.002 .976	-.143 .145
2. Language Ability Supports Integration (LASI)	P. Correlation Significance	.419** .000	1 .	.339* .0004	.464** .000	.525** .000	.676** .000	.587** .000	.497** .000	.017 .862	-.113 .250	.148 .131	-.145 .140
3. Final Cultural Integration (FCI)	P. Correlation Significance	.399** .000	.339* .000	1 .	.205* .036	.190 .052	.140 .155	.400** .000	.235* .016	-.045 .644	.090 .358	-.072 .463	-.220* .024
4. Emphasis on Language Growth (ELG)	P. Correlation Significance	.313* .001	.464** .000	.205* .036	1 .	.218* .025	.486** .000	.577** .000	.273* .004	.250* .010	-.074 .454	.130 .185	-.123 .212
5. Local Language Assistance (LLA)	P. Correlation Significance	.300* .001	.525** .000	.190 .052	.218* .025	1 .	.329* .000	.355* .000	.408** .000	.033 .736	-.186 .057	.207* .034	-.088 .370
6. Language Growth (LG)	P. Correlation Significance	.309* .001	.676** .000	.140 .155	.486** .000	.329* .000	1 .	.539** .000	.392** .000	.171 .082	-.030 .757	.159 .105	-.132 .179
7. Cultural Integration Growth (CIG)	P. Correlation Significance	.425** .000	.587** .000	.400** .000	.577** .000	.355* .000	.539** .000	1 .	.332* .000	.148 .133	-.062 .527	.157 .111	-.134 .174
8. Language Ability (LA)	P. Correlation Significance	.121 .218	.497** .000	.235* .016	.273* .004	.408** .000	.392** .000	.332* .000	1 .	.247* .011	-.327* .000	.093 .344	-.248* .011
9. Weekly Language Hours (WLH)	P. Correlation Significance	.017 .856	.017 .862	-.045 .644	.250* .010	.033 .736	.171 .082	.148 .133	.247* .011	1 .	-.250* .010	-.057 .558	-.093 .343
10. Male or Female? (M/F)	P. Correlation Significance	.027 .783	-.113 .250	.090 .358	-.074 .454	-.186 .057	-.030 .757	-.062 .527	-.327* .000	-.250* .010	1 .	-.240* .013	-.026 .792
11. Marital status (MS)	P. Correlation Significance	.002 .976	.148 .131	-.072 .463	.130 .185	.207* .034	0.159 .105	.157 .111	.093 .344	-.057 .558	-.240* .013	1 .	.185 .059
12. Did you do a homestay? (H)	P. Correlation Significance	-.143 .145	-.145 .140	-.220* .024*	-.123 .212	-.088 .370	-.132 .179	-.134 .174	-.248* .011	-.093 .343	-.026 .792	.185 .059	1 .

N = 104, \*significance at  $p < .05$ , \*\*significance at  $p < .0001$ , highlighted sections indicate possible trends

Table 14

*Pearson Correlations for Homestay Participants*

		1. HLIg	2. HLLG	3. HALL	4. HLG	5. HCIG	6. FCI	7. LA
1. Language ability at start of homestay led to Integration Growth (HLIG)	P. Correlation Significance	1 .	.754** .000	.223 .094	.170 .205	-.005 .966	-.194 .146	.011 .933
2. Language ability at start of homestay led to Language Growth (HLLG)	P. Correlation Significance	.754** .000	1 .	.114 .397	.218 .101	.006 .962	-.146 .277	.037 .783
3. Host family assistance in learning language (HALL)	P. Correlation Significance	.223 .094	.114 .397	1 .	.627** .000	.437* .000	.156 .246	.217 .103
4. Language growth during homestay (HLG)	P. Correlation Significance	.170 .205	.218 .101	.627** .000	1 .	.419* .001	.067 .616	.227 .088
5. Homestay Cultural Integration Growth (HCIG)	P. Correlation Significance	-.005 .966	.006 .962	.437* .000	.419* .001	1 .	.361* .005	.230 .083
Days of Language study prior to homestay	P. Correlation significance	.274* .038	.350* .007	.036 .790	.100 .458	.113 .401	-.063 .638	.063 .638
GPA Phase at start of homestay	P. Correlation Significance	.192 .150	.238 .073	.007 .954	.112 .403	.139 .298	.115 .391	-.218 .102
Language level at start of homestay (ACTFL scale)	P. Correlation Significance	.371* .004	.475* .000	.213 .110	.181 .175	.197 .139	.018 .889	.277* .036
Who joined you? (single = 1, roommate =2, family = 3,4,5)	P. Correlation Significance	.020 .882	.071 .594	-.081 .548	-.269 .042	-.171 .200	-.021 .873	.145 .280
How many days in the homestay?	P. Correlation Significance	.026 .843	-.002 .985	.103 .442	.083 .534	-.081 .549	.043 .442	.103 .750
Homestay setting: Urban =1, town =2, village =3, rural =4,	P. Correlation Significance	-.154 .250	-.131 .328	.293* .026	.143 .287	-.012 .928	-.124 .357	.013 .923
Host family's previous experience with foreigners (1 = none, 2 =some, 3 = extended, 4 = previously hosted)	P. Correlation Significance	-.092 .492	.134 .318	-.166 .216	-.105 .432	.210 .115	.194 .147	.022 .865

N = 57, \*significance at  $p < .05$ , \*\*significance at  $p < .0001$ , highlighted sections indicate possible trends

## Appendix C: IRB Approval For Research



OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND  
SPONSORED PROGRAMS  
ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY

### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Administrative Services 210

Website: [stcloudstate.edu/osp](http://stcloudstate.edu/osp) Email: [osp@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:osp@stcloudstate.edu)

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Name: Melissa Lewis

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USA

### IRB Application Determination

Exempt

4/12/2015

#### Co-Investigators

Advisor: James Robinson

Project Title: Home stays and Language Learning

#### Comments:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application to conduct research involving human subjects. We are pleased to inform you that your project has been APPROVED in full accordance with federal regulations. Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

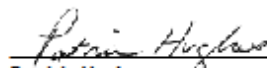
- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.
- Exempt reviews only require the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.
- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

Good luck on your research. If you require further assistance, please contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 320-308-4932 or email [lidonnay@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:lidonnay@stcloudstate.edu). All correspondence should include your SCSU IRB number as indicated on this letter.

For the Institutional Review Board:

  
Linda Donnay  
IRB Administrator  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

For St. Cloud State University:

  
Patricia Hughes  
Interim Associate Provost for Research  
Dean of Graduate Studies

#### OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSUIRB#: 1437 - 1763  
Type of Review:

Approval Date:  
Expiration Date:

4/12/2015  
4/11/2016

### Research Consent Form for Homestays and Language Learning

**What this study is about:** You are being asked to take part in research that addresses language learning and cultural adaptation. Many programs advocate staying with a host family in order to advance your language and culture learning. The purpose of this survey is to explore the language learning and cultural experience of adult language learners.

**What we will ask you to do:** Complete a survey. This will take ten minutes for all participants, and an additional 25 minutes for those who have done a homestay. It will include questions about your language learning growth and interactions with native speakers of the language you were learning.

**The purpose:** This questionnaire is meant for people who have traveled overseas and studied a foreign language. The results will be used to compare and contrast those who included a home stay in their language acquisition with those who did not.

**Risk and Benefits:** I do not anticipate any risks to you in this study, other than what happens in normal day-to-day life. The benefit of this study is that some factors that will lead to more positive language and cultural interactions may be identified and shared with you and other adult language learners.

**Your answers will be confidential:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any question you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

**If you have questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Melissa Lewis, with advisor Dr. James Robinson. If you have any questions you may contact Melissa Lewis at [abemeliss2009@gmail.com](mailto:abemeliss2009@gmail.com), or Dr. Robinson at [jhrobinson@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:jhrobinson@stcloudstate.edu).

**Results of the study:** The results of the study will be used towards completion of a Master's Thesis at Saint Cloud State University. If you would like a copy of the study results, you may e-mail me directly and I will send these to you at the completion of the study.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and received answers to any questions I have asked. I consent to take part in the study. I am at least 18 years of age.

St. Cloud State University

Institutional Review Board

Approval date: 4-12-15

Expiration date: 4-11-16



