

Doctoral Programme in English Applied Linguistics and

TESOL/TEFL

Doctoral School in Linguistics

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pécs

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**Exploring the Language Socialization of Study Abroad Medical Students in Hungary**

*Doctoral Dissertation*

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Pécs, 2020

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## ABSTRACT

In the present study, I explore the identity construction of study abroad medical students at the University of Pécs Medical School through the coding and qualitative content analysis of written accounts and interview data. I aim to understand the factors leading to or prohibiting students from developing multiplex social networks during their sojourn. 133 first- and second-year medical students submitted written accounts of their experiences, and five study abroad medical students were interviewed for the research.

I collected the written data in February of 2019. The participants were asked to provide a story detailing their experience as a study abroad student in Pécs. After two coding cycles, I identified five aspects of identity construction namely SELF-EVALUATION, EVALUATION OF THE SA CONTEXT, ADJUSTING TO THE SA CONTEXT, SOCIAL NETWORKS, and COMMUNICATION; and their connection with the participants' language socialization.

The semi-structured interviews took place in February of 2020. I designed the interview questions based on the aspects of identity construction identified in the written data the previous year. After transcribing and coding the interview data, I analysed the interviews keeping in mind the aspects of identity construction, and focusing on the topics of identity, agency, and the development of social networks. The analysis revealed that international medical students in Pécs seemed to consider their study abroad experience to be a time of personal change and identity construction. The accounts pointed to a limited interest in the host culture and members of the host community. The written accounts suggested that study abroad medical students in Pécs rarely manage to build social networks that contain members of the host community. The five interviewees' identities rarely led to seeking out access to members of the host community. Despite their beliefs of the study abroad being a time of personal growth and learning, and despite the proclaimed language learner identities of some of them, most interviewees did not exercise their agency over their Hungarian language learning or over constructing social

networks that involve Hungarians. The only exception was an Uyghur student, who found a meaningful historical connection between his identity as an ethnic minority and the host culture. His case demonstrated how an investment in the host culture, identity construction, and agency over language learning can lead to legitimate participation in a Hungarian-speaking community of practice and regular, meaningful Hungarian input.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mónika Fodor, my supervisor, for the unrelenting encouragement, support, and thoughtful advice she provided both in person, and in Covid-times, online. Her immense knowledge and unique insight helped me get over any hurdle, academic or otherwise. Her mentorship extended beyond any measure, and it would be impossible for me to list all the ways in which she supported me.

I would be remiss not to extend my gratitude to Nikolov Marianne, who introduced me to Applied Linguistics in the halcyon days of my tertiary studies and guided me with astonishing patience and wisdom ever since. Her passion and zeal in service of scientific progress has been an inspiration, and her treasured advice was instrumental in shaping my experimental and analytical methods.

I would also like to offer my special thanks to my professors who taught me in the PhD programme, and whose expertise and skill was invaluable for me: Andor József, Horváth József, Lehmann Magdolna, Lugossy Réka, Martsa Sándor, and Szabó Gábor.

Further, I am deeply grateful to my friends and colleagues at the Department of Languages for Biomedical Purposes and Communication at the Medical School of the University of Pécs. They have been nothing but helpful and understanding throughout the gruelling months of dissertation writing.

Naturally, at the centre of the research are the participants, who took the time to be interviewed or provided an accounts of their stories and experiences. Without their willingness to open up for a strange Hungarian teacher, all my efforts would have been in vain.

Last, but by no means least, I must thank my beautiful family for supporting me and believing in me. Without the tremendous understanding and encouragement of my parents, my wife, and my children in the past few years, it would have been impossible for me to complete my dissertation.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AAC&U: American Association of Colleges and Universities

ACE: American Council on Education

AH: at-home

APLU: Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities

CofP: Community of Practice

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EHEA: European Higher Educational Area

EMEMUS: English Medium Education in Multilingual University Setting

ESL: English as a Second Language

FLs: Foreign Languages

GPI: Global Perspectives Inventory

IAT: Intragroup Approach-Avoidance Tendency

IC: Intercultural Competence

IDI: Intercultural Development Inventory

IM: immersion

IP: International Posture

L1: first language

L2: second language

LoS: Length of stay

LST: Language Socialization Theory

MLS: Multilingual Subject

PE: Physical Education



SA: Study abroad

SERU: Student Experience in the Research University Survey

SIT: Social Identity Theory

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SLS: Second Language Socialization

TEF: Test d'Evaluation de Français

TFI: Test de Français International

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

UP: University of Pécs

UPMS: the Medical School of the University of Pécs

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## INTRODUCTION

From September 2006 through January 2007, I was in Aberdeen, Scotland as an Erasmus student. I arrived with high hopes: I was determined that this experience would be my springboard to becoming a scholar of the history of the British Isles. I was a second-year student of English and History at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pécs, and imagined myself becoming a historian all my life. My plan was to scour the library of the University of Aberdeen for primary sources of Scottish medieval history and, once home, write a thesis on the connection between Scottish and Hungarian royal dynasties, using sources not available in Hungary. My professors, clearly impressed, would then welcome me with open arms into the doctoral program of the History department. I was excited about my plan.

And yet, I spent most of my time in front of a computer screen, chatting with friends I left behind in Pécs - mostly with my future wife. When I was not online, I often felt lonely, depressed, and homesick. I knew that I was not living up to my plans and fantasies, that I was squandering my time and opportunities in Scotland. I made few friends and only one that lasted longer than my stay in Aberdeen. I saw and learned little of Scotland, and when the time came, I decided not to extend my stay for another semester and went home, defeated.

Years later, as fate would have it, I ended up as an LSP teacher at the Department of Languages for Biomedical Purposes and Communication at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Pécs. One of my first classes was a course on Medical Hungarian for Study Abroad (SA) students in the English Program. Over the years, I encountered many SA students in my classes, whose stories often reminded me of my own experiences in Aberdeen. Their experiences just as often prompted an investigation in me about how their situation is in many ways different, increasingly common, and yet relatively unknown. Unknown to their Hungarian teachers, unknown to members of the institution and the host community surrounding them, and ultimately unknown to researchers as well.

The number of SA students globally topped 5.3 million in 2017, up from two million at the turn of the millennium, and international student mobility received 1,229 million USD in government funds in 2016 alone (International Organisation for Migration, 2020). In 2010, 47 countries proclaimed their shared political will to collaborate in a European Higher Educational Area (EHEA) by adopting reforms in tertiary education with the main goal of increasing mobility (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020, p. 43). Unsurprisingly, following global trends and in accordance with the member states' political will, European higher education experienced "substantial growth in international student movement within the EHEA over the past two decades" (Skinner, 2018). According to Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat, 2018), in 2016, there were over 1.6 million SA students taking part in tertiary level education across the European Union, with the number expected to rise in the future. Lately, the European Commission has nearly doubled the budget of the Erasmus program for the upcoming budget period of 2021-2027, which should enable 12 million students to take part in the mobility program over 6 years (Eurostat, 2018b). In the United States, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), and the American Council on Education (ACE) have all claimed promotion of study abroad options as a strategic goal (Twombly et al., 2012).

Hungarian higher education, and especially medical schools, have been following the global trend and have been competing for the interest of international students by offering courses in English. Since 2016, the Medical School of the University of Pécs has consistently admitted more international students than Hungarian nationals (University of Pécs Medical School, 2020). With the European Union's, Hungary's, and the university's continued commitment to encourage international student mobility, there is reason to believe that this trend will continue. Perhaps it will become even more pronounced. The Covid-19 pandemic's effect on the trend is unclear, as the most recent available data on student statistics is from 2018.

In personal conversations the administrators at the registrars' office at Medical School of the University of Pécs (UPMS) disclosed that, although the growth in the number of SA students have slowed, the trend continued in 2020-21. Unsurprisingly, research into SA students' experiences is a growing and important field of inquiry due to the ever-growing number of SA students worldwide. "Studies of internationally mobile students tend to focus on the conditions (push and pull factors) that motivate students to study overseas; but policymakers are also interested in international students because they can become highly skilled immigrants in the future" (International Organisation for Migration, 2020).

Research into internationally mobile students often investigates the different "push" and "pull" (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) factors that entice a student to pursue a study abroad experience. Whereas research has identified a wide range of pull factors, it is widely agreed upon that interest in the host culture and language is one of the important pull factors and that it "will continue to play a crucial role" (de Wit, 2018). More than half of the world's internationally mobile students have enrolled in educational programs in only six countries: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Germany, and the Russian Federation (International Organisation for Migration, 2020). The majority of the population in three of the six countries speak English and French. German or Russian are also widely recognised as valuable languages to know in large parts of the world besides France, Germany, or the Russian Federation.

That is not the case in Hungary. Even before I started the data collection for the pilot study of this dissertation in 2016, my students did not make it a secret that their interest seldom lies in Hungary. Many of them barely knew anything about Hungary before they arrived and may have known little more than that when they left. Whenever I asked about their plans for the spring or fall break, they talked about how they looked forward to going home, visiting other countries in Europe, or just hanging out in their apartments with other international

students. Whenever I asked them about events happening in or around Pécs in the coming weekend, their surprise belied their lack of information on the local context.

I made it my job to inform them of these events, acting as a self-appointed travel agent. I went as far as to half-jokingly ask them to visit local tourist destinations as a home assignment. I asked them to find Hungarian friends, to recommend good restaurants, clubs, nice spots in the city to their fellow SA students. Most often than not, my requests fell on deaf ears, and no recommendations were forthcoming. The students often complained of not having enough time to be tourists. Although I believe them and empathise with their complaints of a high workload, these responses did not change my conviction that ultimately they were not interested in Hungary.

At the same time, Bernadett Potos the registrar at the Medical School revealed in a personal conversation that the dropout rate among our international students was very high, by her rough estimation around 90%. This figure seems inaccurate, and the graduation rate is seemingly improving among international students, however, there is a clear discrepancy between Hungarian and international students' graduation rates (Table 1). The number of newly enrolled Hungarian and international students has been comparable each year, with slightly more international students admitted (newly enrolled Hungarian students in 2018: 190; newly enrolled international students in the same year: 212). At the same time, approximately twice as many Hungarian students graduate as international students each year (Hungarian student's graduations in 2018: 147, international student's graduations: 75) (University of Pécs Medical School, 2020).

Table 1.

*A comparison of graduations at the English and Hungarian programs* (Source: University of Pécs Medical School, 2020).

| Academic year | English program |             | Hungarian program |             |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
|               | New admissions  | Graduations | New admissions    | Graduations |
| 2011/2012.    | 207             | 44          | 216               | 141         |
| 2012/2013.    | 198             | 66          | 212               | 130         |
| 2013/2014.    | 213             | 52          | 227               | 120         |
| 2014/2015.    | 204             | 50          | 220               | 118         |
| 2015/2016.    | 202             | 56          | 215               | 130         |
| 2016/2017.    | 240             | 70          | 212               | 131         |
| 2017/2018.    | 220             | 84          | 204               | 161         |
| 2018/2019.    | 212             | 75          | 190               | 147         |
| 2019/2020.    | 225             | n.d.        | 203               | n.d.        |

It is understandable that the international students enrolled in the English program of the Medical School, and who therefore study medicine in their second language (L2), face a more difficult path to their degree than the students who study in their first language (L1). However, this difference only partially explains away the discrepancy. Many of our students graduate, but they eventually do so at a different medical school, and often in a different Central European country, and similarly we receive many international students who have started their studies in other Central European universities, inside and outside of Hungary.

Unfortunately, I do not have data on the global prevalence of this phenomenon. However, I believe it would be misleading to depict the international students at the Medical School of the University of Pécs only as they fit into the global trend of increasing international student mobility, without investigating how their lived experiences in Pécs set them apart from other internationally mobile students, and how these experiences contribute to their academic success in Pécs. To understand this issue in more depth, I have designed and implemented a complex qualitative research project which involves the content analysis of written accounts and semi-structured interviews. My aim was to answer the following research questions.

- 1) What aspects of identity construction manifest in students' written life experience narratives?
- 2) How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students' identity construction?
- 3) How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students' agency construction?
- 4) How do SA students construct the image of the training institution in narrative?
- 5) What are the implications of the present narrative study for the educational institution?

By answering these and similar questions, I hoped to understand my students better and perhaps be of better service to them as a teacher of Hungarian during their study abroad.

## **OUTLINE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter one gives an overview of the relevant research published concerning language learner identity and motivation. After an overview of how researchers had conceptualised the self and identity, I will describe how the relationship



between the concepts of language and language learning has been written about. Building from these relationships, I will also review how the literature relates motivation, international posture, and agency to identity and language learning.

Chapter two builds on the analysis of the studies outlined in chapter one. It looks at the field of research into study abroad language learning as a formative platform of identity construction and negotiation. Following a discussion of the development of language abilities in study abroad settings, I will review the extra-linguistic factors that influence students' study abroad experiences. I will describe the effects of intercultural competence, length of stay, and social network on study abroad in separate sub-chapters.

Chapter three presents the research design. Following a discussion of the context where the research took place, I will describe the pilot study I conducted in 2016 that served as a blueprint for the collection and analysis of written accounts in this study. This chapter also presents the research questions the dissertation aims to answer, a detailed description of the participants and the employed procedures. At this point, I will discuss two examples of how the written accounts were analysed, as the large number of accounts collected made it impractical to include the analysis of all accounts in the study.

Chapter four outlines the aspects of identity construction found in the accounts of study abroad medical students and explores their connection with the participants' language socialization. By the careful reading and re-reading of the accounts I identified a total of five aspects of identity construction in the accounts, namely SELF-EVALUATION, EVALUATION OF THE SA CONTEXT, ADJUSTING TO THE SA CONTEXT, SOCIAL NETWORKS, and COMMUNICATION. I present and discuss each of the five aspects in separate sub-chapters.

Chapter five investigates the interviews conducted with five study abroad medical students on their experiences. The analysis aims to point out the connections of the aspects of

identity constructions defined in chapter four with SA students' access to social networks, agency and language learning. Finally, chapter six draws conclusions based on the data and discussion of the previous chapters.

## CHAPTER ONE: LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

The relationship between language and identity has long been the subject of interest in the humanities and social sciences. Identity relates to language in multiple forms, including the speaker of a language, the person who gets acclaimed by the language they speak, the audience to conversational partners' language use. The multiple forms of the two relating to each other make their relationship reciprocal: the identity of the speaker constructs language, and language constructs the identity in return (Weedon, 1987, Norton-Peirce, 1995). Issues of defining the self and identity, the link between language and identity, language learning and identity, international posture and motivation, form the backbone of the theory underlying my research. Researchers have looked at motivation, study abroad experiences, and identity construction separately, but to date, few studies have investigated the interplay among these phenomena. In what follows, I will introduce key aspects of these constructs and show how they are connected. The ultimate aim is to determine possible actions to facilitate better language learning outcomes for students in the English program of the Medical School. To identify new avenues for possible future research of study abroad L2 motivation and study abroad L2 identity construction are further goals of the study.

### 1.1 IDENTITY AND THE SELF

In our modern world of rapid social change, technological disruption, and economic uncertainty, the very concept of *identity* has become a contested notion. We hear it used in the media, in politics and in everyday conversation, yet it is rarely defined with scientific vigour in heated conversations. Identity is a key concept of the present moment for a reason. It is a powerful theoretical concept that is used for self-definition, asserting hegemony, and defining the limits of possibility. Apart from it being a politicised term, it is also our way of anchoring

and sense-making in a world characterised by change (Hammack, 2014, p. 11). It is paramount, therefore, to make clear what we mean when we refer to a person's identity even if, as Bucholtz and Hall (2010) argue, identity "in all its complexity cannot be contained in a single analysis" (p. 27). Beyond its most obvious definition of "who you are" (Joseph, 2006), identity has been defined numerous ways.

The first theories on identity in the social sciences were developed in the nineteenth century by James (1890). William James saw the concept of the self primarily as the conscious understanding of "personal sameness" (James, 1890, p. 331). Margaret Mead (1934), on the other hand, focused more on the social and developing aspects of identity and claimed that a person's identity develops through social action and experience (1934, p. 135). Both approaches emphasize that individuals aim to construct a valid self-sameness through multiple encounters and social processes.

Perhaps the first scholar who was primarily known for his work on identity issues was Erik Erikson, who mostly built on James's theory of identity. His seminal work on identity development (1963, 1968) gave perhaps the most influential definitions of what identity is in the twentieth century. In Erikson's opinion, a person's identity is a "subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image" (Erikson, 1975, p. 18). Identity, following this definition, is an understanding that even though our environments and our roles might change, and our reactions might be diverse, what motivates our response to issues of the surrounding world remains constant. Erikson was mainly interested in the development of identity through childhood as a prerequisite of psychological health. In Erikson's model of identity development, a healthy adult's identity functions on three levels. Erikson called a person's sense of personal sameness and continuity *ego identity*. Goals and beliefs are understood on the level of *personal identity*. Finally, the third level of identity in Erikson's

model is called *social identity*. It is defined by the connections a person has to their social environment through their ethnic background, nationality, gender, or other groups.

Since Erikson was mainly concerned with identity development, the Eriksonian school of identity research mostly focused on describing where an individual is at any given moment with regards to the identity development process as described by Erikson. As a result, Marcia (1966) developed an identity status model, and identity status research became a preeminent avenue of identity research in psychology (McLean & Sayed, 2014). However, Erikson's theory also "offered a broader and more integrative perspective on the relationship between individual psychology and social change" (Hammack, 2014, p. 18), as he theorised adolescent identity creation is an act of either reproducing or repudiating the status quo (p. 18).

The first criticisms of identity status theory came from recognising that ethnic and racial minorities' experiences tend not to conform to the stages of identity development plotted by the Eriksonian model. Starting in the 1970s, new theoretical approaches to race and ethnic identity were formulated, which recognised the uniqueness of the psychological experiences of minorities. "These perspectives were more person-centered and explicitly concerned with identity development as a sequential process" (Hammack, 2014, pp. 19). Another interesting path of identity research in psychology opened up in the 1980s with the growing emphasis on the narrative structure of meaning making. The reconceptualization of narrative and identity, such as in the works of Jerome Bruner (1986, 1987, 1990), holds that human beings make sense of their social environments through narrative processes. Much like the theories of racial and ethnic identity development, the theory of narrative identity development focuses not on identity processes in social interaction. Bruner argues that a person's identity is a product of narrative processes that develop over time as they link events and experiences in the storytellers' personal narratives or life stories. In this framework, the construction and reconstruction of personal identities are understood not as a process of identity development of

prescribed stages, but as the narrative development of meaning-making in the personal context of the individual. The study of life stories has thus become the investigation of personal identities. In McAdams' definition, identity is an "internalized and evolving life story" (McAdams, 2001, p. 117). Life stories' tone, imagery, thematic and ideological content have all been the subjects of studies (McAdams, 1988, 1990, 1996) to approach identities from multiple angles. The period of study abroad is a period in the students' life highly different from the period of life that led up to it. Study abroad students often react to their new setting through "reflection and narrative identity work" (Benson et al., 2013, p. 9); therefore, the narratives of their study abroad experiences are important tools in the construction of their second language identities.

This shift towards the understanding of identities as being narratively constructed is part of a broader narrative turn within social sciences that has also ushered in an emergent interest in language and discourse (Hammack, 2014, p. 23). The first proponents of understanding identities as a product of language were poststructuralist theorists Michel Foucault (1972, 1977) and Judith Butler (1990). In Foucault's theory, identities are not fixed but the product of a particular historical moment, mediated through our interactions with others (Foucault, 1972). Butler claimed that identity is illusory and a question of belief that it is retroactively attributed based on a person's actions prescribed by "social sanctions and taboo" (Butler, 1988, p. 520). In her theory, identity is artificial, proscribed, and performative instead of the manifestation of fixed psychological reality.

Narrative psychologists emphasize the historical and political context in which narrative identity constructions take place less than structuralist theorists do, however their research often engages with "master narratives" and "dominant storylines" available in the construction of coherent life stories (Hammack, 2014, p. 23). Narrative identity construction is understood as

a fundamentally social process where events are given a story form that defines a person's identity, and provides the motivation for action (Hammack, 2008).

Traditionally, a person's identity was understood as a "singular, unified, stable essence, that was minimally affected by context or biography" (Day et al., 2006, p. 602) or as being rooted in place-based language communities (Myles, 2010, p. 139). In the last few decades these notions have been challenged from multiple angles. The distinction between "presence and absence" (Larsen et al., 2006, p. 265) is becoming blurred due to the developments in information technology. Licoppe called this new phenomenon a "connected presence" (Licoppe, 2004) of people of many languages and cultures. Identities are no longer considered fixed entities (Hall, 1996, p. 598), but constructed and reconstructed through discourse (Blackledge, 2002, p. 68). As a result, studies often treat identities "as dynamically constituted in relationships and performed with/for audiences" (Riessman, 2008, p. 137), as demonstrated by Riessman with exemplary studies by herself (2004), Brown (1997), and Gallas (1994). Consequently, research into the relationship of selves, identities, and languages has become more prevalent in the literature.

Before I continue with a review of the research into the relationship between identity and language a discussion of the distinction between self and identity is in order. These are closely related notions. Giddens (1991) has argued that the dissimilarities are basically negligible or artificial, however most researchers agree that the distinction in terminology refers to valid differences in essence (Zacarés & Iborra, 2015, p. 432). According to Zacarés & Iborra:

Different theoretical approaches recognize several levels at which identity and self can be defined and understood: the personal or individual level, the relational level, and the social or collective level. Personal identity refers to those aspects of self-definition at the individual level including goals, values, beliefs, and a whole set of associated self-representations and self-evaluations. Relational identity refers to the contents of identity present in "face-to-face" interactions that has been framed in a variety of social roles and positions (son, student, friend, etc.). It also covers the way adolescents define and interpret these roles. Collective identity refers to all the cognitive and affective aspects

deriving from belonging to certain groups with which adolescents identify themselves and which place them within certain social categories such as ethnicity, nationality, or gender. (Zacarés & Iborra, 2015, p. 432)

Indeed, the main distinction one can make between the two is perhaps how malleable each one is. The self has often been theorized as being a person's universal, general nature, therefore, fairly fixed. Identity, on the other hand, is an individual's self-concept, derived from a person's self, but also from social processes outside the individual (Wiley, 1994, p. 1). Identities are both a project and the projection of the self, that exists more in conjunction with social forces. It can be imposed and contested, it is constantly negotiated, and it is often a locus of struggle. Identity, in contemporary research, has been defined as a "discursive construct that emerges in interaction" (Hall & Bucholtz, 2010, p. 19).

According to van Lier, "the overall semiotic structure of the self is identical for all humans" (van Lier, 2004, p. 127). This does not seem to be true for the concept of identity, which, as van Lier argues, is more dependent on social-cultural contexts and often appears in multiple forms. Race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and profession are only a few of the most conspicuous identity categories that recent research has highlighted on the subject. Identity is also part of politics; therefore, issues of social and institutional power structures also have an influence on identities.

However, in our age of growing global connectedness, previously established definitions of the self are called into question, further eroding the distinction between self and identity. Van Lier (2004) described the self as an ongoing process (p. 130), and it is sometimes described as socially constructed (Harré & Gillett, 1994).

As far back as Nietzsche (1980), philosophers argued that selves are not given or fixed but are in fact created by each individual. In Foucault's words, "we have to create ourselves as works of art" (Foucault, 1988 qtd. in Poster, 1993, p. 66). The self is perhaps best understood as an awareness of our actions in context. As humans act on the world, information is created,



which forms the basis of what Neisser (1988) calls the ecological self (van Lier, 2004, p. 107), or a self with respect to the immediate physical environment. Since the ecological self takes form in connection with its physical environment, it is also an emergent, constantly changing, ongoing project that aims to establish one's place in the world (p. 115).

One of the most influential models of the self is Neisser's (1988). Neisser proposes that there are five kinds of self-knowledge that develop in a person, each with different points of origin, possible pathologies, and roles to play in influencing experience and actions (Neisser, 1988, p. 35). The five selves proposed by Neisser are the already mentioned ecological self, the interpersonal self, the extended self, the private self, and the conceptual self. In Neisser's model the interpersonal self is the self that manifests in communication and interaction, therefore the most closely related to the concept of identity. The locus of the extended self is personal memories and anticipations, it is the self of past experiences and active routines. The private self is created by the unique experiences and interpretations not shared with others, it is the self that is created by realising that certain feelings, experiences, and thoughts cannot be shared in their original, unique forms. The conceptual self is what we believe ourselves to be, our theories about our social roles, what we are made of - our soul, our mind, our sense of self (Neisser, 1988, pp. 35-36).

This model has been debated and renegotiated since it was published. Neisser himself, in his later works, decided the ecological and interpersonal self to be parts of what he dubbed the perceptual self (Neisser, 1993, p. viii). In Neisser's model of the self, these ways of self-knowledge develop at different points of a person's life and reflect different levels of cognitive functioning. The latter three selves - extended, private and conceptual - are congruent with Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective "where perceptual and social-interactive (interpersonal) processes precede and grow into conceptual, intrapersonal processes" (van Lier, 2004, p. 116).

Just as there is a close connection between the physical environment and the self, the self is also constructed in language. “Whenever we say something we do not only provide a piece of information about something or other, we also at the same time provide information about two other important matters: Who we are ourselves, and who we think our listeners or readers are” (van Lier, 2004, p. 108). Therefore, unsurprisingly, the study of the self has important implications for SLA. L2 learners bring their own selves into the language learning process, most importantly their conceptual selves. “The longer-term goal of any language program is therefore to connect the new language to the self, finding a voice, constructing and validating identities or roles” (Kramsch, 2000, p. 151).

Norton-Peirce (1995), Bakhtin (1993), Vygotsky (1978), Wittgenstein (2009), and many others have seen the self as a social construct. In their views, the self is an intricate web of meaning, social activities, habits, and more. Therefore, our minds, motivations, attitudes, in short, our selves are discursively constructed in interaction with others (van Lier, 2004, p 119). Norton-Peirce argues that “when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (1995, p. 18). The mention of target language speakers in Norton’s work highlights the fact that the discursively co-constructed selves are subject to the languages we speak, and FL use can be a vehicle of renegotiation and development of the self.

## **1.2 IDENTITY, SELF AND LANGUAGE**

The poststructuralist understanding of identity has influenced theories on the links of identities and languages as well. The realization that “the self and its identities may be involved in the semiotic process of language use” (van Lier, 2004, p. 130) is not new. However, up until the

works of Edward Sapir (1916) and Otto Jespersen (1922) at the beginning of the twentieth century, mainstream linguistics did not consider a language's identity-forming function to be in its purview. Since then, it has been widely accepted that language, identity and culture are related through theories developed based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Ennaji, 2005, p. 20). The hypothesis, in its simplest form, states that the languages we speak determine the "ways we think and perceive the world" (Deutscher, 2010, p. 130).

Perhaps the first major study investigating the relationship between linguistic features and identity was Labov's famous 1963 study of the year-long-residents of Martha's Vineyard. Labov investigated how local people distinguish themselves from the visitors with their pronunciation of certain diphthongs. He concluded that residents of Martha's Vineyard, a popular tourist destination of New York socialites, used the non-standard pronunciation of certain diphthongs to signal their identities as native residents and set themselves apart from the tourists (Labov, 1963, p. 304). Moreover, the pronunciation of diphthongs varied even between Vineyarders, and was especially prominent amongst Up-Islanders and people between the ages of 30-60, thus creating the markers for a clear and specific identity. Labov proved that we express and construct who we are not only in semantic ways but in the pronunciation and accent as well. A decade later, Robin Lakoff (1973) argued that language use signals and enforces a marginal social status for women. Since the 1990s, the study of the link between language and identity has been one of the most researched topics of sociolinguistics.

One of the most influential models of the language-identity link has been Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (SIT). In this model, social identity is fundamentally subjective, derived from an individual's self-concept, as it pertains to memberships in social groups, and the significance the individual attributes to these memberships (Tajfel, 1978). The theory claims that feelings and thought are derived from a person's identity (Tajfel, 1981), therefore language use is predominantly in the service of maintaining a person's identity, for example, by signifying

belonging to or dissociating from certain social categories. An interesting and important inference of SIT research was a new understanding regarding the causes of social conflict. In SIT research, ingroup bias was observed even in cases where it was the product of research design and had no real-world relevance, leading to the realization by SIT researchers that social conflict is not necessarily a result of competition over material resources, but a function of personal identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, pp. 16-17). Following the logic of SIT, as SA students find themselves in a new context, they are in a situation where they can re-negotiate their previous social group memberships and redefine their identities.

In the 1980s, Ochs and Schieffelin's investigation of the relationship between language learning and socialisation led to the birth of the Language Socialisation Theory (LST). Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) highlighted how the social practices of caregivers socialised children into the language, culture and values of a community. According to Duff's review of the field (2007), LST has been used to research the school-community differences in socialisation, especially in L2 and multilingual contexts. LST's occupation with the link between language and culture leads to an increasing interest in identities, ideologies and narratives. While LST also views membership in a community or group as a premise of socialisation, it also emphasises how access to a new language and participation in a new community is not automatic and without obstacles for L2 learners. For example, Duff (2004) demonstrated how a lack of shared knowledge of Canadian pop culture negatively affected ESL students learning outcomes in Canada (Duff, 2004). The potential language learning failure or success of students is especially significant according to Duff (2007, p. 310), as language learning also equips students with the tools of creating new identities, allowing them to rethink their ideologies and personal rituals.

Following the emphasis on the importance of membership in social groups, starting in the 1980's researchers have turned towards the investigation of social networks, or as Milroy

described it “the informal social relationships contracted by an individual” (Milroy, 1980, p. 174). What makes these informal relationships a social network is not merely the amount of social contact, but a shared set of norms. In two famous studies by Fish (1980) and Anderson (1983), these shared sets of norms became the basis of two new, related concepts: the interpretative community and imagined community, two groups, whose members do not usually meet each member of their own communities, and yet through these shared sets of norms could identify each other as belonging to the same community. Members of an interpretative community can identify competing readings of the same culturally significant texts as valid or absurd. On the other hand, members of the same imagined communities, of which, in Anderson’s interpretation, a nation is one, identify each other through their shared belief of membership. However, Anderson also emphasized, that a community being imagined does not make it false or fictionalised, the descriptor is used to imply that these communities are a product of abstract thinking. In Anderson’s understanding, imagined communities, by definition, need to be large communities of people, who share a deep horizontal comradeship, and the significance they attribute to their group membership is such that they are willing to die in defence of the imagined community. While Anderson coined the term in pursuit of better defining nationalism, since then, the framework of imagined communities has been used to describe other communities, such as communities formed around the awareness of global risk factors (Beck, 2011) or the imagined communities of social media groups (Kavoura, 2014).

Research into the role of imagined communities in language learning has been particularly fruitful. In the second edition of her seminal book *Identity and Language Learning*, Bonny Norton suggests that in the twenty-first century understanding the relationship between language learning investment and the student’s imagined identities and communities has become a central pivotal concept (2013, pp. 15-16). Participation and investment in cultural and classroom practices has become a rich field of research, especially in SA contexts (e.g., Isabelli-

Garcia, 2006; Kinginger, 2004). The construct of investment aims to highlight the complex relationship between language learners' commitment and relations of power in different learning environments. Norton claims that learners invest in a language, or other words, make an "intentional choice" to learn a language in a given learning environment if they believe that it will equip them with more symbolic and material resources to increase their cultural capital and social power (Norton, 2013).

Pavlenko and Blackledge claim that "the complex relationship has been significantly undertheorized, with the focus being on the negotiation of language choice, or on performance and indexing of identities" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 3). At the turn of the millennium, a surge in research into the relationship between multilingualism, multilingual settings, and identities was noticeable (e.g., Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2004, Block, 2007, Burck, 2005 Gubbins & Holt, 2002). One notable example is Claire Kramersch's book, *The Multilingual Subject*, which focuses on "our conscious or unconscious sense of self as mediated through symbolic forms" (Kramersch, 2009, p. 18). According to her, all language use is symbolic, thus multilingual speakers have access to a wider range of symbolic forms to renegotiate their identities. In Kramersch's opinion, a multilingual person who engages in the interplay between conventional and personal meanings available in the languages they speak becomes a multilingual subject. The person who can choose to either reproduce or contest these symbolic meanings renegotiates their experiences and creates new identities for themselves.

Another offshoot of the research into imagined communities and the relationship between language and identity is Eckert's concept of "communities of practice" (CofP). A community of practice was defined by Eckert as "people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 464). The concept has since come to include any group of people that share norms, beliefs or ideologies. One of the key features distinguishing communities of practice from imagined communities is the question of

peripherality. Peripheral members of a community of practice might have less power with regards to the social hierarchy of the group, they “nonetheless engage in and contribute to some of the practices of the CofP, and in doing so, can potentially affect the overall CofP style” (Moore, 2010, p. 126). Since any given individual can be a peripheral or even a core member of many communities of practice, the framework can best be used in exploratory research as a means to evaluate the validity of social structures and defining an individual as a member (core, peripheral or marginal) of a community of practice will rarely accurately depict their whole identity (p. 124).

The understanding that identities or “who we are to each other, then, is accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated in discourse” (Stokoe & Benwell, 2006, p.4) is the basis of this study. The interest in the discursive construction of identities links this study to discursive psychology. Discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) borrows from the Foucauldian work an interest in how people are positioned in talk. A position, or subject position, can be understood as a temporary identity which is conferred on or taken up by a speaker and which becomes both who she or he is seen to be, by others, and the perspective from which she or he sees the world.

Another definition of positioning was proposed by Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré (1990, 1991). They argue that “position” is a concept that replaces the previously widespread term of “role.” Accordingly, positioning, as I will use it is “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 45). Therefore, it stands to reason that access to languages, be it the professional jargon of a community of practice or perhaps a second language, makes it possible to take on new subject positions and perspectives. Consequently, we need to look at the research into the link between identities and language learning.

### 1.3 IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Kramersch (2009) claims that who we are, our identities can be very different in various languages. This is because, as a sign system, language elicits subjective responses in the speakers themselves: emotions, memories, fantasies, projections, identifications. Because it is not only a code but also a meaning-making system, language constructs the historical sedimentation of meaning we call our “selves.” In our times of increased migration activities and displacements, when globalization makes what Pratt (1991) calls the “contact zones” and the “traffic in meaning” (2002, p. 25) more and more common among individuals and communities, it is important that we look in richer detail at the lived experiences of multiple language users (Kramersch, 2009, p. 2). Through these experiences of using multiple languages, people can construct multiple identities for themselves. Kramersch calls these identities “subjects,” which she defines as the “symbolic entity that is constituted and maintained through symbolic systems such as language” (p. 17). For most students in the majority of SA contexts, it is a must to become multilingual subjects. The questions of the process and what kind of multilingual subjects they become have a profound impact on their language socialisation and language learning outcomes.

In Kramersch’s opinion, language learning is the “construction of imagined identities” (p. 17) which “involves both the conscious mind and the unconscious body’s memories and fantasies, identifications and projections that are often the product of our socialization in a given culture” (p. 18). Becoming an MLS means acquiring new systems of “public meanings encoded in symbols and articulated in social actions” (Kramersch, 2009, p. 124). However, it is important to note here that the construction of new imagined identities is partially dependent on what Eckert and Wenger (1993) deemed necessary factors of active participation: motivation, access, and opportunity.



In the case of international students studying medicine in Hungary, a “construction of imagined identities” (Kramsch, 2009, p. 17) “articulated in social actions” (Foley as cited in Kramsch, 2009, p. 124) takes place as the result of both the process of learning a new language, Hungarian, and of new discourses: medical English and medical Hungarian. James Scotland, citing Judyth Sachs (2001), states that the “orthodox definition of professional identity would be: a set of ascribed attributes which differentiate one group from another” that is “constructed at the nexus of three key areas: institutional and personal environment, individual agency, and discourse communities” (Scotland, 2014, p. 34.) This study will examine how identity construction takes place through language learning and the process of becoming a medical professional. Whether and how the performance of the individual agency, the influence of the target discourse community, interactions, and tensions of the institutional and personal environment are reflected in personal narratives and interviews will be one of the foci of the study.

Language learners bring their own selves to the language learning process. According to Neisser (1988), different kinds of language learning demands and tasks act on the language learners’ different selves: for example, learning about expressions of time and space is understood by the learner with regards to the ecological self, while storytelling exercises relate to the learners extended self. According to Kramsch (2000), the goal of any language learning program should relate the new language to the student’s selves and identities, by validating their voices and identities, which in van Lier’s understanding can only be achieved in conversation (2004, p. 120). In an SA context, the even more intense realisation of the student’s selves, especially the ecological self, is possible by immersing the students in target language discourse right away.

In Norton’s definition, identity is “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person

understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2000, p. 5). Foreign language use goes beyond merely exchanging information. It is an act of organising and reorganising the speaker’s sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world (Norton-Peirce, 1995, p. 18). In an SA context, the reorganising of the speaker’s ecological self is even more accentuated. Difficulties might arise from discrepancies between a language learner’s sense of self and social identities and the study abroad context. As Neisser noted (1988), the development of different selves follows a certain pattern. He claimed that the ecological and the interpersonal self predate and contribute towards the extended, private and conceptual self. In a study abroad context, the language learner has to renegotiate their extended, private, and conceptual self in light of their new ecological and interpersonal environment. Van Lier holds that “in the new environment the perceived and the established aspects of self are not naturally in sync, and quite often clash quite violently with one another, leading to culture and language shock, a traumatic silent period, and a protracted struggle between the perceived outer world and the experienced inner world” (van Lier, 2004, p. 121).

Identity’s features such as its malleability, multiplical nature, and status as a locus of struggle and negotiation are particularly important for SLA. Language learning, on the one hand, empowers individuals to take up new, more desirable identities with regards to a target language community. On the other hand, the very opportunities to practice a language, and participate in a target language community are socially structured and often contested (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 73). The Language Socialization Theory, proposed by Ochs and Schieffelin in 1984, posits that novices are socialized into a language community “into and through” language and discourse. The learning of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, according to the theory, are not separable but happen simultaneously. Novices acquire knowledge of sociocultural knowledge through participation in language activities (Ochs, 1988, p. 4). In Duff’s (2007) words, language socialization is “the process by which novices or

newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the group” (p. 310) The theory also recognises the role social identities play in language socialization. For example, Ochs (1988, pp. 159-161) examined the early utterances of Samoan children and noted that it was often claimed that the first word children learned was *tae*, the Samoan word for shit. The caregivers interpreted this claim as symbolic of the naughty nature of children. “In doing so, they socialize children into cultural concepts of self and emotion through everyday language practices” (pp. 161). Recently, second language socialization in a study abroad setting has become an area of much research. “As language socialization has to do with new members gaining communicative competence in the new context, the context of SA, in which a student joins new language communities, makes an ideal setting for the study of SLS (Wang, 2010, p. 57). As learners in a study abroad context are presupposed to have better access to the target community and can partake in their linguistic and cultural practices, they also become novices in new communities (e.g. host families, classes, friend-groups and other social networks). Their participation in the host culture community lends itself to the investigation of second language socialization in a study abroad setting.

#### **1.4 INTERNATIONAL POSTURE**

As research into the construct of international posture illustrates, students’ perspectives on the target language and the target language communities have a significant effect on language learning outcomes and students’ identities. International posture (IP), a concept put forward by Yashima (2002, 2009), is often defined as language learners’ attitude towards the international community in general, as well as their interest in international vocation, activities, and their tendency to approach and communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds in particular. IP’s relationship with personality traits is still opaque, although not entirely without

research. The construct of IP has its roots in Gardner's notion of integrativeness, and the link between integrativeness was investigated by Lalonde and Gardner (1984): they found that integrativeness correlates positively with nine personality traits in their study. IP seems to have a close connection with what Gardner called openness to other groups and lack of ethnocentrism (Ortega, 2008, p. 180).

In 2012, Ghonsooly et al. demonstrated that of the Big Five personality traits (Openness to Experience, Extraversion, Emotional stability, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness) Openness to Experience has a significant positive correlation with a person's IP. Ghonsooly et al. (2012) did not analyse the other four personality traits in the Big-Five model, but they have demonstrated the significance of students' IP in predicting their willingness to communicate

Toyama and Yamazaki (2020) expanded their analysis to involve all five of the Big-Five personality traits. Their findings are in line with previous findings by Gardner and Ghonsooly et al. in that they have also found a significant association between IP and Openness to Experience. However, they also found that Extraversion has a significant positive relationship with one of the subconstructs of IP, the students' intragroup approach-avoidance tendency (IAT). They interpreted this as a result of sociable and talkative respondents seeking out "social stimulation and opportunities to interact with others. Since IAT involves the tendency to approach and communicate with people with different cultural backgrounds, it is self-evident that extraversion is relevant to" (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2020, p. 9) intergroup approach-avoidance tendency.

IP was demonstrated to have a strong positive correlation with L2 learning motivation by Yashima et al. (2004) in Japanese high-school EFL students. The structural equation modelling of 297 Japanese university students showed that international posture has a significant correlation with L2 motivation and, in turn, their proficiency in English (Yashima et al., 2004, p. 125). In investigating both at-home and study abroad students, they found that students who

have a greater interest in international affairs, occupations, and activities seem to be more willing to communicate in the L2 and voluntarily engage in communication more frequently. Furthermore, those who are internationally oriented seem to be motivated to study the L2. (Yashima et al., 2004, pp. 14 -142)

Yashima et al. postulate a circular, self-reinforcing relationship between intercultural communication experiences, interest in international communication and affairs, L2 motivation, and a willingness to communicate (p. 144).

Although Lamb (2004) did not explicitly investigate international posture, he also found that students' exposure to English language media and "a vision of an English-speaking, globally involved but nationally-responsible future self" (2004, p. 16) facilitated EFL learning. Lamb, however, also pointed out that some of the comments he received in his qualitative study from Indonesian EFL students suggest that the students' relationship with English as a lingua franca was a complex one, and their international posture originated from a sense of urgency to embrace the changes globalization has forced on them in order not to be "pushed away" (pp. 11-13).

Dörnyei and Csizér conducted a large-scale study of Hungarian students attitudes towards five different FLs found that students with relatively frequent exposure to FL communication in areas with low levels of tourism (2005). The authors report more positive attitudes towards FLs than students with comparable exposure in areas with higher volumes of tourism. In Dörnyei and Csizér's understanding, some students might start to contest positive international attitudes or even subvert them after a critical amount of international contact. The study , points towards a more complex relationship between international posture, L2 exposure and motivation than Yashima et al. (2004) suggested. Although Dörnyei and Csizér admit that their data does not provide unambiguous evidence, they make a strong case arguing that the reason why increased intercultural contact has a negative effect on intergroup and language

attitudes in localities where international tourists are relatively common lies in the higher cosmopolitan saturation levels of said localities (e.g., Budapest). As a result of intercultural contact being a common occurrence, the residents of these places were not positively biased about the intercultural contact itself in contrast to other parts of the country (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005, pp. 351-354). The question arises whether the SA context in Pécs should be considered a higher or lower cosmopolitan saturation level environment when it comes to the effect observed by Dörnyei and Csizér (2005).

## 1.5 MOTIVATION

SA experience has been considered as one of the most beneficial opportunities for students in higher education. It facilitates cross-cultural encounters, intercultural competence, language learning, and repositioning of the traveling self. There have been multiple studies focusing on just the language learning experience it creates, most concluding that it enhances students' language learning motivation and consequently their L2 proficiency. The first such studies (E.g. Clément, 1977; Clément et. al, 1978) did not focus specifically on SA students but on the motivational characteristics of French-Canadian students of English. However, more recently Isabelli-Garcia (2006) and Allen (2010) also established SA students' motivation as a variable that determined some aspects of their language learning success.

Generally speaking, research into the language learning motivation of SA students is not a well-developed area (for more detail, see for example Chirkov, et al. 2007). This is especially striking if we consider that L2 motivation research is in vogue. Boo, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) documented a surge in the number of publications in their meta-analysis of the field of L2 motivation research. This boom in the number of publications correlates with the emergence of new theoretical models on motivation issues.

Approaches towards researching L2 motivation have commonly been categorized into three periods (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010): the social-psychological period, the cognitive-situated period, and the process oriented period. The social-psychological period originated from and was dominated by the research of Wallace Lambert and Robert Gardner (MacIntyre et al., 2009). The key factor receiving the most attention was integrative orientation, L2 learners' interest in the people and culture of the target language, and their desire to learn in order to become fully participating members of a target language community. Starting in 1959 (Gardner & Lambert, 1959), integrativeness dominated the discussion on L2 motivation for decades. Gardner's model of integrative motivation lends itself well to an SA context, where language learners have direct exposure to the culture and lived reality of the host culture of the L2.

However, while the influence of the concept is still significant, criticisms of Gardner and Lambert's theoretical concept eventually grew to a substantial level (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). A point of contention in the 1980s was the role of linguistic milieu in an individual's motivation (Dörnyei, 1990). Gardner and Lambert's research was conducted on a homogenous population of Canadian students, and this population was for a long time overrepresented in research (e.g. Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Lalonde & Gardner, 1984).

Starting in the late 1980s and early 1990s, motivation was investigated through a cognitive lens with the help of self-determination and attribution theories. This period, sometimes called the Cognitive-Situated Period, was characterized by researchers adapting the findings of cognitive psychology to a situated language-learning context. Among the theories developed to describe language-learning motivation, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) became one of the most influential ones. Noels, Clément, Pelletier, and Vallerand (2000) developed an instrument to assess student's language learning motivation on a scale ranging from amotivation to intrinsic motivation. When developing their scale based on the Self-

Determination Theory of motivation, they did not discard Gardner's findings, but aimed to incorporate it into their research and build on the findings. Similarly, Noels et al., (2003) proposed a theoretical construct of motivation where language-learning motivation can result from intrinsic, extrinsic and integrative reasons.

Another theory of wide-reaching influence in language learning motivation is the Attribution Theory championed by Weiner (1986). The theory claims that the reasons we attribute to our successes and failures play an instrumental role in our motivation for future endeavours in the same field. Following the model, Nikolov (2001), Ushioda (1998, 2001), Williams, and Burden (1999) have pointed out attributions and learning outcomes they had an influence on. By incorporating a temporal aspect in the understanding of motivation, the Attribution Theory laid the foundation for the process-oriented period of motivation research. Dörnyei and Ottó proposed a process model of motivation (1998), where they divided motivated behavioural processes into three phases: pre-actional phase, actional phase, and post-actional phase, and looked at how wishes and hopes transform into goals, goals into action, and finally how the action leads to evaluation.

These attempts to conceptualize language learning motivation as an ahistorical process, and the language learner as an ahistorical agent have been criticized by Norton (2000) for failure to acknowledge that motivation and identity are linked, and that they are both socially constructed. Norton-Peirce (1995) introduced the concept of investment to model language learners' historically and socially constructed relationship to language learning motivation. Norton argued that language learning is a way for learners to acquire social, and symbolic and often material resources. Norton argues that instead of conceptualising learners as motivated or unmotivated, they should be understood as fully formed individuals with complex identities and multiple desires, who might, or might not be, invested in the language practices of their classrooms for numerous complex reasons. As McKay and Wong (1996) pointed out, an



individual's needs and desires should not be viewed as separate from, or sometimes even interfering with SLA, but as things that determine the students' investment in language learning. They also pointed out that a learner's investment in each of the four main language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), might be very different, as each of these skills might be considered to be important for the learner's identity to different degrees.

Others (eg. Skilton-Sylvester, 2002, Haneda, 2005) have also argued that traditional models of motivation are inadequate. They suggest that an understanding of students' identities and investment is a necessary ingredient to understand students' varying levels of participation and engagement in SLA programs. Recently Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System has attempted to address the criticism SLA motivation research has faced over the decades and to incorporate the development that took place in the conceptualization of the self, multiple identities, and students' investments. In the L2 Motivational Self System, language-learning motivation can come from three main sources: the learners Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and a positive L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self is the second language-speaking future self the language learner wishes to become. The Ought-to L2 Self is a self that possesses the attributes the learner believes he ought to possess to avoid negative outcomes. As these attributes as thus expected by others, the Ought-to Self is the most socially related of the selves in Dörnyei's model. L2 Learning Experience is the motivation stemming from the immediate language learning environment and experience. The Ideal and Ought-to L2 Selves need to be elaborate, vivid, and plausible, to be motivational. Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System has been tested and validated by several large-scale quantitative studies over the last ten years (e.g., Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Islam, Lamb, & Chambers, 2013; MacIntyre, Mackinnon, & Clément, 2009).

## 1.6 AGENCY

The term agency has been in wide circulation within different disciplines, but perhaps there has been an increase in the volume of research into agency. Larsen-Freeman (2019) attributes this increase to recent social movements and researchers' need to reclaim their own agency. She also cites several monographs, anthologies, and articles to emphasise her point. She also points out that in all of these works agency "has been associated, and even conflated, with free will, consciousness, identity, autonomy, and empowerment" (Larsen-Freeman, 2019, p. 61).

Its widest definition, which accommodates its many uses across disciplines, can be perhaps formulated as a socioculturally mediated capacity to act in the world (Ahaern, 2001, p. 112), however it has often been used as a synonym to mean 'free will' (e.g., Davidson, 1971, Segal, 1991). This understanding of agency as free will is based on action theory, and it presupposes an intent, a presence of the self, and a domain of intentional control as prerequisites of agency. This view, however, often neglects to consider the sociocultural situatedness of agency. Agency should not be looked at without considerations of the agents' context, for, as Karp put it, an agent is a person, who, by exercising their power bring about effects and reconstitute the world (Karp, 1986, p. 137).

This is the reason why anthropologists consider how conceptions of agency differ in different cultures, and how it is related to notions of personhood and causality (Desjarlais, 1997, Jackson & Karp, 1990, Pickering, 1995, Skinner et al. 1998). Ahearn maintains that it is "important to ask how people themselves conceive of their own actions and whether they attribute responsibility for events to individuals, to fate, to deities, or to other animate or inanimate forces" (2001, p. 113), a view that I share in this study. Agency has also been invoked by various theories, such as performativity theory (e.g., Miller, 2014), sociocultural theory (e.g., Arievidt, 2017; García, 2014), sociocognitive theory (e.g., Dufva & Aro, 2015), or complex

dynamics systems theory (e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2019). Unfortunately, none of these models could unquestionably account for the role of agency in language learning (McLoughlin, 2016).

Agency in language learning is also understood along the lines of intentionality, cognition, and self-consciousness (Carter & New, 2004), but it is also connected to the learner's "capacity to achieve desired and intended outcomes" (Giddens, 1984, p. 15). This capacity involves not just an ability of autonomous learning, but also the learners' capacity to acquire a "right to speak" and impose reception on the interlocutors (Norton, 2000, p. 8). A right to speak and be heard is of course key in acquiring linguistic competence, and therefore a learner agency is instrumental in language learning. However, the question of primacy between learner agency and structural determinism is still open. Sealey and Carter (2004, cited in Gao, 2010) claim that there are four main positions researchers take when discussing this question: the structuralist, the voluntarist, the structuration, and the realist positions.

The structuralist view holds social relations and sociocultural structures dominate human behaviour. The differences are learners' outcomes are mostly investigated through the lens of these social relations and individual agency is therefore often neglected (e.g., Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, Wen & Clement, 2003), or learners are construed as non-agentive (Larsen-Freeman, 2019, p. 62). On the other end of the spectrum, the voluntarist view emphasises the role of individual agency and downplays the role of sociocultural structures (e.g., Parks & Raymond, 2004, Donato & McCormick, 1994, Norton & Toohy, 2001). The structuration theory tries to find a middle ground between these two extremes, and views agency and sociocultural structures as two interdependent constructs that interact and influence each other (Giddens, 1976, 1982, 1984). This theory views learners as "highly reflexive and knowledgeable agents" (Gao, 2010, p. 28) in control of their strategic decisions. While the structuration theory holds that learner agency "emerges from its interaction with contextual structure" (Goa, 2010, p. 28), it also highlights learners' capacity to change their contextual

structures in their efforts to create beneficial learning conditions. According to the fourth view, which Gao called the realist position, individual agency and sociocultural structures are in interaction, but they also have autonomous properties outside of the other's zone of influence. Sociocultural structures provide the learners with the context to act upon, and agency is an expression of self-consciousness, reflection, intentionality, cognition, and emotionality in a given context (e.g., Carter & New, 2004; Layder, 1981, 1985, 1990; Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Sealey & Carter, 2004). Learners' agencies exist in relation and reaction to their sociocultural contexts, and it makes it possible to "reflect upon" and "seek to alter or reinforce the fitness of the social arrangements they encounter for the realization of their own interests" (Sealey & Cater, 2004, p. 11). The fundamental difference between the structuration theory and the realist view of learners' agency is in the understanding of how much individual learners can effect change in sociocultural structures. Of the two, the realist view considers the structures to be more enduring, and the changes effected by individual learners to be predominantly individualistic in scope, and their choice to be constrained by context (Gao, 2010, p. 30). Ultimately, when it comes to determine the relationship between agency and choice, I agree with Claire Kramsch, that "we are free to act but at the same time are not in control of the choices that are given to us." (2012, p. 15)

Another consideration that must be made with regards to agency is its relationship to investment. For a learner to make a conscious effort in executing a learning strategy they need to invest in the acquisition of the language, or at least some language skills. Investment can be selective (McKay and Wong, 1996), and might not involve all four skills. The employment of learners' specific strategies is related to their identities and to the "strength and type of his/her investment in learning the target language" (McKay and Wong, 1996, p. 604). Agency and investment need to be investigated on a granular and individual level, for "linguaging is still performed by an agentive learner in particular in a specific place for particular reasons with

particular others” (Larsen-Freeman, 2019, p. 63). Even as the sociocultural context might be similar for individual students, their investment might differ, which might result in different manifestations of their agency. For this reason, I agree with Diane Larsen-Freeman (2019) that “the individual interacting with the environment is an appropriate level of granularity – indeed, a necessary one – if understanding the uniqueness of the learning trajectories is the goal” (p. 73). In the analysis of the interviews, I conducted with study abroad medical students, I intend to achieve this level of granularity in demonstrating the interaction between the interviewees’ investment, environment, and agency.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

For the purposes of this study, my main theoretical framework is going to be the Language Socialization Theory, proposed by Elinor Ochs and Bambi Shieffelin (1984). The study also builds on the understanding of L2 motivation based on the L2 Motivational Self System proposed by Dörnyei (2009), with the inclusion of some context-specific factors. As the theory conceptualises motivation to be identity-based, the research also includes an inquiry of identity construction of SA students from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in an English Medium Education in Multilingual University Setting (EMEMUS) (Dafouz and Smit, 2014, 398-399), and considers the student’s international posture expressed in accounts and interviews. The study examines international students studying health sciences in Hungary as multilingual subjects who construct their identities in narratives of personal experiences. In addition, the analysis of the emergent themes in the students’ personal narratives provides an insight into how variables of the students’ SA experience (culture, gender, age, and social networks, length of stay, accommodation, etc.) influence the process of professional identity

construction, language outcomes and academic performance at the University Of Pécs, Medical School.

## CHAPTER TWO: LANGUAGE LEARNING AND STUDY ABROAD

A study abroad program makes it possible for students to move out of their home environment and enter a different culture while staying within their professional world. This process brings about changes in their language proficiency, cultural and professional knowledge as well as intercultural competence (IC). Participants land in an entirely different culture and often a new language. Thus, studies aimed at revealing and interpreting the impacts of SA programs have a twofold focus: measuring changes in participants' language proficiency and assessing the changes in their IC. The concept of intercultural competence is difficult to define unequivocally, and indeed there has been much debate in the research literature regarding it. In a 2009 meta-analysis of the field, Spitzberg and Chagnon concluded that there are several hundred similar but not identical conceptual approaches to IC. Most conceptual approaches to IC describe a set of individual abilities and predispositions that make it possible to “perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who linguistically or culturally differ from oneself” (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006, p. 12). The high number of competing conceptualisations of IC and the high level of interest is understandable given the reality of the rapidly globalising nature of our present moment, of which the increasing number of SA students worldwide is another indicator.

The growing number of SA students and their rising economic and political significance worldwide has made the research into study abroad (SA) language learning a growing and important field of linguistic research (Llanes, 2011). Just in the United States, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), and the American Council on Education (ACE) all claimed promotion of study abroad options as a strategic goal (Twombly, et al., , 2012). According to Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat, 2018), in 2016, over 1.6 million SA students took part in tertiary level education across the European Union, with the number expected to

rise in the future. Lately, the European Commission has nearly doubled the budget of the Erasmus program for the upcoming budget period of 2021-2027, which should enable 12 million students to take part in the mobility program over six years (Eurostat, 2018). In fact, the increased popularity of SA has been a global phenomenon, with the number of SA students rising from half a million in 1975 to 4.5 million in 2012 (Kritz & Gurak, 2018, p. 222).

Organisations and institutions worldwide are supportive of the increasing volume of student mobility partially due to the general understanding that SA is facilitative of language acquisition. The millions of participants in study abroad programs bring their own, already established sense of self and identities in a new ecological and interpersonal context that might challenge their beliefs, individuality and worldviews, while they are expected to develop in intercultural competence and global language proficiency through native-speaker interaction. The result unfortunately, is often abandonment of the language learner identity, as Kinginger (2008, p. 10) demonstrated. This abandonment of the language goals and learner identity might be one of the main reasons for the uneven results researchers have documented in investigating SA student's language development (Isabelli-García et al., 2018, Wang, 2010, Yang, 2016).

In fact, studies into SLA in an SA setting generally maintain that such an experience is facilitative of language learning. The literature on SA language learning can be broadly classified into three categories: (1) research into the development of language abilities in SA settings, (2) research into how other extra-linguistic factors of the students' SA experiences affect language learning and (3) research into SA students' perceptions, beliefs, and individual differences. As the following overview of the study abroad research literature will point out, there is no consensus regarding the study abroad learning context optimal for language learning. Researchers had to content with a high level of variability of outcomes resulting from program design and individual differences.



## 2.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE ABILITIES IN SA SETTINGS

Our knowledge of the development of language abilities in SA settings has a great depth of research behind it. For example, one of the earliest and most often quoted research into SA was John Carroll's (1967) study that examined the language proficiency of 2,782 randomly selected language majors at 203 institutions in the continental US. Carroll, who previously developed the Modern Language Aptitude Test and later influenced the design of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (Stansfield, 1999, p. 749), set out to measure the foreign language proficiency of American language teachers at the start of their careers. Carroll's testing instruments collected data about the four basic language skills – Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing – and teacher preparation subtests for participants from teacher training programs. Another questionnaire given to the participants inquired about their history of language learning, their attitudes, interests, and motivations. The results were compared by qualitative statistical analysis and concluded that time spent as an SA student was one of the strongest predictors of foreign language proficiency. Even a short time as an SA experience had a strong positive influence on students' language skills. For Carroll, this finding was predictable, as he stated, "Time spent abroad is clearly one of the most potent variables we have found, and this is not surprising, for reasons that need not be belaboured" (p. 137). Somewhat more surprisingly, Carroll also found that students with a lower level of language proficiency profit more from an SA experience with regards to language skills, a finding that has been supported by numerous studies over the years (e.g., Brecht and Davidson, 1991; Freed, 1995; Díaz-Campos, 2004). As a conclusion, Carroll claimed that it would be pointless to summarise the findings of such an extensive statistical report in a few sentences, but at the same time suggested that while the proficiency levels of foreign language teachers at the end of their tertiary studies

in 1967 left much to be desired, the study suggested a number of ways to remedy the situation and time spent as an SA student being one of the possible remedies.

Following the publication of Carroll's ground-breaking work, a number of discrete-point test-based studies measuring students' language proficiency before and after a SA period corroborated Carroll's findings. Willis, Doble, Sankarayya, and Smithers summarized these studies in 1977, and they followed up this summary with an examination of 88 SA British students in France or Germany. Their quantitative discrete item test-based studies reported improved speaking, listening and reading skills as a result of the residence abroad program. Veguez (1984) conducted a study of language growth among 17 American college students studying Spanish. The results were measured with the help of the Oral Proficiency Interview, a 20-30-minute-long interview developed to assess global oral proficiency. Over the course of one semester abroad, the participants' results on the Oral Proficiency Interview advanced one level or more. Magnan (1986) employed the same Oral Proficiency Test to measure the speaking proficiency of University of Wisconsin students learning French. The sample size was rather small, with only 10 students from each year of studies. While the data showed, unsurprisingly, that there was a significant positive relationship between the level of proficiency and year of studies, it also demonstrated a higher oral proficiency among students with an SA background and than those without it.

However, towards the end of the 1980s, a number of researchers (e.g., Kaplan 1989, Freed 1990, Milleret 1990) pointed out the flaws with these discrete point test-based studies. On the one hand, these studies failed to account for the ceiling effect often observed and are therefore not very useful to discriminate among students of high proficiency. As Freed (1990, p. 483) has pointed out, the reason why higher-level students often demonstrate less growth on standardised tests of grammar, is that they have "less room to demonstrate growth." Another

point of critique was the fact that these studies were mostly small-scale and short-term studies, often without a control group.

The early 1990s saw the conclusion and subsequently the publication of papers (e.g., Brecht, et al., 1995; Brecht & Davidson, 1991; Brecht & Robinson, 1993) detailing the most extensive study into SA language learning. In a multi-year, multi-institutional study, Brecht et al. investigated students' language learning abroad and at home. Over the years, the 658 American students learning Russian participating in this longitudinal study were asked to fulfil the Oral Proficiency Interview, the Modern Language Aptitude Test, as well as other quantitative and qualitative evaluation instruments. This study, among other results, also supported previous claims that SA has a positive relation with oral proficiency gain, whereas also pointing out that the higher the students' pre-SA reading and grammar skills, the more likely their other skills will improve during an SA experience (Brecht & Davidson, 1991).

Carroll's initial findings and studies following and building upon his insights concerned themselves with the global L2 proficiency of American students, but research ultimately turned towards the investigation of the development of some facets of students' language skills. While pre- and post-test research design remains popular, another reaction to these criticisms was to compare language gains of SA language learners, at home (AH) language learners, and in some cases, students who took part in an immersion program. To make the comparison more exact and valid, these studies mostly focus on one or a few related areas, selected from a wide range of language skills. The comparison of the development of various language skills in different contexts is one of the better researched areas of the field of study abroad language learning.

For example, VanPatten (1987), Ryan and Lafford (1992) and Guntermann (1992a, 1992b, 1995) all investigated the acquisition of Spanish copulas *ser* and *estar*. VanPatten studied the classroom learning of first-year university students. Ryan and Lafford (1992) later attempted to test VanPatten's findings in more naturalistic study abroad setting (Ryan &

Lafford, 1992, p. 715). Ryan and Lafford's study concluded that students who are exposed to more natural input in a study abroad environment acquire vocabulary items in a different order than students in American classroom settings. Guntermann (1992a, 1992b, 1995) tape-recorded interviews of nine Peace Corps volunteers in South America and analysed the interviews for a picture of the interlanguage development of the use of *por* and *para* (1992a), *ser* and *estar* (1992b). Finally, based on her previous findings, she investigated the impact of study abroad experiences on second language acquisition in general (1995). In this study, investigating the acquisition of linguistics forms by Peace Corps volunteers and traditional study abroad students, she found that Peace Corps volunteers had a similar acquisition order but superior progress in more complex form-function relations compared to other study abroad programs. Guntermann's findings suggested that "living and working in the culture" (1995, p. 167) can be a source of motivation and can lead to better language learning outcomes than merely "concentrating on acquiring linguistic elements" (p. 167) would.

Freed, Segalowitz and Dewey (2004) compared the fluency and oral proficiency gains of at-home and study abroad students and concluded that the students immersed in the target culture made significant gains in their oral fluency. Similarly, Bradley (2003) compared at-home and study abroad students with the help of the Oral Proficiency Interview and analysed the use of formulaic language in German. While the two groups performed similarly regarding rates of speech and number of fillers, study abroad students outperformed their at-home counterparts with regards to the total number of words and non-filler formulas (Segalowitz et al., 2004). Besides oral fluency, Segalowitz et al. (2004) also examined AH and SA students' gains in oral proficiency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and communication strategies in 46 students studying Spanish, and found that students who have spent a semester in Spain made greater gains in oral proficiency and fluency as well as having developed "superior narrative discourse abilities" (p.13). On the other hand, SA students' grasp of grammar and clearness of

pronunciation of selected features of Spanish phonology was markedly worse than that of the AH students. Segalowitz and Freed (2004), in the same year, looked at the relation of oral gains, measured with the Oral Proficiency Interview, to word recognition and the automaticity of lexical access in 40 SA and AH English native learners of Spanish. The study demonstrated that SA learners made greater gains in oral proficiency, however, these gains also correlated significantly with cognitive abilities and language contact.

Dewey (2004) compared the reading comprehension development of 15 intensive domestic immersion and 15 SA students of Japanese, and in contrast with the studies investigating oral proficiency, and found a significant difference in only one measure, self-assessment. He introduced the aspect of immersion (IM) in her studies. Further investigating the phenomena Dewey (2008) also found that gains in vocabulary were also “fairly similar between SA and IM settings” (2008, p. 143). Dewey also highlighted the importance of productive language use as it also proved to be an effective way to develop vocabulary knowledge.

Stevens’ (2001) comparative study of AH and SA learners of Spanish analysed the pronunciation based on pre- and post-test acoustic analysis. While both groups improved their pronunciation of sounds that were similar to sounds found in English phonology, only the SA students made significant gains in phonemes dissimilar to English sounds. However, the results were not reproduced by Díaz-Campos (2004). In comparing the speech samples of 26 SA and 20 AH learners of Spanish, Stevens concluded that while the number of years of prior language instruction was a strong indicator of gains, the context of the learning had a negligible effect. In a follow-up study, Díaz-Campos (2006) further investigated these findings, specifically with regards to the effect of speech style (reading and conversation) on linguistic gains across time and found that his previous findings were partially a result of the use of the read-aloud protocol, as SA students tended to do better in conversation than regular classroom students.

While there seems to be substantial evidence to suggest that an SA context is more advantageous for the acquisition of oral proficiency, and there are some studies pointing towards it being advantageous in improving participants' pronunciation, there has been little indication of such positive effects in the acquisition of grammar. Longcope (2003) compared the gains in fluency, grammatical accuracy and syntactic complexity over a five-month-long study abroad and found that the context was only facilitative for fluency gains. Collentine (2004) analysed the effects of learning contexts on grammatical abilities in the oral conversation discourse of 46 SA and AH American students of Spanish in a pre- and post-test design. The AH participants in Collentine's study developed more in discrete grammatical and lexical features than the SA students, whereas the SA students' language production was more semantically dense. On the other hand, Isabelli and Nishida's (2005) longitudinal study of 61 SA and AH students' acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive demonstrated that the SA students' use of the Spanish subjunctive in oral production was far superior. Pérez-Vidal and Juan-Garau (2009) contrasted the written performance of 37 non-native SA students of English not just to the written performance of AH students, but also to a baseline written performance of native speakers. The findings provided further evidence that an SA improves written fluency and lexis, while gains in syntax lagged behind.

As Churchill and DuFon (2006) indicated, the seemingly contradictory results of these studies are merely an indicator that patterns of language acquisition are complex and variable, and the interplay of language gains, learner characteristics and even the study abroad context particularities make it difficult to draw universal conclusions on the benefits of staying in an SA context. While Carroll, and many researchers since, has maintained that an SA in itself promotes immersion and meaningful, beneficial language experiences, other researchers attempted to correlate language outcomes with activities, attitudes and beliefs of students in SA programs.

The impact of a study abroad context on students' development of language skills is rarely a settled question. Study abroad seems to be most beneficial for the acquisition of oral proficiency and vocabulary items, and there is some evidence that it is also beneficial for the improvement in reading comprehension and written complexity, whereas the results concerning its impact on grammatical complexity are mixed. Studies examining language development in a study abroad setting are typically unconcerned with what goes on in an SA context (Taguchi, 2016, p. 128). The ambiguity of the findings mentioned earlier highlights the fact that study abroad functions as a complex system, and its study "requires researchers to take into account the whole person and the whole context" (Coleman, 2013, p. 36). Most research studies to this day have failed to approach study abroad in this manner, although many have investigated some aspects of the context.

## **2.2 EXTRA-LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN SA EXPERIENCES**

In the last decades, an ever-increasing number of SA research has factored in the effects of extra-linguistics factors on language learning. Among others, these research works focused on the effect the stay abroad had on the students' intercultural competence, the significance of the duration of the SA period on language gains, and the importance of social networks in SA language gains.

### ***2.2.1 THE EFFECT OF STUDY ABROAD ON INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE***

Engle and Engle (2004) conducted a four-year-long research of American SA students of French. Their goal was to test if the program design at their institution facilitates the acquisition of French and the development of intercultural sensitivity. Two hundred fifty-seven students

were asked to fill out two assessment tools. The Test d'Evaluation de Français (TEF) is a testing tool widely used in France to provide an overall view of students' linguistic skills. Moreover, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a "multiple-choice testing tool developed in 1998 by Mitchell Hammer and Milton Bennett" (Engle and Engle, 2004, p. 229). Both tools aim to measure an individual's orientation to cultural differences and how these disparities weigh in the SA programs' language aspect. In their analysis, Engle and Engle stated that their SA students' intercultural sensitivity was positively affected by direct, authentic contact with the host culture and by "skillful mentoring which guides, informs, inspires, and stimulates the experiential learning process" (p. 232). However, when considering the relationship between the students' scores on the TEF and IDI, Engle and Engle found that while the "results suggest a certain moderate level of coherence between individual rates of linguistic and cultural progress, they fail to confirm consistency." The cultural progress in their research referred to the participants' Intercultural Development Inventory scores, and the linguistic progress was measured by the Test d'Evaluation de Français. Such a large scale assessment reveals information less visible in previous studies and points to how one's tolerance of cultural differences as measured in IDI is a strong element in the SA program's study. In the introduction I already pointed out that many SA students at the Medical School in Pécs have little interest in exploring the cultural differences of the local culture.

Anderson et al. (2006) also used the IDI to quantify the effects of a 4-week-long SA experience on the participants' intercultural sensitivity. The study involved only 16 participants, therefore its sample size was too small to generalize. However, the researchers found that the students from an American midwestern private university significantly improved their intercultural sensitivity after only four weeks in England and Ireland. Pedersen (2010) took the findings of these studies and designed research to provide details on IDI and its connection to SA success. Pedersen compared the pre-post IDI scores of three groups of participants. Group



one consisted of SA students whose program included intercultural effectiveness and diversity training pedagogy, cultural immersion, guided reflection, and intercultural coaching. Group two were participants in the same study abroad experience without the intercultural effectiveness and diversity training pedagogy intervention. Group three consisted of at-home students, who have previously expressed interest in an SA experience. Pedersen found a significant difference in the IDI scores of the SA students who received the intervention and the other two groups, and no statistically significant difference between the non-intervention SA students' and the at-home students' IDI scores. Pedersen concluded that an SA experience in itself is not sufficient in creating effective global citizenship, and intentional pedagogy focusing on intercultural effectiveness is needed.

The question has long been lingering whether only official SA programs are beneficial to language learning or perhaps personal traveling, including holiday trips, are also affecting SLA positively. Stebleton, Soria and Cherney looked into this dilemma in their 2013 study, in which they examined the relationship between five different types of travel/SA participation, ranging from an SA university program to travelling abroad for recreational purposes, and the development of intercultural competencies. They used the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) online survey. Altogether 99,810 American students from a number of American public universities answered the survey. Their results showed that participation in formal SA programs had a higher positive impact on the students' intercultural competencies than other forms of international travel activities.

Anderson, et al.'s (2015) study looked at the relationship between the students' motivations to participate in an SA program, the characteristics of the SA program and the students' intercultural competence in a pre-post-test assessment. In the study, 355 American SA students took the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) before and after the SA period. The authors hypothesised that the motivation of the students with more complex reasons for SA

would have a significant effect on their intercultural development. Namely, students who choose to partake in an SA program to learn about the world or achieve personal growth would register a higher rate of intercultural development than the students whose main motivation in participating in an SA was a desire for entertainment. However, their results did not support this hypothesis, as the participants' GPI scores did not increase significantly as a result of the SA. The participants' intercultural competence did not develop during their SA, but they found that the students' motivations for embarking on a study abroad positively correlated with their intercultural competence. In particular, Anderson and Lawton found that students with more "noble" motivations, such as a desire to learn about the world, to achieve personal growth, and to develop one's career, had higher GPI scores (2015, pp. 49-50).

As is shown in the contrasting results in Stebleton, et al. (2013) and Anderson, et al. (2015), whether or not an SA experience is conducive to the development of intercultural competence is by no means a settled issue in SA research. In fact, Shartner (2015) found that students' cultural empathy and open-mindedness declined during an SA experience. Shartner tracked 223 international postgraduate students at a British university. They administered the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire in two stages, two weeks and nine months into the students, SA program. The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire items were developed to measure intercultural competence conceptualised as cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability and flexibility (Shartner, 2015, p. 404). To gain a more nuanced picture, Shartner decided to conduct semi-structured interviews to follow up the questionnaires. This project involved twenty participants throughout the same academic year. Based on the results of the two questionnaires and the interviews, Shartner had to conclude that the students' intercultural competence did not develop merely due to their exposure to a multicultural study environment. Institutional and program factors, such as length of stay and program design, were also key predictors in the development of intercultural competence in study abroad students.

### *2.2.2 LENGTH OF STAY AND SA EXPERIENCE*

The length of stay for SA students varies greatly from only a few weeks to several years. Despite the significant discrepancy, how the length of stay affected language gains or the SA experience in general, has been under-researched and has only recently garnered appropriate interest. The dearth of research might be explained by the fact that two strong assumptions were shared by most SA researchers. On the one hand, it was assumed that the longer an SA period, the more benefits the students accrue (Dwyer, 2004, p. 151). On the other hand, a short-term SA experience would not be impactful enough to prompt an investigation. Thus, most of the research focused on populations that had at least three months of SA experience (Llanes & Munoz, 2009, p. 354).

While not many researchers focused on the length of stay in their research, it very often turns up as a key factor in otherwise centred research. For example, Ife, Vives Boix and Meara (2000), while investigating vocabulary development in a SA, focused on whether students at various proficiency levels and of different backgrounds exhibit significant differences in the progress they made. Of the 36 students who took part in the research, about two-thirds spent one semester abroad. The remaining one-third spent two. The participants were administered a questionnaire of 120 items, each consisting of three words, two of which strongly associated with each other, and a third one not. The participants were asked to identify the misfit word. Ife, Vives Boix and Meara found that length of stay was the only environmental variable that had a significant positive relationship to their three Word Association Test. The participants who spent two semesters on SA scored higher on vocabulary tests than those whose SA lasted only one semester.

Dwyer (2004) was among the first to measure the longitudinal impact of SA on a large sample size. The study utilized a survey of 28 retrospective questions on the impact of SA on behaviours and attitudes, which 3,723 previous SA students answered. The work confirmed previous beliefs that the length of stay had a significant relationship with impact. Students whose SA experience lasted for a whole year reported higher confidence in their linguistic abilities, were more successful academically, and were more likely to use the language of the host country in their work when compared to summer school SA students.

In their 2009 study, Llanes and Munoz challenged the assumption that short-term SA experiences “may not produce any significant change in subjects’ second language proficiency” (Llanes & Munoz, 2009, p. 354). They asked 24 Catalan and Spanish L1 students to partake in short oral interviews before and after a short stay abroad. They found that even a three- or four-week-long SA experience can lead to significant improvement in listening comprehension, oral fluency, and accuracy. Moreover, they found that an extra week can have measurable results, as “those participants who stayed for four weeks performed the oral task with greater fluency; and with greater accuracy, relative to those who stayed abroad for three weeks” (p. 362). While these findings do not argue against the benefits of longer SA periods, as Llanes and Munoz (2009) also point out, their findings are especially important in light of the increasing popularity of shorter SA programs.

Building upon the surprising findings of Llanes and Munoz (2009), Llanes and Serrano (2011) investigated if a month difference in the length of a SA participation can lead to “a significant difference in the written and oral production” of language (Llanes & Serrano, 2011, p. 101). Forty-six Spanish and Catalan students were asked to write a biographical composition and narrate a story based on pictures before and after their SA experience. The results showed no significant difference between students who stayed abroad for two months and those who stayed for three. Llanes and Serrano explained the difference in the results by citing previous

research. Llanes and Munoz (2009) found a significant difference in language gains between study abroad and at-home students, whereas Llanes and Serrano (2011) found none, despite the difference in length of stay being only one week. Llanes and Serrano argued that they did not find a significant difference because the participants in their study were advanced students of the target language, and the participants in the 2009 study were adolescents with lower levels of proficiency. Llanes and Serrano's argument would therefore support the claim that study abroad is more beneficial for students with lower levels of proficiency.

The findings of Lara, Mora and Pérez-Vidal (2015) added another twist to the research into the effects of length of stay on language gains. They compared two groups of Spanish-Catalan bilinguals based on role-play tasks, which the students were asked to perform before and after the SA. The SA lasted for 3 and 6 months for the two groups respectively. The data was analysed for accuracy, complexity and fluency. Their statistics showed that the three months group showed more gains in accuracy and fluency than the students in the 6-month-long group, whereas there were no significant differences between the groups with regards to gains in complexity. In conclusion, based on these recent studies, it seems that, for now, the question in the title of Lara, Mora and Pérez-Vidal's (2015) article, namely, "How long is long enough?" cannot be unequivocally answered.

### ***2.2.3 SOCIAL NETWORKS IN STUDY ABROAD***

Another variable that influences language gains besides the length of study is the type and extent of social interactions that are created during SA. Contacts with the host university students and the local community provide SA students with seemingly crucial opportunities to practice their L2 in authentic situations. In an attempt to measure the density and intensity of SA participants' social interactions, researchers have often utilized the social network

framework first proposed by Lesley Milroy (1980), who defined it as informal relationships contracted by the learner, which frequently results in interactions. For example, Isabelli-García (2006) claimed that an analysis of an SA students' social networks could be "used to account for linguistic development and variation between speakers" (p. 231), because the frequency and type of interaction with native speakers is an important factor in the acquisition of sociolinguistic skills. In her study, Isabelli-García investigated the connection between the type of motivation, attitudes towards the host culture, and the social networks of SA students. She found that motivated SA students develop more extensive and complex social networks while in the host country, but also, that in turn, their "success, or lack thereof, in incorporating themselves into social networks" (p. 255) affects their motivation. In her study, she used Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview, which is a semi-direct speaking test simulating encounters with native speakers "to have quantitative data on pre- and post-program proficiency" (p. 239). According to their findings, there was only one student whose rating did not improve in the pre-post-test. This participant was also the only student whose social network size diminished from the first to the fifth month of stay and never managed to develop a multiplex social network with members of the host culture.

A similar concept drove Tanaka (2007) to study the extent and quality of Japanese students' contact with the English language while on a 3-month-long SA in New Zealand. Tanaka (2007) found that the students' exposure was limited. Many participants admitted in interviews that they preferred interacting with other Japanese students to seeking opportunities to meet locals. Even homestay students reported limited interactions with the host families. In Tanaka's assessment, it was the low level of English proficiency that limited the Japanese SA students' L2 experience.

Kinging (2008) also looked at SA as "a productive - if imperfect - environment" (p. 107), where immersion and meaningful L2 interaction does not occur automatically and

naturally for SA students. Kinginger used the Test de Français International (TFI) to measure pragmatic competence and language awareness. The study's cohort of 24 students demonstrated significant gains over the SA period, with considerable within-group variation. Based on the students' reports of their SA experiences, provided in the form of journals and interviews, Kinginger found that the conditions for language learning provided to the students, the qualities of experiences, and the student's beliefs and attitudes all related to language development. One of the participants reported having a supporting host family, who actively encouraged his language development and provided him with valuable input. Another homestay SA student, however, wrote about her loneliness and lack of interaction with the host family. Kinginger, in the end concluded that one of the main influencing factors in the high degree of individual variation in language outcomes among SA students is their beliefs and attitudes towards the SA. "In the cases studied here, we find that some students interpreted study abroad in ways that favoured their language learning, whereas others did not" (p. 108), and one of the ways this difference in attitudes manifested itself was in the development of social networks. The participants who managed to develop informal relationships with members of the host culture, had better scores on the data collecting instruments, and the qualitative analysis of the data they provided showed more positive attitudes.

Allen (2010) used Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to study the relational dynamics of SA and how students interacted with their host communities during their SA. Allen found that the levels of interaction between SA students and the L2 community were influenced by multiple factors. Among these factors Allen highlighted the students' initial motivations to participate in an SA experience and their beliefs and perceptions of the host culture and the SA program. He also found that the students' strategies in critical moments where they enacted agency and constructed the conditions of their continued language learning was another key

factor. Allen concluded that the SA learning context emerges “from the dynamic interplay between the learner’s intentions versus those in his or her community of practice” (p. 20).

One of the most common ways SA students form social networks with members of the host culture is by living with host families, or as often called, being homestay SA students. Allen, Dristas, and Mills (2006) found that homestay SA students reported both a higher level of linguistic ability and a higher level of expected and encountered cultural difficulties than SA students who lived in other living environments (e.g., in a dormitory, or a rented apartment). The participants were asked to fill in a survey consisting of four subscales: The Demographic Information and Language Contact Profile, the Linguistic Self Assessment Profile, the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, and the Acculturation Scale. Interestingly, Allen, Dristas and Mills found that despite the reported cultural difficulties, homestay students, after their SA identified less strongly with their own culture’s “perspectives, practices, communication practices and products,” (Allen et al., 2006, p. 198) whereas the non-homestay students’ identification became stronger. At the same time, both homestay and non-homestay students identified strongly with the host culture after the SA experience.

However, just like with other aspects of involvement with the host culture, beneficial interaction does not seem to happen naturally, even in a homestay SA setting. Lafford and Collentine (2006), in their review of the literature pointed out that “learners’ living conditions abroad may also prove to be a crucial factor” (116): there is a great variation between the quantity and quality of interaction that takes place between the students and the host families. Pinar (2016) claimed that recent research has shown that the attitudes of the host family and the SA student can both facilitate and hinder the development of linguistic abilities and intercultural competence. The key factor seems to be whether the homestay context facilitates frequent quality interaction. For example, in DuFon’s (2006) research, when the interaction between the



student and host family was infrequent and limited to mealtime, the amount of meaningful interaction was too little for students to develop their linguistic abilities.

Living conditions are only one of the predictors of language use, and in an ambitious questionnaire-based study, Dewey et al. (2014) investigated the predictors of language use in six SA programs in six different countries. They examined the relationship of six predictors (the SA program, age, gender, initial level of cultural sensitivity, personality, initial L2 proficiency and social network size) and L2 use of 118 SA students. Dewey et al. found that the characteristics of the SA program and social network size were the most important predictors of language use. Their findings regarding social network size were complex. Social network size was a positive predictor of out-of-class L2 use, but social network size was influenced by program design. Program design therefore was the single strongest predictor of language use. The initial level of cultural sensitivity, on the other hand, was a negligible factor.

### **2.3 CONCLUSION**

Research into the development of language abilities in SA settings has shown that the setting in itself does not guarantee better language gains than other settings would. Instead of clear-cut evidence of the linguistic benefits of study abroad settings, the research focusing on linguistic constructs and gains in SA has led to the realisation “that many aspects of language development are nonlinear and . . . multivariate and dynamic” (Spoelman & Verspoor, 2010, p. 547). The extra-linguistic factors influencing SA experiences and language development in a study abroad setting are numerous, difficult to isolate or control, and therefore looking at individual factors “often yields inconsistent results” (Wang, 2010, p. 59). As Wang succinctly argues, these facts serve as a rationale for an exploratory qualitative approach towards language socialization in study abroad.

### CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

Research on the impact of SA on students' language proficiency and intercultural competence has pointed out the significance of these programs for the participants' professional development. As the Medical School of the University of Pécs has a long history in offering SA opportunities in the Hungarian educational context, we have long faced the questions of how professional identity development and the social networks the students participate in are related. On the next pages, I will provide a detailed description of the research methodology, the participants, and the research context of the study. As the body of research literature concerning both students' identities and study abroad second language acquisition grows, the present study intends to provide a qualitative analysis of the participants' unique experiences.

The study was designed to research the impact of SA on identity construction through emergent themes found in SA students' personal accounts and through semi-structured interviews. In the first part of the research, SA students were prompted to provide written accounts of events during their SA period to uncover the emergent themes salient to their experiences. The second part of the research consisted of six semi-structured interviews designed to reflect on the content of the emergent themes identified in the written accounts.

It has been pointed out that we live in "narrative's moment" (Maines, 1993, p. 17). Something of a "narrative turn" has been happening in recent decades. In other words "treating a narrative as an object for careful study" (Riessman, 2008, p. 14) has become widespread in many disciplines of human sciences. Moreover, as Aneta Pavlenko put it "In the past decade, language memoirs, linguistic autobiographies, and learners' journals and diaries have become a popular means of data collection in applied linguistics" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 163). This narrative turn, and in a wider sense the social turn (Block, 2003) it has been a part of has opened the possibility of investigating issues that were previously studied through a qualitative lens through narrative analysis, and thus made this research possible as well.

The first questions researchers conducting narrative analysis always have to ask are explaining the what and why. What is narrative in the framework of the research? Why is it that they choose it as the source and subject of their study?

Although human sciences' "turn" towards narrative has only occurred recently, narrative has been the subject of studies in literature since the beginnings of literary studies. In his works, Aristotle talked about a "coherent presentation of events in a narrative or dramatic imitation", which he calls *muthos* or story (Aristotle, 2006 p. 73). Story, plot and narrative have been often used interchangeably or to mean similar things in literature ever since. For example, according to Herman and Vervaeck (2001), "traditionally a narrative is considered to be a sequence of events" (p. 11). In their definition, narrative is the semiotic representation of a series of meaningfully connected events (p. 13). With the popularity of the term on the rise in science and in everyday usage, this definition of narrative is, however, so broad that it might almost be without meaning. In contemporary usage, narrative has come to mean anything beyond a few bullet points; when someone speaks or writes more than a few lines, the outcome is now called narrative by news anchors and even some qualitative researchers. "Reduced to little more than a metaphor, everyone has a "story" that, in turn, feeds media culture, whether it entails telling one's story on television, or at a self-help group meeting in our interview society" (Riessman, 2008, pp. 4-5).

Riessman claimed that there is no scientific consensus on the proper definition of narrative, and that instead, it is a "range of definitions" which effectively form a continuum. On the one end of the continuum, "narrative refers to a discrete unit of discourse, an extended answer by a research participant, to a single question, topically centred and temporally organized... On the other end of the continuum... narrative can refer to an entire life story, woven from threads of interviews, observations, and documents" (Riessman, 2008, p. 5).

The prototypical narrative results from a storyteller recapturing past events from a single point of view constituting a well-bounded, closed temporal unit (Labov, 1972, p. 359-360). In Labov's view, a prototypical narrative consists of at least two narrative clauses that guide the audience over the temporal sequence of events, and any number of free clauses that add complimentary information. A fully developed prototypical narrative contains an abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation and resolution (Labov, 1972, p. 370). An abstract introduces the topic, the orientation explains the who, when, where of the story; the complicating action explains how the conflict developed; the evaluation interprets the personal meaning the storyteller derived from the narrative and finally the resolution explains the state of the storyworld at the end of the narrative.

However, narratives are often not produced by only one teller. Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (2001, p. 20) distinguish the co-constructed conversational narratives from the prototypical narratives described by Labov. These narratives emerge from interactions as two or more interlocutors negotiate interpretation of life events through narrative telling. The narratives that emerged from the interviews in this study are instances of what Riessman calls personal narratives, or "extended accounts of lives in context that develop over the course of single or multiple research interviews" (Riessman, 2008, p. 6), whereas the written accounts produced by the participants more closely resemble Labov's prototypical narratives. Freeman (2006) claims that neither type of narrative is better or truer, but rather provide different avenues to examine life stories. By incorporating both types of narratives I aim to utilise the complementary nature of these two types of texts.

Narrative inquiry that involves both prototypical and conversational inquiries is a worthwhile effort, as one of the most prominent differences between them is in the ways they are used for the purposes of identity construction, which is one of the main function of narratives to begin with. Researchers have argued that the narrative construction of our life stories

involves constant construction and negotiation of identities (McAdams, 1993). In narrative telling, language is used to present a sense of self that is positioned and negotiated in terms such as “self” and “other,” “objective” and “subjective” (Fodor, 2019, p. 29) to create a discursive encoding of the self, often referred to as subjectivity. Agency and victimicy, whether the storyteller is presented as an active, voluntary participant in the narrative telling, is another key concept in understanding how narratives position the self that will be analysed in the study. To understand the storytellers’ subjectivity and agency presented in discourse I will investigate their subject positioning. Davies and Harre (1990, p. 50) defined subject positioning as a discursive process of presenting selves in conversation as participants. Selves are positioned in stories in relation to exclusive categories, and belonging to some of the categories is experienced by the tellers through adopting a worldview. The power of the concept of subject positioning stems from the possibility of locating selves in narratives of lived histories. With the use of narrative forms, plot, learnt metaphors, and characters, storytellers’ can create subject positions for themselves that present their identities.

As my aim with the research was to explore study abroad medical students’ experiences in-depth through multiple sources of information, emphasizing the importance of the context it fits most definition of a case study (Duff, 2008, p. 22). Following Duff’s classification of case studies, the present dissertation can be best described as an explanatory-relational case study, as its goal is to find “causal or relational patterns among observations or yield explanations about” (Duff, 2008, p. 101) language learning in the study abroad context at the Medical School.

### **3.1. THE STUDY ABROAD CONTEXT AT THE MEDICAL SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS**

A closer look at the context of the study answers *why* the personal narratives selected for the purposes of this research merit an analysis. Just as it is the case in higher education in

general, globalisation has been one of the prominent trends of the last decades (Császár & Wusching, 2014, p. 10) in Hungary. Medical Schools are especially popular destinations for international students. Although the General Medicine in English program started more than 30 years ago, in 1984, at the University of Pécs, and the General Medicine in German program in 2004, the internationalization of the Medical School (Császár & Wusching, 2014, p. 10) is a recent phenomenon, as the number of international students only surpassed 200 in 2000, and, as was mentioned earlier, international students only became a majority among students at the Medical School in 2012. Their absolute numbers and relative percentage among students continues to grow (Császár & Wusching, 2014, pp. 11-12). In 2018, of the 3,427 students of the Medical School, 2,014 were international (Pécsi Tudományegyetem, n.d.). The student population of the university is made up of three distinct communities: at-home students from Hungary, SA students in the German program, who mostly study in their mother tongue, and students of the English program, who study medicine in English. While here, these students, who come from sixty-odd countries (Császár & Wusching, 2014, pp. 12-13; in 2013 students from 59 countries studied at the Medical School), from a wide range of cultural, social, economic, religious backgrounds, form a temporary community based on their shared lived experiences as SA medical students. The language of communication among themselves is English, German, or any of the numerous other languages they speak, but almost never Hungarian. The language of professional instruction is mostly English or German, as they have relatively few Hungarian classes. In the first two years of their medical studies, most SA students sign-up for Medical Hungarian classes, which take place twice a week over the course of the shortened, 12-week-long semester. Whereas their other classes focus on endowing the students with a high level of medical knowledge and professional competence, the Hungarian classes focus on teaching them how to ask basic questions and understand basic answers in a

doctor-patient setting, a skill that they will find useful only starting in the third year of their SA experience, in their clinical classes.

The Medical School of the University of Pécs can therefore be characterised as a multilingual university; following Dafouz and Smit (2014), it could be described as an English Medium Education in Multilingual University Setting (EMEMUS) (2014, pp. 398-399). Dafouz and Smit proposed a conceptual framework for describing the language ecology of EMEMUS settings that consists of six components, (Roles of English, Academic Disciplines, (language) Management, Agents, Practices and Processes, Internationalization and Glocalization), and the last one which they dubbed ROAD-MAPPING. They also postulate that discourses can serve as “a point of access to analysing EMEMUS” (p. 403).

The EMEMUS setting for SA students at the Medical School is remarkable because, whereas most of the education takes place in English or German, which are also the languages of communication between the participants of the setting, the students also take Hungarian for Specific Purposes classes. Whereas a proof of English proficiency is an entry requirement for beginning studies at the English program of the Medical School, Hungarian proficiency is not. Study abroad students at the Medical School typically encounter the Hungarian language for the first time when their SA experience starts. Some of them take Hungarian classes before the first semester either in Pécs at the International Studies Centre or someplace else, but this is not universal. Once their studies at the University of Pécs start they are offered Medical Hungarian classes. These classes are optional, and most study abroad students capitalise on this opportunity. The classes take place twice a week, for ninety minutes for four semesters. Since the semesters last twelve weeks, by the end of the four semesters the students will have attended Medical Hungarian classes for 144 hours. Unlike the Medical Hungarian classes, an oral medical history taking interview and a listening comprehension test in Hungarian are criterion requirements for several classes in the third academic year. The simulated medical history-

taking interview consists of speaking tasks. First, the students ask basic questions regarding biodata (for example name, age, previous diseases) and current symptoms from the examiner in Hungarian. Then they have to prove that they understand the answers in Hungarian. Their comprehension is measured by their ability to translating them into English. In the listening part of the exam, the students listen to a simulated medical history taking interview performed by Hungarian actors from the local theatre, and answer twenty questions on discrete points of information, such as the age of the patient, the symptom, the onset of the symptom and the like. Following a successful medical history exam the students can sign up for further, more specialised medical Hungarian classes, but the sign-up rate of these classes is significantly lower than the sign-up rate of the pre-exam classes.

Table 2.

*SA students formal Hungarian language learning at the Medical School*

| <b>Name of Hungarian course or exam</b> | <b>Details</b>                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-program preparatory course          | Optional, typical length is between 60 and 140 classroom hours over 2-4 weeks                                    |
| Medical Hungarian classes               | Optional, 144 classroom hours over four semesters                                                                |
| Final examination in Medical Hungarian  | Criterion requirement for all SA students, simulated medical history taking in Hungarian                         |
| Clinical Hungarian classes              | Optional, only a low percentage of students participate, 24 contact hours each semester for up to four semesters |



In the ROAD-MAPPING framework proposed by Dafouz and Smit, the first component is called Roles of English, referring to the ecological significance of the “English-plus” multilingual policies of institutions in relation to the “complete linguistic repertoire of a specific higher education site” (Dafouz & Smit, 2014, pp. 404-405). While this description is wide enough to encompass the complex situation at the Medical School as well, it is important to highlight the roles of Hungarian in the research.

Clearly, the situation imposes immense challenges on the international students. In a conversation in June 2016, Bernadett Potos, the registrar of the Medical School, claimed that the overall dropout rate of SA students at the English program of the Medical School of the University of Pécs is around 90%. The SA students of the English program come to Hungary to study health sciences (general medicine, pharmacy, or dentistry at UP), which is already considered to be among the most demanding paths a student can choose. Studying in an English Medium Education program, exacerbates the challenge as English is rarely the students’ first language (L1). But besides having to navigate life in a foreign country, and an English medium medical education, they are also expected to, by the end of the second academic year, be able to take a medical history in Hungarian - a language they, most of the time, had little to no contact with before starting their studies in Pécs.

Additional challenges facing these SA students include having to form temporary communities of practice with peers from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds whereas having to navigate the unknown environment of a SA setting at a time when they are forging new identities as competent healthcare professionals. Not all students finish their education at the University of Pécs, and most of them have no intention of starting to work as doctors in Hungary. Many of them consider Hungary only as a temporary place of residence until they graduate from the UP or can transfer to another university in the country they consider their final destination or home.

One of my experiences as a language teacher of these SA students was that amidst these turbulences, they rarely espouse a language learner identity, which might adversely affect their SA experience in Hungary, their English and Hungarian language learning outcomes, and even the maintenance of their motivation. The research into the personal narratives of some of these SA students intends to discover the impact of SA on identity construction.

## **3.2. THE PILOT STUDY**

### ***3.2.1. CONTEXT***

My research started with a pilot study, published in Krommer (2019), with the aim to investigate the accounts of first and second-year medical students on their experiences and feelings. By identifying the emergent themes in these accounts, the pilot aimed to explore the factors influencing study abroad students' experiences at the Medical School. In this section, I describe the pilot study as it greatly influenced the research design of the current study, and it probably affected my evaluation of the present data as well.

### ***3.2.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

The pilot study investigated the experiences and feelings of first- and second-year study abroad medical students through qualitative context analysis of their accounts. In exploring the factors influencing SA students' experiences, the pilot study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What emerging themes can be identified in participants' personal accounts?

2. To what extent do these emerging themes correspond to factors identified by SA research (e.g., involvement with the host culture, social networks, meaningful interaction, learning contexts, length of stay)?

3. How do these emerging themes relate to the participants' Motivational Self System?

### ***3.2.3. PARTICIPANTS***

30 study abroad students participated in the pilot. Five of them were second-year students at the Faculty of Medicine; nine were first-year students at the same faculty. Sixteen participants were first-year students of the Faculty of Pharmacy. The participants formed a convenience sample, as they were all students in my Medical Hungarian classes, and the accounts were collected in class. The participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds. Fifteen of the 16 first-year pharmacy students were Iranian, the 16th being from Jordan. Three second-year medical students were Norwegian; the other two second-year students came from South Korea and Jordan. Five of the first-year medical students were from Jordan, making it the second most numerous nationality in the sample. Of the remaining four, two were Nigerian, one Turkish, and one Japanese.

### ***3.2.4. DATA COLLECTING INSTRUMENTS***

Participants were asked to write a “one-page story” about their experiences and feelings as foreign students at Pécs. They were instructed to write about something that happened to them, or something that they did and make it a concrete story. The intention of the researcher was to elicit “topically centered and temporally organized” discrete units of discourse (Riessman, 2008, p.5), although some participants chose to write about their feeling and experiences in

more general terms or to include short descriptions of several events. The data collection took place between 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 2016 in Pécs.

### **3.2.5. PROCEDURE**

The accounts were analysed using a data-driven and inductive approach (Boyatzis, 1998). The themes were identified after careful reading and rereading of the data, over two cycles of coding. In the first cycle of coding, descriptive codes were assigned to the data (Saldana, 2009). These codes identify specific themes, forming a rough outline of preliminary thematic categories. The resulting codes were then categorized following the recommendations of Saldana (2009) for Focused coding in the second cycle of coding. Focused coding was used to search for “the most frequent or significant Initial Codes” to develop salient categories (Saldana, 2009, p. 155).

### **3.2.6 RESULTS**

In the pilot study, seven salient, emergent themes were identified after two cycles of coding 30 participants’ personal narratives. The seven themes identified in order of frequency were SA motivation (present in 17 texts), intercultural adjustment (16), communication difficulties (13), social networks and support (13), evaluation of Hungarians (12), Hungarians’ English skills (7), and the Evaluation of the Hungarian language (6).

Table 3.

*Frequency counts of the emergent themes in the pilot study*

| Emergent theme | Frequency count |
|----------------|-----------------|
| SA motivation  | 17              |

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Intercultural adjustment             | 16 |
| Communication difficulties           | 13 |
| Social networks and support          | 13 |
| Evaluation of Hungarians             | 12 |
| Hungarians' English skills           | 7  |
| Evaluation of the Hungarian language | 6  |

In the category SA motivation, I included all mentions about possible reasons or benefits of a study abroad experience. Of the seventeen texts that had this theme, eight mentioned a motivation to study Hungarian. For two students, the motivation to study Hungarian comes from a desire to make Hungarian friends, as they thought that developing a social network that includes members of the host culture would improve their study abroad experience. Three students mentioned that they would like to be able to speak Hungarian, as it would be useful in their academic studies. Gaining independence was another source of study abroad motivation for four participants of the pilot study, however two students felt that their study abroad context is a hindrance in the performance of their selves. For one of them the problem derived from what she viewed as possible in her new environment: she used to play in a band and felt unable to do so in Pécs. Another student viewed herself as a competent professional, and was frustrated by the fact, that she was not able to transfer her Iranian credits to Pécs, therefore had to attend classes she viewed beneath her needs.

Mentions of culture shock and initial anxiety upon arrival were recurrent. In some cases, the perceived differences and unfulfilled expectations had an alienating effect on the students and resulted in contact avoidance. However, the narratives rarely contained concrete examples of differences between the participants' native and the local Hungarian customs. They rather fell back on more generalized statements about Hungary and their native countries that were

“completely different.” The participants also often evaluated Hungarians; however, their evaluation was diverse. In seven cases, they expressed negative attitudes towards members of the host culture as “slow,” “rude,” “impolite,” or so unwilling to communicate with SA students that they would even “lie themselves out” from such situations. In two cases, the participants even articulated how the negative attitudes towards them they perceived from Hungarians have contributed to their growing seclusion from the host culture. One does not have to think hard to connect such results to Norton and McKinney’s (2011) point on how participation in a target language community is often contested. According to Norton and McKinney, an identity approach to SLA highlights the fact that learning takes place in specific sociocultural contexts, where newcomers are allowed legitimate peripheral participation in the social practices of the target language community (2011, pp. 79-80). A Turkish student who was initially intrigued to learn about Hungarians and expressed motivation to achieve participation in the host culture, after she overheard Hungarian restaurant staff talk about her using swear words she was familiar with, she gave up this ambition. The negative attitudes she experienced led her to conclude that she is not allowed legitimate participation, which decreased her motivation and willingness to communicate, and ultimately left her with a social network that does not provide any Hungarian input. On the other hand, five participants used more positive expressions to describe Hungarians, such as “welcoming”, and “nice,” even if these evaluations were vague and lacked description.

Only two personal narratives referred to attempted communication with members of the host culture in Hungarian. Of the remaining eleven stories where communication difficulties were mentioned, eight explicitly mentioned that the difficulty took place in English, and further three probably involved using the English language. In one case, the communication difficulty took place on the first day of the student’s stay in Pécs, making it very likely that the exchange took place in English. In another case, the student wrote about how language issues made her

studies more difficult, and since except for the Medical Hungarian classes, the Medical School is an English medium university setting for the study abroad students, it is reasonable to infer that her difficulties were related to her unsatisfactory English proficiency.

In one case, the participant's lack of Hungarian proficiency was a clear hindrance towards the performance of a medical identity. He had an encounter with one of his neighbours, an elderly lady, in their apartment building's elevator. The woman recognised him as a medical student and initiated a conversation about her ailments.

I answered with yes, then she kept talking but what I mostly understand that she has heart problems plus allergy and suddenly she started crying and didn't know what the main point or what she really need, I hugged her and told her to get well soon, if she need any help I'm here all the time. (Laith, a second-year Jordanian student, in narrative composition)

The participant, according to his text, only managed to pick up a few expressions he remembered from medical language classes but was unable to provide medical advice. This seems to have been a motivating incident for him, as he ended the text by stating his intention to renew his efforts to learn Hungarian to be able to "deal with patient and society more and more." In his case, the Hungarian interlocutor expected the performance of a medical identity" articulated in social action" (Foley, 1999 as cited in Kramsch, 2009, p. 124), seemingly triggering the recognition of an Ought-to self motivating factor. Newly discovered or reinforced motivation towards language acquisition was mentioned several times in the personal narratives. However, I cannot rule out the possibility that data collection taking place in a language classroom might have influenced the participants. Moreover, none of the received texts contained details about how this motivation translated into the effort or stories about how communicative difficulties have been overcome.

On a related note, participants often mentioned the lack of English proficiency among Hungarians and expressed their feelings and opinions of the Hungarian language. In all but one

case when the Hungarian language was mentioned, the participants pointed out that they found the language difficult. They even went as far as calling it one of the world's hardest languages - a common point raised about the language on online platforms, illustrating perhaps how the expectancy-value of achievement (Atkinson, 1957) attributed to the Hungarian language inhibits students' motivation. There was no consensus about the usefulness of the language, with one participant claiming that she likes German better, "because it is more useful in Europe," whereas another participant noted that Hungarian "really useful for us" "because we are alone here," presumably revealing different levels of investment (Norton-Peirce, 1995) in the Hungarian language. The last participant's assertion about the usefulness of the Hungarian language stemming from a need for self-reliance in a foreign country is connected to remarks about Hungarians' lack of English proficiency. Participants often blamed this perceived lack of English proficiency or their unwillingness to communicate in English for their communication difficulties. One of them wrote about how even though she thought her landlady was nice, and her landlady's son usually translated for them, she ultimately moved to another rental, where her new landlord is fluent in English.

Finally, and as a result, only one participant wrote about having Hungarian friends. Thirteen of the 30 texts contained information about the participants' social networks developed in Pécs, and some of them mentioned their contacts with Hungarian landlords, neighbours or the support received from the university staff. Mentions of the complex social networks developed with other SA students were more common. This fact confirms the assumption that for the SA student, the Medical School is an English-medium university in a multilingual setting. The participants were exposed to the cultures, languages and customs of other SA students through these complex social networks, whereas the host culture and language remained alien to them.



All in all, the pilot study concluded that the participants were exposed to very little meaningful Hungarian input, so they did not develop a Hungarian speaking Ideal or Ought-to-Self (Dörnyei, 2009). Moreover, their investment in the Hungarian language was very low. The study revealed the need for further collection of more varied data to understand SA students' lived realities at the Medical School better. Of the 30 participants, eight mentioned explicitly that they would like to study Hungarian, mostly in the hope of making Hungarian friends or because they thought that Hungarian proficiency would become useful later. Four students mentioned that being an SA student in Pécs helped them become more independent and self-reliant, and in this sense, changed their identities. Two participants felt, however, that the SA context had been a hindrance to the performance of their selves. For example, an Iranian student, who already viewed herself as a competent professional due to her previous studies and qualifications, was frustrated for having to attend class with students years younger than her.

### **3.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What aspects of identity construction manifest in students' written life experience narratives?
- 2) How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students' identity construction?
- 3) How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students' agency construction?
- 4) How do SA students construct the image of the training institution in narrative?

- 5) What are the implications of the present narrative study for the educational institution?

### 3.4. PARTICIPANTS

I consider the study to consist of two parts: a qualitative content analysis of study abroad students personal accounts to identify aspects of identity construction; and an investigation of semi-structured interviews. For the first part of the study, 157 first- and second-year international students in the English program of the Medical School were asked to write a passage about how their lives became different as international students in Pécs. One hundred thirty-three of them decided to provide an account. The informants of the personal accounts data were selected through cluster sampling. I asked my colleagues to distribute the prompts in their language classes, and each member of the classes was asked to respond. The data collection took place between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, 2019. The 133 responses represent roughly half of the students involved in our language classes at any given semester.

The average length of stay of the participants in Pécs was 1.79 calendar years, in other words, more than three academic semesters, with the shortest length of stay being half a year and the longest five and a half. Table 1 shows the self-reported nationality of participants.

Table 4.

*Self-reported nationality of participants*

| <b>Nationality</b> | <b>No. of participants</b> | <b>Nationality</b> | <b>No. of participants</b> |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| American           | 3                          | Nigerian           | 2                          |
| Belgian            | 1                          | Norwegian          | 38                         |

|                     |    |                     |   |
|---------------------|----|---------------------|---|
| Canadian            | 1  | Norwegian-French    | 1 |
| Chinese             | 10 | Norwegian-Hungarian | 1 |
| English             | 1  | Spanish             | 2 |
| German              | 3  | Swedish             | 1 |
| Indian              | 1  | Swiss-Turkish       | 1 |
| Iranian             | 24 | Taiwanese           | 1 |
| Israel              | 1  | Turkish             | 7 |
| Japanese            | 10 | Vietnamese          | 3 |
| Jordanian           | 6  |                     |   |
| Korean/South-Korean | 13 | No data             | 2 |

The participants were of 22 nationalities. The highest number of participants were Norwegians. In fact, besides the 38 participants who gave Norwegian as their nationality, one identified himself as Norwegian-French and one as Norwegian-Hungarian. The second most numerous nationality was Iranian with 24, and the third one South-Korean with 13. There were 10 Chinese and 10 Japanese participants, 7 Turkish and one Swiss-Turkish, and 6 Jordanian. Of German, American and Vietnamese students, there were three of each among the participants. Besides two Spanish participants, the following nationalities were represented by 1 participant each: Belgian, Canadian, English, Indian, Israel, Swedish, Taiwanese. Two

participants did not provide their nationalities. One hundred and seven participants attended the faculty of General Medicine, 17 were Dentistry students, and nine were students of pharmacy. Even as their medical studies focus on different fields of medicine, the Hungarian classes of these students follow a similar plan. They are offered four Medical Hungarian classes in the first four semesters, and they are expected to take a Medical Hungarian final exam by the end of the second year. The Medical Hungarian final exam simulates professional encounters between healthcare providers and clients.

Three of the interviewees, Emma, Nora and Jacob (pseudonyms) came from Norway. Two of them, Emma and Jacob arrived in Pécs as second-year students after they finished their first year in Bjorkness, Norway. For Emma, this was in 2016, 3,5 years before her interview, and Jacob arrived before the fall semester of 2017. Nora also arrived in 2016, but unlike Emma, she started her tertiary education in Pécs. Aiza, a Swedish student of Urdu ancestry, had been a student of the University of Pécs since 2015, for 4,5 years when her interview took place. Alim, an Uyghur student who arrived in Pécs via Sweden has been an SA student in Pécs since the fall of 2016 as well. All five students mentioned so far have been students of General Medicine of the English Program of the Faculty of Medicine.

### **3.5 PROCEDURES**

The study builds on the combined analysis of written accounts and interview data collected from SA students at the Medical School. It aims to explore the interplay between identities, social networks, and motivation in students' lived experiences by investigating the emergent themes in the datasets.

Table 5.

*Outline of the research*

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research questions</b>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| RQ1                                  | What aspects of identity construction manifest in students' written life experience narratives?                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| RQ2                                  | How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students' identity construction?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| RQ3                                  | How does social network membership impact SA healthcare students' agency construction?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| RQ4                                  | How do SA students construct the image of the training institution in narrative?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| RQ5                                  | What are the implications of the present narrative study for the educational institution?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>First round of research</b>       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Data collection of written accounts: | February 6 and 14, 2019                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Participants:                        | 133 first- and second-year SA students at UPMS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Data collection instrument:          | A prompt reading "Please write a passage about how your life became different as a foreign student at Pécs. Think about a memorable event or events in your life – something you did or something that happened to you – when this was particularly strongly felt. Be as concrete and descriptive in your story as you can." |
| Data analysis method:                | Thematic analysis following two cycles of coding which resulted in descriptive codes and salient categories of the aspects of identity construction                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Second round of the research</b>  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Data collection of the interviews:   | February 5 and 18, 2020                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Participants:                        | Five SA students at UPMS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Data collection instrument:          | A semi-structured interview (Appendix B) based on the salient categories identified in the personal accounts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Data analysis method:                | Thematic analysis focusing on the aspects of identity construction identified in the personal accounts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

### 3.5.1. DATA COLLECTION

The first round of data collection took place between February 6 and 14, 2019, at the University of Pécs. The prompts were administered by my colleagues at the Department of Languages. The participants were instructed to write a passage about how their life became different as a result of their study abroad experience (Appendix A). They were asked to “think about a memorable event or events”, “something you did or something that happened to you” when they felt this change particularly strongly. The prompt also reminded the participants to be concrete and descriptive. The prompt wording was decided for the pilot and the study after a previous version failed to motivate students to produce personal. The full prompt read as

Please write a passage about how your life became different as a foreign student at Pécs. Think about a memorable *event or events* in your life – something you did or something that happened to you – when this was *particularly strongly felt*. Be as concrete and descriptive in your story as you can.

I intended to elicit “topically centered and temporally organized” discrete units of discourse (Riessman, 2008, p.5), although some participants chose to write about their feelings and experiences in more general terms or to include short descriptions of several events. The identities of participants were concealed according to the research ethics of qualitative fieldwork. I will refer to my informants by an ordinal number that merely reflects the random order in which the accounts were coded.

In the second round, five semi-structured interviews were conducted between February 5 and 18, 2020, at the University of Pécs. I selected the respondents of the interview project through convenience sampling. I asked 51 of my former students in an email sent on 20/01/2019 “to sit down with me for an interview, where we could talk some more about you and your life in Hungary.” Of the 14 students who answered positively, three later decided to sign up for

additional language classes with me, and decided not to sit down for an interview after all, and four were not available the week the interviews took place. The interviews took place in my office between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020. They were recorded on the audio recorder app of my phone. The participants were informed of the recording and were told that the interviews are going to be used for research purposes. They were given and they signed informed consent forms. The five interviewees sat down with me individually, however one of them showed up with a visiting German friend on the day of the interview, so she also attended the conversation. All interviews took place in my office. I conducted the interviews in English, the interviewees L2 and the language of instruction at the university, out of necessity, as I do not speak any of the participants' L1s, and none of the participants felt comfortable conducting the interviews in Hungarian. I used a written set of questions for the interviews that I compiled on the basis of the emergent themes identified in the first dataset of the study: in the personal narratives. However, following Mackey and Gass's (2015, pp. 225) recommendation, these questions were used flexibly and mostly as a guide, whereas the topics raised by the participants during the interviews were probed for more information. The shortest interview took 37 minutes, the longest 50. Consequently, the interviews were transcribed into individual word documents. Both the personal accounts and the interviews contain language mistakes, which were not corrected or edited.

Table 6

*Interview details*

| Date       | Length (in minutes and seconds) | Interviewees |
|------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| 05.02.2020 | 47:03                           | Alim         |
| 06.02.2020 | 44:27                           | Nora         |
| 07.02.2020 | 50:47                           | Emma         |

|            |       |       |
|------------|-------|-------|
| 10.02.2020 | 42:19 | Jacob |
| 18.02.2020 | 37:36 | Aiza  |

Murray (2003) claims that interviews are “the primary means of obtaining narrative accounts” (p. 101). He adds that often researchers discourage interviewees to indulge in narrative storytelling, as they prefer to keep to the plan they have plotted for the interview, and the more concrete answers they expect for their predetermined questions. Murray offered two alternate approaches to data collection via interviews, which he called life history and episodic interviews (p. 103). In both cases, the interviewer tries to collect narrative accounts, and in fact encourages the participants to produce detailed stories of their experiences. The interviewer in these situations needs to be empathic, supportive and reflexive (pp. 102-103), the “participants need to feel that their stories are deeply valued” (p. 102). The main difference between life history and episodic interviews is the broadness of their focus. Whereas in life history interviews, the focus is a “particular broad area of experience,” in episodic interviews the researcher introduces a “structured series of topics” and “seeks detailed narrative accounts about the participants’ experiences with these topics” (p. 103).

The episodic interview structure serves two functions that a life history interview might not fulfill in this research. Namely, that the participants of this research have significantly different cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds and, even more importantly, their English proficiency is of notably different levels. On the one hand, interviewees in episodic interviews are less expected to function autonomously in a second language, making the interview less strenuous for participants not yet fluent in English. On the other hand, with the episodic interview structure the researcher can ensure that all the same topics will be touched upon in all interviews, making the collected data more comparable.



One of the hardships for what Murray (2003) dubbed the episodic interview is finding the right topics, as they need to be relatable for the participants and they also need to prompt the telling of narratives. Since I personally cannot utilise my own experiences, as I am neither a medical professional, nor have I been an international student for an extended period of time, I decided to turn to the international students currently in the process of becoming medical professionals for topics. The topics of the episodic interviews will be based on the emergent themes identified in the personal narratives elicited in the first round of data collection. This will ensure that the topics of the interviews are not only relevant for the research but are also close to the experiences of the participants.

I started the research by collecting personal accounts from 133 students to identify salient categories and relevant themes in the accounts, which would, in turn, guide me in devising the questions for the semi-structured interviews. As Murray (2003, p. 103) pointed out, whereas interviews are perhaps the most commonly used tool to obtain narrative accounts, interviewers often prefer to keep the plan they have plotted for the interview. I was determined not to railroad the interviewees by influencing them with my questions, but as a novice, I did not feel entirely confident in my ability to follow the interviewees' lead and also keep the interview germane to my interests. This structure of first identifying emerging themes in personal accounts and then conducting the interviews was devised to ensure that the interviews yield responses meaningful and relevant to the participants and the study as well.

The interview questions (Appendix B) asked about five topics: the participants' experiences and feelings concerning Hungarians and the Hungarian language, communication difficulties experienced during the SA, intercultural adjustments and culture shock, the participants' social networks in Pécs, and the participants' self-analysis.

### **3.5.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

The purpose of the study is to examine how students of the Medical School construct their professional identities as medical professionals through their lived experiences as medical students in Pécs, and how their willingness to communicate and general motivation to learn languages is affected by this process of identity construction. The various texts of narrative accounts and interview transcriptions, collected for the purposes of the research, were subject to qualitative content analysis. “This type of analysis follows the very generalized sequence of coding for themes, looking for patterns, making interpretations, and building theory” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 246). As I am most interested in how they become a multilingual medical professional and in the influence languages and cultures have on professional identity constructions, it seemed necessary to focus the analysis on narratives. “This is because conceptual narrativity is defined by temporality, spatiality, and emplotment, as well as relationality and historicity” (Somers, 1994, p. 16); therefore, narrative analysis looks at identities through the lens of time, space and analytical relationality (p. 17).

Both the narrative data and the interviews were coded, after careful reading and rereading, first with descriptive codes (Saldana, 2009, pp. 70-73), which were then categorised into salient themes. I employed a content analysis approach. The analysis of the data was thematic. Instead of focusing on “how”, “to whom”, or “why” certain things were said, all of which are valid foci for research purposes, my main interest lay in “what” was said. The research thus highlighted the shared main themes in the data, according to what was the most prevalent for the participants, as they considered their experiences as study abroad students in Pécs. These shared themes connect the individual participants to a larger group of SA students and reveal the commonalities and dissimilarities of their accounts.

To further elaborate on this topic, through the example of two personal narratives, I will demonstrate the coding of the data.

### 3.5.2.1 JANA'S PERSONAL NARRATIVE.

Table 7

*The written account of participant no. 5. (collected in writing on February 08, 2019).*

| No. of line | Text                                                                                                                                | Code                                 |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1           | Hungary taught me how to rely on myself.                                                                                            | Identity – self reliant              |
| 2           | During my time abroad, the responsibility I gained here would taken me more time to gain it back there in Jordan                    | Identity – self reliant              |
| 3           | I'm more open to choices by myself too.                                                                                             | Identity – open minded               |
| 4           | The culture difference wasn't a problem at all,                                                                                     |                                      |
| 5           | I liked how they like celebrating certain days here,                                                                                | Hungary - Interesting events         |
| 6           | the events are a bit different that what I used to                                                                                  | Hungary - Interesting events         |
| 7           | but they are all great.                                                                                                             | Hungary - Interesting events         |
| 8           | I've had a really shent nice story,                                                                                                 |                                      |
| 9           | tho all what I've heard about hungarians of not liking people coming from other countries,                                          | Hungarians – negative preconceptions |
| 10          | especially some people were exposed to some racist situation,                                                                       | Hungarians – negative preconceptions |
| 11          | but as I always say those are just the fewest in each country you can find                                                          | Hungarians – negative preconceptions |
| 12          | so the story was when I came here in the first weeks, I was on my way from the Medical School to Kórház to have my hungarian class, |                                      |
| 13          | I needed help                                                                                                                       | Identity – self reliant              |
| 14          | since I didn't know where is everything in Pécs                                                                                     |                                      |

|           |                                                                             |                               |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>15</b> | so I saw a young hungarian lady in front of the bus station of Petőfi utca, |                               |
| <b>16</b> | I asked her how can I walk to Kórház,                                       |                               |
| <b>17</b> | the beautiful thing she did is that she was on her way to her work          | Hungarians – can be nice      |
| <b>18</b> | but she didn't take the bus but rather she walked with me,                  | Hungarians – can be nice      |
| <b>19</b> | leading me to Kórház, specifically to the class that I had,                 |                               |
| <b>20</b> | we're friends now,                                                          | Friendship – with a Hungarian |
| <b>21</b> | and I think she shows how nice people can be here.                          | Hungarians – can be nice      |

Following Saldana's coding system (2009, pp. 70-73), after multiple careful readings of the text, the following descriptive codes and subcodes were assigned to the text: Friendship - with a Hungarian (line 20); Hungary - interesting events (lines 5-7); Hungarians - negative preconceptions (lines 9-10); Hungarians - can be nice (lines 17-18, 21); Identity – self-reliant (lines 1-2, 13); and Identity - open-minded (line 3). These descriptive codes were added to the full list of descriptive codes identified in the narratives, to serve as an inventory of the narratives' content. In the second cycle of coding, the full list of descriptive codes were considered in developing “the most salient categories” (Saldana, 2009, p. 155) in the context of the research. The first cycle codes found in Jana's text were grouped into one of three salient categories, resulting in the following second cycle codes:

DEVELOPING SOCIAL NETWORKS: Friendship - with a Hungarian

EVALUATING THE SA CONTEXT: Hungary - interesting events  
Hungarians - negative preconceptions  
Hungarians - can be nice

SELF-EVALUATION: Identity - self-reliant  
Identity - open-minded

Jana, a first-year Jordanian student felt that the main benefit of her SA experience was how it helped her develop self-reliance, become more open-minded, and she writes about her initial preconceptions of Hungarians, her consequent evaluation of them, and her text contains a short description of how she met and became friends with a Hungarian. After two rounds of coding, the three emergent themes identified in this text were Social networks and support, SA context, and Self-evaluation.

She starts the text (lines 1-2) by asserting that back in Jordan it would have taken her more time to become responsible for herself and her choices. This assertion suggests that she sees the process of becoming more independent as a struggle for young people in her society, that takes time and effort, but also that it is - at least for her - a natural and inevitable result of growing up. As Erikson (1968) pointed out, adolescence and early adulthood are often times of identity crisis, as people have to take on new roles and responsibilities. When she states that “I’m more open to choices by myself too,” it points towards her views of how her role in society is changing based on her SA experiences.

She is aware and welcoming of all the differences she noticed in her new environment, especially around holidays and events (lines 3-5), which indicates her being what Norton (2013) would call being invested in the social practices of her host community. However, she also alludes to her preconceptions about members of the host community (lines 9-10), and to stories she heard about the experiences of other SA students in Hungary. She has a positive attitude towards Hungarians and explains away the stories of Hungarians’ xenophobia and racism as not being representative of the general population (line 11). Despite the negative stories she heard, her international posture (Yashima, 2009) is high.

She follows up this statement with a story of how she asked for directions from a Hungarian woman (lines 12-21). The story took place at the beginning of her stay in Pécs. She needed help getting from one class to another since the various locations of the Medical School are spread out in Pécs. On her way, she decided to ask for directions. Given how she first wrote about her negative preconceptions she might have expected a negative answer, or perhaps an unfriendly, begrudgingly given answer. Instead, the “young hungarian lady” walked her to her classroom. Jana closes the narrative with a short postscript stating that they are now friends and that she considers this a rebuttal of the negative opinions she initially heard about Hungarians, and a testament of “how nice people can be” (line 21).

Additionally, it is important to point out that Jana’s effortless use of the names of the various places (lines 10, 13, 14, 17) as she code mixes Hungarian nouns in her story. This shows how familiar she has become with the area of the city where the story took place. Another point to make is about the relationship between the prompt and the personal narrative. The prompt specifically asks for a story in as much detail as possible; this point illustrates how Jana’s SA experiences differ from her previous experiences. She starts her text on a general statements about how the experience affected her identity and sense of self. Jana displays a certainty in what Neisser (1988) calls self-knowledge, especially as it relates to her conceptual self. The story she eventually elects to tell is a rebuttal of the opinions and stories she heard about Hungarians, and a confirmation of her openness towards members of the host community, despite her preconceptions. The story primarily serves as an illustration of the conceptual self she defined in the first sentences of the account when she positioned herself as an open-minded individual, someone who is willing to communicate and take risks.

Her story of being lost in Pécs, reaching out for help to a Hungarian, and finally becoming friends with said Hungarian girl was also a logical response to the prompt’s inquiry

when her new position as an SA student was particularly strongly felt, illustrating Hall and Bucholtz's point that identity emerges in interaction (2010, p. 19).

### 3.5.2.2 RIN'S PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Table 8

*The written account of participant no. 18. (collected in writing on February 07, 2019).*

| No. of line | Text                                                     | Code                          |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1           | My life style have changed..                             |                               |
| 2           | The biggest change was food.                             | Food -negative experiences    |
| 3           | I usually didn't eat bread and food containing flour     | Food -negative experiences    |
| 4           | but in Hungary there is lots of flour containing food    | Food -negative experiences    |
| 5           | and sometimes I feel sick about those food.              | Food -negative experiences    |
| 6           | That's why I try not to eat them.                        | Food -negative experiences    |
| 7           | This is bad change,                                      |                               |
| 8           | but I have also good change in my life.                  |                               |
| 9           | I can communicate with lots of other countries students. | Friendships - SA students     |
| 10          | At first I felt alone and I wanted to go back my country | Loneliness                    |
| 11          | but now I am very happy to spend with friends            | Friendships - SA students     |
| 12          | and Hungarian is kind.                                   | Hungarians - nice and helpful |
| 13          | When I lost the way some young guys told me the way      | Hungarians - nice and helpful |
| 14          | and professors are also very kind.                       | Hungarians - nice and helpful |
| 15          | I am not good at English                                 | Communication difficulties    |
| 16          | so I have lots of question in the class                  | Communication difficulties    |

|    |                                        |                             |
|----|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 17 | and I asked many questions             |                             |
| 18 | but they always answer to my question. |                             |
| 19 | And I started to go many place alone.  | Attribute - outgoing person |
| 20 | When I was in Japan I didn't do that.  | Attribute - outgoing person |
| 21 | I don't know the reason                |                             |
| 22 | but I became going outside more.       |                             |

In the first cycle of coding the following descriptive codes and subcodes were assigned to the text: Food - negative experiences (lines 2-6); Loneliness (line 10); Friendships - SA students (lines 9, 11); Communication difficulties (lines 15-16); Hungarians - nice and helpful (lines 12-14); Attribute - outgoing person (lines 19-20). In the second cycle of coding these descriptive codes were determined to belong to the following salient categories:

|                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| DEVELOPING SOCIAL NETWORKS:  | Friendships - SA students     |
| ADJUSTING TO THE SA CONTEXT: | Food - negative experiences   |
|                              | Loneliness                    |
| COMMUNICATION                | Communication difficulties    |
| EVALUATING THE SA CONTEXT:   | Hungarians - nice and helpful |
| SELF-EVALUATION:             | Attribute - outgoing person   |

Rin, a second-year Japanese SA student of General Medicine started her text with a statement that serves as a direct response to the prompt: “My life style have changed” (line 1). For Rin, the biggest change that occurred in her life since she became an SA student seems to be negative (lines 2-7). First, the food she has the easiest access to in Hungary is very different



from what she was used to back home. Second, just the difficulty of adjusting to a new and unusual cuisine, she feels that this new diet makes her feel sick sometimes. It is unclear if this is a sign of legitimate health issues or a low level of Openness to Experience (Ghonsooly et al., 2012) anything Hungarian.

She contrasts her negative experiences concerning the food available in Hungary with her success in communicating and building friendships with other SA students (lines 9-11). Rin mentions that this state of affairs took some time to develop and that she had to contend with feeling alone and homesick at the beginning of her SA. Being able to develop a social network was the key to turning her experience into a positive one. The positive effect that the ability to develop a social network had on Rin's attitude towards the SA is in line with Isabelli-Garcia's (2006) findings on the relationship between SA students' motivation, attitude towards the host culture, and the strength of social networks. Rin does not specify who the members of her social network are, but the throwaway mention of "Hungarian is kind" (line 12) points towards a complex social network that might also include some members of the host culture. However, a more likely interpretation links this statement about Hungarians' niceness not to her previous point regarding her social network of friends but the next two examples demonstrating this niceness (lines 13-18). She mentions a concrete event of being lost and reaching out for help to "some young guys," and the repeat occurrence of asking many questions in class due to her low levels of English proficiency and receiving patient answers.

Interestingly, research has demonstrated that there is a statistically significant, positive correlation between students' International Posture and Openness to Experience (Ghonsooly et al., 2012), however in Rin's case, her aversion towards Hungarian food is paired with her positive attitude towards Hungarians, and her enthusiasm about being able to communicate with "lots of other countries students."

Rin closes her text by turning back to her original point about how her lifestyle has changed in Pécs (lines 19-22), and how she has become a more outgoing person than she was in Japan, and how unlike what she used to do in Japan, she is more willing to go out alone. Similar to Jana in the previous example, Rin also demonstrates a high level of self-knowledge about her conceptual self.

These two examples were meant to demonstrate the procedure with which the 133 personal accounts were analyzed. The results of the analysis are presented in chapter four.

### **3.6 VALIDITY, CREDIBILITY, AUTHENTICITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS**

External validity is problematic to establish in any qualitative study that involves the thick description and content analysis of personal narratives. The two-step structure of the study was designed not to ensure external validity but to establish particularization. Van Lier (2005) defines particularization as using the insights drawn from qualitative research to inform, adapt to, and “provide comparative information to a wide variety of other cases, so long as one is careful to take contextual differences into account” (p. 198). In line with this definition, I do not claim that the results are generalisable. However, by first identifying emergent themes in a high number of personal narratives and then conducting semi-structured interviews based on these emergent themes, hopefully, particularization was achieved.

Dörnyei (2007, p. 49) claims that as the relevance of validity is disputed in the case of qualitative research, the alternative measure trustworthiness have been proposed for the purposes of qualitative research. A study’s trustworthiness can be developed through five criteria: credibility, authenticity, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Cope, 2013, p. 89). The multiple sources of data, such as the personal accounts and the semi-structured interviews, enhance the credibility of the study. Authenticity was ensured through

the capture of individual differences and thick description of the participants study abroad experiences and their different realities. Dependability was established by the large amount of data included. Identifying emergent themes in 133 personal accounts and including six semi-structured interviews in the study enhanced dependability. Confirmability was demonstrated by describing, in detail, how conclusions and interpretations were established. Transferability of the study established if the “readers can associate the results with their own experiences” (Cope, 2013, p. 89). However, since generalizability outside of the context of the Medical School was never my intent for the study, I view the criteria of transferability as irrelevant.

Researcher bias cannot be ruled out entirely, although as Cresswell (2008) noted that a researcher’s understanding of the context of the research through personal experience enhances “awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to many of the challenges, decisions and issues encountered” (p. 196) by the participants. The researcher himself has been an SA student, and has been the instructor of the participants in previous Medical Hungarian and Clinical Hungarian classes. This familiarity with the participants and the context will hopefully make it possible to establish an emic perspective, which Dörnyei claims to have a “special place in the qualitative credo” as “it is only the participants themselves who can reveal the meanings and interpretations of their experiences and actions” (2007, p. 38).

To ensure an ethical approach towards the research subjects, the anonymity of all participants was guaranteed by using sequential numbers in the case of personal accounts and pseudonyms for the interviewees.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ASPECTS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN SA MEDICAL STUDENTS' ACCOUNTS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the preceding chapters, I concluded that language learning in general, and study abroad language learning in particular, involve significant self-development and identity negotiation in social interaction. Students' international posture and motivation are factors in this process, but they are also influenced by it. In Chapter two, I explained that one of the most reliable predictors of SA language learning success is the complex network that a student was able to build involving members of the host culture as well. Students' subject positioning and the identities they claimed for themselves or were expected to take up, as well as their willingness to communicate and L2 motivation are in strong reciprocal relationship with their social networking success or failure.

In this chapter, I will present the emergent themes identified in the 133 personal narratives collected in February of 2019. The aim is to answer the first research question, namely: what aspects of identity construction manifest in students' written life experience narratives? I will also show how students negotiate and construct their narrative agency while establishing the links between identity, social networking, and SA L2 outcomes. I will analyse the emergent themes identified in the personal narratives as aspects of identity construction. In sections 4.3 - 4.7 the five identified aspects, SELF-EVALUATION, EVALUATION OF THE SA CONTEXT, ADJUSTING TO THE SA CONTEXT, SOCIAL NETWORKS, and COMMUNICATION will be presented separately, with a description of the aspects as they are understood on the basis of the narratives. I will write about them in the order of how often they were mentioned by the 133 students, starting with the most frequently identified salient

category. The frequencies of the emergent themes and descriptive codes are presented in table 9.

Table 9

*A list of emergent themes and descriptive codes identified in participants' accounts*

| <b>Emergent themes</b>           | <b>Descriptive code</b> | <b>Subcode</b>       | <b>Participant no. whose narrative contains the code</b> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Adjusting to the SA context (72) | Costums                 |                      | 6, 17, 19, 21, 36, 41, 79, 147, 148                      |
|                                  | Acclimatization         | process              | 69, 90                                                   |
|                                  | Acclimatization         | to costums           | 147, 152                                                 |
|                                  | Acclimatization         | difficulty           | 76                                                       |
|                                  | Acclimatization         | acceptance           | 9, 154                                                   |
|                                  | Comfort                 |                      | 57, 58, 67                                               |
|                                  | Food                    |                      | 27, 68                                                   |
|                                  | Food                    | negative experiences | 18                                                       |
|                                  | Friendship              | helping              | 1, 130                                                   |
|                                  | Friendships             | SA community         | 38, 59, 89                                               |
|                                  | Goals                   | changing             | 73, 125                                                  |
|                                  | Homesickness            |                      | 11, 13, 25, 42, 59, 60, 84, 93, 128, 148                 |
|                                  | International Evening   |                      | 68, 121, 123                                             |
|                                  | Loneliness              |                      | 18, 42, 77, 91, 138, 151                                 |

|                    |                |              |                                                  |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|                    | New experience |              | 9, 11, 21, 47                                    |
|                    | Pécs           |              | 1, 4, 16, 152                                    |
|                    | Pet            |              | 4                                                |
|                    | No adjustment  |              | 15, 36, 37, 74, 77, 86, 95, 109, 122, 147        |
| Social             |                |              |                                                  |
| Networks (56)      | Arrival        | with friends | 1, 37, 98                                        |
|                    |                |              | 4; 6, 11, 21, 25, 33, 42, 49, 70, 115, 119, 130, |
|                    | Friendships    |              | 131, 138, 154                                    |
|                    | Friendships    | Hungarian    | 5, 39, 106, 135, 148, 151                        |
|                    | Friendships    | SA           | 10, 12, 18, 20, 23, 28, 38, 60, 68, 73, 75, 78,  |
|                    | Friendships    | SA           | 94, 97, 99, 100, 110, 113, 117, 137, 148, 152    |
|                    | Friendships    | in dorm      | 19, 46                                           |
|                    | Friendships    | relationship | 6                                                |
|                    | Socialisation  |              |                                                  |
|                    | difficulties   | difficulty   | 13, 14, 15, 27                                   |
| Communication (36) | Communication  |              | 22, 24, 27, 47, 50, 89, 91, 107, 120, 122, 135,  |
|                    | difficulties   |              | 152                                              |
|                    |                | Hungarians   |                                                  |
|                    | Communication  | don't speak  |                                                  |
|                    | difficulties   | English      | 9, 29, 39, 43, 57, 71, 72, 82, 139, 151          |
|                    | Language       |              |                                                  |
|                    | learning       | English      | 10, 22, 43, 58                                   |
|                    | Language       |              |                                                  |
|                    | learning       | Hungarian    | 50, 139                                          |
|                    | Language       | English and  |                                                  |
|                    | learning       | Hungarian    | 9, 53, 59, 116                                   |

|                 |             |                 |                                        |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------|
|                 | Language    |                 |                                        |
|                 | learning    | by necessity    | 82, 107, 135                           |
|                 | Language    | to the          |                                        |
|                 | learning    | detriment of    |                                        |
|                 |             | NL              | 60                                     |
| Evaluating the  |             |                 |                                        |
| SA context (69) | Hungarians  | unfriendly      | 13, 17, 39, 41, 48, 76                 |
|                 | Hungarians  | kind            | 5, 15, 41, 50, 53, 58, 120             |
|                 | Hungarians  | racist          | 43, 105, 154                           |
|                 | Hungarians  | open minded     | 16                                     |
|                 |             | negative        |                                        |
|                 | Hungarians  | preconceptions  | 5, 26, 69                              |
|                 | Hungary     | cheap           | 57                                     |
|                 |             | interesting     |                                        |
|                 | Hungary     | events          | 5                                      |
|                 | Hungary     | strange         | 4,13,59, 69, 154                       |
|                 | Hungary     | familiar        | 37, 82                                 |
|                 |             | stores close    |                                        |
|                 | Hungary     | early           | 16                                     |
|                 |             | good for        |                                        |
|                 | Pécs        | studying        | 9, 43, 145                             |
|                 | Pécs        | bad for sports  | 13                                     |
|                 | Pécs        | similar to home | 14                                     |
|                 | The Medical |                 |                                        |
|                 | School      |                 | 29, 34, 49, 66, 77, 115, 117, 119, 144 |
|                 | The Medical |                 |                                        |
|                 | School      | too much study  | 7, 50, 51, 93, 151                     |

|                      |                    |                      |                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | The Medical School | too much paperwork   | 72                                                                                                                                                  |
|                      | The Medical School | stress               | 11, 84, 140                                                                                                                                         |
|                      | The Medical School | academic success     | 22, 119                                                                                                                                             |
|                      | The Medical School | fulfilling ambitions | 13, 58, 67, 75, 101, 138, 153, 155                                                                                                                  |
|                      | The Medical School | exams                | 145                                                                                                                                                 |
|                      | The Medical School | teachers             | 18, 98                                                                                                                                              |
| Self-evaluation (95) | Attribute          | self-reliance        | 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 20, 24, 25, 28, 37, 39, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 53, 60, 66, 69, 70, 83, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 106, 107, 115, 117, 124, 134, 146, 149 |
|                      | Attribute          | open-mindedness      | 5, 11, 48, 74, 76, 96, 126, 127, 132, 141, 157                                                                                                      |
|                      | Attribute          | outgoing             | 18, 73, 6                                                                                                                                           |
|                      | Attribute          | diligence            | 22, 51                                                                                                                                              |
|                      | Attribute          | multicultural        | 33, 34, 35, 38, 75, 80, 113, 114, 116, 125                                                                                                          |
|                      | Attribute          | professional         | 153                                                                                                                                                 |
|                      | Learning           | other cultures       | 1, 11, 12, 21, 78, 80, 81, 90, 92, 100, 113                                                                                                         |
|                      | Learning           | Hungary              | 74, 99, 149                                                                                                                                         |
|                      | Learning           | Europe               | 79, 96                                                                                                                                              |
|                      | Learning           | oneself              | 147                                                                                                                                                 |



|          |           |                                                 |
|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------|
|          |           | 20, 23, 29, 38, 44, 73, 83, 114, 116, 117, 126, |
| Learning | the world | 127, 132, 141, 144                              |

#### 4.2 EMERGENT THEMES AND DESCRIPTIVE CODES

Table 9 shows the list of emergent themes and descriptive codes identified in the participants' personal narratives. In the first cycle of coding, seventy-five different Descriptive code - subcode pairs were assigned to the data. Some of these codes only applied to one text. For example, only one participant, no. 16, wrote about stores in Pécs, complaining about the early closing hours, and linking the complaint to Pécs being a small town. Pets were also only mentioned once, by participant no. 4, who wrote about how after difficulties adjusting to the SA context, she adopted a cat to provide comfort in an otherwise difficult situation.

Most descriptive codes, however, were applicable to several texts. Three participants wrote about the International Evening, a significant event for many SA students. For no. 68, this was the main topic. She stated that the previous International Evening was a formative and positive event for her, that she “eat many foods from other countries” and that she managed to build friendship with other SA students in the International Evening. No. 121, in a very brief response to the prompt, stated that “In the international evening, I felt that strongly last year,” but did not elaborate on it. Comfort was another descriptive code given to three texts. Participant no. 57 stated that due to Pécs, on average, being cheaper than Norway, her home country, she is eating out more here, and can afford to live in nicer flats. No. 58. listed the same comforts: “Very good food. Nice apartments, low prices.” No. 67 worded similar ideas: “life became better partly because it’s cheap here, so my living standards has went up.”

As the aim of the coding was to identify emergent themes that connect the content of the various texts, the same descriptive codes, sometimes with different subcodes, were given to the narratives wherever it was justified (Saldana, 2009, p. 72). For example, the descriptive code “Hungary” was used for seven texts with four different subcodes (Hungary - cheap, Hungary - interesting events, Hungary - different, and Hungary - will hopefully change). The different subcodes were used to signify that whereas all these participants wrote about the same topic, what they wrote regarding Hungary was very different. No. 57, as we already saw, highlighted, how the relatively cheap prices of Hungarian services made it possible for her to live in more comfort, whereas no. 5, whom I called Jana, mentioned that she found Hungarian events interesting. Four of the eight texts with the descriptive code “Hungary” contain information about the strangeness of the participants’ host country. Participant no. 4, a Chinese SA student, who adopted a pet cat, wrote about how the differences between her new environment and her home country made her suffer. No. 13 realised that even as he succeeded in his medical studies, he found his SA location “traumatising”, missed his home, and did not want to finish his studies in Hungary. No. 59 mentioned that she found both the prices and the culture different in Hungary, but also that she considered this a positive phenomenon.

Some of the most often used descriptive codes were “Acclimatisation”, “Homesickness”, “Friendship”, “Communication difficulties”, “Language Learning”, “Hungarians”, “The Medical School”, “Attribute”, and “Learning.” Some of these codes were narrow enough, and the participants’ message about these topics similar enough so that they did not require different subcodes. For example, the participants’ feelings of homesickness came up in ten accounts, with similar descriptions. No. 11 centred his text around a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of an SA experience, and concluded that although as an SA student “you miss your family, your country, foods, friends”, ultimately it is worth it, as this SA experience provides an opportunity to get to know new cultures, foods, and traditions

“from all around the world”, thus displaying a high international posture, and also implying a lower level of interest in the host country’s culture, cuisine and traditions. No. 25, even though she had managed to build friendships with many SA students from her country and from other places, closed her account by stating that she still felt lonely, and missed her friends and family. No. 42 also felt that the new friendships he built did not mean he did not miss his family. No. 59, 60, 84, 93, and 148 all mentioned missing their family as the main symptom of their homesickness, without going into much detail.

Other common descriptive codes received several subcodes to distinguish the various ways the participants approached the same topics in their accounts. The descriptive code “Hungarians” encompassed five subcodes: “unfriendly,” “kind,” “racist,” “open-minded,” and “negative preconceptions” to register the different attitudes the participants displayed with regards to the members of the host community. Participant no. 17, a South-Korean first-year medical student, found it difficult to adapt to the new environment, because he felt uncomfortable because Hungarians were staring at him, and treating him as a stranger. No. 43’s main conclusion, after writing about Hungarians’ unwillingness to learn English, and their unfriendly demeanour in the service industry, was that Hungarians are generally racists. On the other hand, participant no. 16 felt that the people of Pécs are “mostly open-minded” and accepting of the SA students. Another participant, no. 120, described Hungarians as “nice when you can understand them. Perhaps notably no. 16 and no. 120 were Norwegian students, whereas no. 43 was an Iranian student of Pharmacy and no. 17 was South-Korean.

The most frequently assigned descriptive codes were Acclimatisation, Friendship, Language Learning, Hungarians, Hungary, the Medical School, Attribute and Learning, with the full list of descriptive codes and subcodes used summarised in Table 9 preceding this chapter. These descriptive codes were deemed fit for the texts, because although the particular points in the texts might vary in context, emotions and evaluations, they are about the same or

closely related topics. In total, 74 distinct descriptive codes and subcode pairs were used in relation to the data. As the list grew long, in order to avoid the list of descriptive codes becoming unwieldy and over-fragmented (Lewins & Silver, 2007, p. 100), in the second cycle of coding these descriptive codes were grouped together into salient categories corresponding to the emergent themes identified in the data.

This second cycle of coding resulted in a list of five emergent themes. Since the goal was to cluster descriptive codes based on conceptual and thematic similarities, the second cycle of coding employed a Focused coding approach (Saldana, 2009, p. 151). In the following chapters, I will describe the descriptive codes that made up the five identified emergent themes.

#### 4.3 SELF-EVALUATION

Table 10.

*Descriptive codes and subcodes linked with self-evaluation*

| <b>Descriptive code</b> | <b>Subcode</b>  | <b>Participant no. where present</b>                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attribute               | self-reliance   | 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 20, 24, 25, 28, 37, 39, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 53, 60, 66, 69, 70, 83, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 106, 107, 115, 117, 124, 134, 146, 149 |
| Attribute               | open-mindedness | 5, 11, 48, 74, 76, 96, 126, 127, 132, 141, 157                                                                                                      |
| Attribute               | outgoing        | 18, 73, 6                                                                                                                                           |
| Attribute               | diligence       | 22, 51                                                                                                                                              |
| Attribute               | multicultural   | 33, 34, 35, 38, 75, 80, 113, 114, 116, 125                                                                                                          |
| Attribute               | professional    | 153                                                                                                                                                 |
| Learning                | other cultures  | 1, 11, 12, 21, 78, 80, 81, 90, 92, 100, 113                                                                                                         |

|          |           |                                                      |
|----------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Learning | Hungary   | 74, 99, 149                                          |
| Learning | Europe    | 79, 96                                               |
| Learning | oneself   | 147                                                  |
|          |           | 20, 23, 29, 38, 44, 73, 83, 114, 116, 117, 126, 127, |
| Learning | the world | 132, 141, 144                                        |

By SELF-EVALUATION, I mean an aspect of identity construction represented by the participants' discursive efforts to demonstrate their self-concept by comparing their past or possible alternative selves with the selves they developed during their study abroad experience. As Mercer (2011a) stressed, a student's self-concept has the power to influence their language learning behaviour, motivation, and attitudes. Mercer (2011b, p. 343) defined self-concept as a "complex network composed of an interrelated web of multiple layers of self-belief across different domains at different levels of specificity and differently related to context" that can be dynamic and relatively stable across different dimensions. Changes in students' self-concept often reflect contextual changes, such as would be the case for students who found themselves studying abroad.

Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that SELF-EVALUATION was identified in 95 texts, making it the most frequently touched-upon-aspect of identity construction in the dataset. I will discuss the two descriptive codes that make up the category, Attribute and Learning in the following sections.

#### **4.3.1 ATTRIBUTE**

The descriptive code "Attribute" was used to code for text sections where the participants wrote about perceived characteristics, regardless of having, developing, losing, or perhaps striving for

these characteristics. By far, the most frequent subcode used in conjunction with this descriptive code was “self-reliant.” In total, 36 participants wrote about how the SA experience made them a more independent and autonomous person. For participant no. 9 self-reliance manifested itself in having to manage personal finances, an experience he found interesting. Participant no. 25 highlighted how being away from parents, one had more freedom, but also more responsibility. In this telling, having to manage life by oneself was ultimately a lonely experience, and the account ended on a note of homesickness. This was a common way of perceiving self-reliance by participants. For student no. 60, becoming independent was also a necessary effect of “having to handle a lot of situations without help/counselling from family.” In these instances, it is hard to decide if the participants evaluated these changes as a positive step towards a more desirable self. Participant no. 106 contrasts her new independence in this SA context with the values of her home culture, where “independency could seem not so good.” As Norton (2000, p. 127) claimed, a person’s subjectivity is produced in the meaning-making practices of the communities they participate in. The SA students at the Medical School are in a situation where they are expected to exercise their agency and act as more self-reliant and independent than they used to. This is not an automatic repositioning of someone’s subject position, as some students accept, or even embrace the change, and others resist the new position.

In some accounts attaining independence and learning to navigate life as an SA student in Pécs is described as a positive change, not for its inherent value, but for how this change affected the participants’ daily life. Participant no. 69 was initially terrified in Pécs, which he perceived as a dangerous city. However, after he learnt how to take care of himself, he joined a sport’s club, and finally “got used to the environment.” In this case, the participant’s sense of self-reliance changed his perceptions on what is possible in his SA context, and ultimately lead to a more active participation in his host community. Participant no. 12 relished the experience

of being away from family and living an independent life, as it had given him a chance of being “friend with students at my age from different countries.”

The third way in which participants appraised independence and self-reliance was through the lens of personal growth, and it was conceived as a positive change in one’s life. Participant no. 12 confessed to feeling great about being away from family and in a new SA environment. Based on the wording of the start of the account, namely “I feel great, seriously to tell the truth”, this feeling was either unexpected or perhaps something that runs counter to how one should feel in the new situation. A common evaluation of how the SA experience has changed the participants was that it made them stronger by making them independent. Participants no. 83, 90, 92, 93 all echoed this sentiment. For participant no. 107 living alone in Pécs was a liberating experience that improved her independence and confidence. Still others might not have perceived this strength and self-reliance as something resulting from the SA context, but merely something that could manifest itself in this new environment. Participant no. 117, for example, wrote about how he discovered “how strong I am and how independent I am” under these circumstances. According to the Attribution theory of motivation (Weiner, 1986) how people view the casual links that lead to their successes and failures affects their future behaviour. In this case, students who attribute self-growth to be a result of the SA context might be more open to experiences than students who believe that their inherent strengths helped them overcome the difficulties they encountered as a result of their SA.

There were also other attributes the participants discovered or developed during their stay in Pécs. Open-mindedness was also frequently mentioned: eleven texts were paired with the subcode “open-mindedness.” This, mostly undefined open-mindedness the participants referred to seems to correspond with the broadly applied definition of cultural sensitivity (Anderson et. al, 2006, p. 458) of “enhancing student appreciation of differences among cultures.” Participant no. 5, saw herself as both gaining independence in Pécs, and she also

emphasised her open-mindedness about Hungarians and others. Other participants were more direct, participant no. 11 stated that having an international friend group made him more open-minded. Participant no. 74 claimed that she already had previous SA experience, however her current one in Pécs “made me more open in my thinking.” Participant 76 also linked her being more understanding of differences to her experiences as an international student. In some cases, a comparison is made between the open-mindedness of SA students and the attitudes of Hungarians towards foreigners. For example, participant no. 48 wrote about how her clinical practice made her “have a perspective of how difficult life is at different places” and later she drew a parallel to how “people here are rather secluded and not very open to foreigners.”

In a related concept, participants also often mentioned being or becoming more multicultural as a result of their SA. Ten accounts were labelled with the *Attribute - multicultural* code. Some stated their views on their subjectivity (Norton, 2000, p. 146) that they were also multicultural subjects before their SA started. Participant no. 33 felt that the multicultural setting of the Medical School fit her self-image as a multicultural person. However, more often participants wrote about how the SA context directly led to becoming more multicultural. For participant no. 13 the change started when he first met international students, whose “culture and ways” affected him, although he did not go into detail about the nature of the changes. A Spanish student, participant no. 38, wrote that she “couldn’t have imagined studying with students from lots of different countries, meeting so many international students’ and that slowly but surely these experiences changed her. In her words, the most significant changes that occurred were befriending a Korean national, speaking in a foreign language - presumably English - more than her L1, and living in a multicultural environment.

But the most important variation I felt is the way I changed my way of thinking. In the beginning, I felt I was only a foreign student someone who lived abroad. Now I feel I belong to a community; I’m part of a multicultural society and I can say Pécs is now my second home. (Participant no. 38)



Three other attributes, being outgoing, professional, and diligent were mentioned by only one or two participants. Participant no. 18 felt that she became more outgoing in Pécs. Participant no. 73 also mentioned that together with learning about “different countries and different cultures” the SA made him more communicative and extroverted. The changes observed by the students were the results of the opportunities offered by the new context, and show how their selves have developed in this new context.

As for diligence, two participants wrote about how the requirements of a medical SA changed their approach toward studying. Participant no. 22 wrote about how her initial failures to communicate in English due to her perceived lack of proficiency, “I was very embarrassed, because my English was very bad”, first motivated her to study English. In turn, her success in learning English, as she “improved even faster than I expected,” made her “interested in studying” whereas earlier she never took “studying seriously.” The participant’s high need for achievement overcame her fear of failure and led to a higher expectancy of success (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, pp. 13–14) and mastery motivation.

The final subcode paired with the descriptive code Attribute was only touched upon by one student, and only as a general mention. Participant no. 153 stated without going into detail that for her, the biggest change was seeing herself as a medical student. This was, by all likelihood, a realization of a new identity based on her Ideal Self.

#### ***4.3.2 LEARNING***

The other descriptive code related to the aspect of identity identified through the emergent theme SELF-EVALUATION was “Learning.” It encompasses all mentions of attaining new knowledge, getting to know new people, places, customs, and direct mentions of learning. Here

four subcodes were used to distinguish the different topics the participants mentioned they were learning about: the world, other cultures, Hungary, and Europe.

The code-subcode pair used most frequently was “Learning - about the world.” These mentions of learning about the world were often vague. Participant no. 73 explained how meeting “so many people from different countries and different cultures” helped him “learn at least some general information about the rest of the world.” Another participant, no. 116, claimed that the SA experience changed how she perceived the world. Participants often linked meeting other SA students to learning about the world, for example, participant no. 117 drew this connection in his account emphasizing the extracurricular nature of this learning: “I meet a lot of people from different countries, it was really interesting, because I could discover a lot beside school.” This same observation is present in participant no. 20’s text as well: “you communicate with people from different countries and you can learn some new things while you are [in] the new place.” The frequent mention of “people from countries”, “different cultures”, “information about the world” signalled a high level of interest in the international community, a concept that is usually described by the construct of International Posture (Yashima, 2009).

“Other cultures” was the second most common subcode paired with the descriptive code Learning. Learning about the world in general and learning about other cultures were closely related in many participants’ texts, as it is also closely related in the field of International Posture research. Participant no. 23 mentioned how he “met a lot of new people with different backgrounds and cultures during his SA. I have learned a lot about different nationalities and cultures.” Participant no. 11 also stressed how during the SA a student would “see everyone from all around the world and know their culture, foods, traditions.” Similar to how participant no. 117 highlighted how learning about the world is an important secondary benefit of studying at the Medical School, participant no. 81 also explained that studying medicine in Hungary

offers opportunities outside of studying medicine, such as “sharing” cultures and language with people from different cultures.

Less frequently than in the case of the above codes, the participants also wrote about learning about Europe or Hungary in particular. For some students, Hungary represented Europe. Participant no. 79, in her short account, noted that in Pécs she learned about Europe, and specifically mentioned her surprise over the custom of using pálinka as a welcome drink. Others compared learning about Hungary to their previous SA experiences. Participant no. 74 stated that he did not experience much change as a SA student in Pécs, as he was “already used to living abroad and alone” and that what made his SA in Pécs different was learning “a lot about Hungarians’ view on life and their customs.” He connected this learning experience to that of becoming “more open in my thinking.” Participant no. 147, an American student of Dentistry, also started by claiming that his life did not change as a result of becoming a student at the Medical School, and it was rather merely a learning experience, as he learnt the “culture, habits, and norms” of the locals. He felt that host community members treat each other and foreigners with more respect and discipline than what he experienced during his other SAs. Once again, the participant claimed that his learning experience directly led to a change in his identity, as he “adopted this behaviour.”

In summary, the emergent theme of SELF-EVALUATION, either through writing about the personality traits the participants attributed to themselves or the learning experiences they felt impacted their identities was the theme most often touched upon in the data identified in 95 accounts. The prompt eliciting the accounts asked the participants to tell a story about an event when they strongly felt that their life became different as international students in Pécs. They were asked to write about something they did, something that happened to them, and to be specific in their descriptions. Even so, many students failed to include descriptions of such events and instead focused on what it was that they strongly felt, most often regarding

themselves. Seemingly, the SA experience in many cases was understood by the participants as a period that is most relevant because of the opportunities it provided for personal growth. In these cases the students exhibited their growth mindset through their beliefs, that even if they found their study abroad experience challenging, development was possible.

#### **4.4 ADJUSTING TO THE SA CONTEXT**

ADJUSTING TO THE SA CONTEXT comprises descriptive codes such as “Acclimatisation”, “Comfort”, “Customs”, “Friendship”, “Food”, “Goals”, “Homesickness”, “International Evening”, “Loneliness”, “New experiences”, “Pet”, “Pécs”, “Previous SA”, and “No Adjustment.”

Adjusting to the study abroad context is often a challenge for study abroad students. As Benson et al. (2012, p. 173) pointed out, “study abroad is a holistic and potentially life changing experience” from the students’ perspective. They argued that for study abroad participants, personal development goals can be complex. On the one hand, personal development is important, or even more important than language gains. On the other hand, personal development outcomes, and language gains intersect in what they call a second language identity. Pellegrino (2005) and Patron (2007) both describe how early experiences with a study abroad can pose challenges for the participants with regards to their identities. Pellegrino called this a “reduced sense of self” (Pellegrino, 2005, p. 18), whereas Patron (2007) referred to it as linguistic shock, an aspect of the more widely known culture shock. Linguistic shock occurs mainly in the early stages of a sojourn “until coping strategies have been devised to mitigate adverse effects” (Patron p. 95). Study abroad students’ new experiences and environments necessitate a need to reorganise their ecological selves, a sense of who they are, and how they relate to their surroundings (Norton-Pierce, 1995, p. 18). The accounts highlighted in this

section of the study all contain information on the reorganisation and coping strategies employed by the participants, as they were interpreting their study abroad experiences through the lenses of their personal development goals. What the descriptive codes have in common is a sense of becoming comfortable as and identifying with being a study abroad student in Pécs.

Table 11.

*Descriptive codes and subcodes linked with adjusting to the SA context*

| <b>Descriptive code</b> | <b>Subcode</b>       | <b>Participant no. where present</b>     |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Costums                 |                      | 6, 17, 19, 21, 36, 41, 79, 147, 148      |
| Acclimatization         | process              | 69, 90                                   |
| Acclimatization         | to costums           | 147, 152                                 |
| Acclimatization         | difficulty           | 76                                       |
| Acclimatization         | acceptance           | 9, 154                                   |
| Comfort                 |                      | 57, 58, 67                               |
| Food                    |                      | 27, 68                                   |
| Food                    | negative experiences | 18                                       |
| Friendship              | helping              | 1, 130                                   |
| Friendships             | SA community         | 38, 59, 89                               |
| Goals                   | changing             | 73, 125                                  |
| Homesickness            |                      | 11, 13, 25, 42, 59, 60, 84, 93, 128, 148 |
| International           |                      |                                          |
| Evening                 |                      | 68, 121, 123                             |
| Loneliness              |                      | 18, 42, 77, 91, 138, 151                 |

|                |                                           |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------|
| New experience | 9, 11, 21, 47                             |
| Pécs           | 1, 4, 16, 152                             |
| Pet            | 4                                         |
| No adjustment  | 15, 36, 37, 74, 77, 86, 95, 109, 122, 147 |

#### **4.4.1 ACCLIMATISATION**

The descriptive code “Acclimatisation” was used for text sections that talk about getting used to new surroundings in Pécs. Four subcodes were used to define the content of the texts in more detail. Participants no. 69 and 90 conceptualised their acclimatisation as a gradual process, therefore their texts were categorised with the code pair *Acclimatisation – process*. Participant no. 69 felt unsafe at first, and over time he became more comfortable with living in Pécs, and now he was “finding very nice aspects of Hungary.” Participant no. 90 claimed that she was beginning “to like my stay here”, after a process of gradual acclimatisation. Participant no. 76 described his acclimatisation as a difficulty, which became another subcode. This 4<sup>th</sup>-year American student at first wrote about becoming more patient with cultural differences, but ultimately admitted that he found it “difficult to adapt” to his new context in Hungary, especially to Hungarians’ attitudes towards him as a foreigner. This admission of the difficulty, without mentioning if he overcame this difficulty, and thus implying that he has not, is why participant no. 76’s account received a different subcode than participants 9, 152, and 154 did. These three accounts were labeled with the *Acclimatisation - acceptance* code pair. Participant no. 9, a second-year Iranian student, also wrote about the difficulties he encountered during his SA. He confesses that most of his difficulties stemmed from his unsatisfactory English language skills and from having found himself in an unfamiliar situation where he had to take care of himself. However, he managed to find interest in the daily responsibilities of managing “the fee

and bill and cost of life with different currency.” He also wrote positively of the relative “silence” of Pécs. In personal conversations, other students hailing from bigger cities several times mentioned smaller size and lower density of cultural and entertainment events as a negative feature. Some students even mentioned missing the traffic they became used to in Tehran. Participant no. 9, on the other hand, construed the silence of Pécs to be conducive “for studies and concentration.” Participant no. 152’s account similarly depicts the participants’ initial distaste of Pécs, because of its smaller size, and the subsequent acceptance. Participant no. 154 wrote about acclimatisation through acceptance in a different light. This first-year Iranian student’s main difficulty came from the racism she felt “in society and university.” She decided not to dwell on the negative attitudes she encountered. As she wrote, “since I choose here as my second country, I tried to accept it and continue my life and enjoy it.” Her approach to acclimatisation through acceptance reads as a conscious decision. The fourth subcode used with the descriptive code Acclimatisation relates not to the way in which acclimatisation was achieved, but to the phenomenon mentioned by the participant. The code pair “Acclimatisation - to customs” was used to label participant no. 147’s account. This participant claims that being an SA student in itself is not unusual for him, as he already “lived in many different parts of the world.” However, he still found “culture, habits and norms” and especially “the way people greet each other” something that he needed to adjust to. He wrote about adapting to the norms of his new surroundings. It was unclear if the motivation to adapt to the host culture came from an Ought-to Self, as he noticed that his surroundings expected it from him, or from his Ideal Self of an experienced SA student.

#### **4.4.2 COMFORT**

The descriptive code “Comfort” was used to label accounts no. 57, 58, 67. These three accounts contained information about the higher living standards attainable by the participants in Pécs, because of its relative cheap prices. These three participants were Norwegians. None of these texts contained a detailed explanation of the higher levels of comforts the participants enjoyed in Pécs. Participant no. 57 mentioned “eating out more and living in nice flats,” participant no. 58 mentioned “nice apartments, good food,” and participant no. 67 claimed that her life became better in Pécs partially because “it’s cheap here, so my living standard has went up.”

Participant no. 57 started her account by claiming that her study abroad experience is “challenging” and “quite frustrating” due to language issues, hinting at communication difficulties and a possible linguistic shock (Patron, 2007). According to Patron, linguistic shock most often occurs when study abroad students’ expectations of how they will be able to function linguistically in the host culture is not fulfilled. At the same time, participant no. 57 expressed her delight over having nice rental flats and being able to eat out more in Pécs, signs of being able to function satisfactorily in the new context. She also contrasted being frustrated by Hungarians’ lack of English proficiency with being able to partake in social activities that requires being able to communicate with the locals. She took up a subject position of a person who is enjoying being a study abroad student. She claimed that these perks are “a big positive.” She often participated in social interactions, mostly as a customer, despite the frustration the linguistic shock caused her.

Additionally, participant no. 58’s short account structured more as a list than a story, touches upon similar features of the study abroad experience, but presented them all in a positive light. In contrast, participant no. 67 does not mention language issues at all, and instead pairs her experience of being more comfortable in Pécs, with “doing what I want (study



medicine”), thereby presenting her new surroundings as a place where the achievement of personal goals is possible, let it be professional goals, or leisure.

#### ***4.4.3 CUSTOMS***

Hungarian customs were mentioned as they relate to adjusting to the study abroad experience as well. Here, customs refer to the regular behaviours Hungarians engage in that characterise behaviour in the Hungarian context, ways of greeting people, for example. The descriptive code “Customs” was added to nine personal accounts that featured parts explaining the participants’ feelings regarding the strange of customs they encountered in Pécs.

Participant no. 6 framed learning about the customs of his new environment in light of her self-concept. He wrote that he was interested in learning about the “differences between countries so came here indeed helped me a lot.” Erikson (1968) claimed students who had to reconceptualise their ecological self to fit their new environment often experienced a crisis of the self. Participant no. 6’s statement implied that his new environment fit his self-concept, and he was able to avoid this crisis. However, I must point out that it is not entirely clear from the account, if participant no. 6 expresses an interest in Hungary specifically, or if he learned about other countries through conversations with other study abroad students.

Participant no. 21 also framed experiencing “the different ways of living” in a predominantly positive light, while also hinting at more nuanced feelings regarding the situation. On the one hand, he wrote about being “thrown” into a new environment and experiencing “vast amount of new things”, phrases that imply a feeling of being overwhelmed by the new context. He also reported “having to adjust to learn the various different cultural backgrounds.” The adjustment the participant wrote about seems to be mandated by the context, and not the result of integrative motivation. On the other hand, even the attempt to adjust is an

effort, and he presented the result of this effort in terms of allowances and opportunities. He wrote that learning about the various cultures “allowed me to experience vast amount of new things.” The respondent added that the SA program gave him the “opportunity to experience the different ways of living.” In participant no. 21’s account, the customs, or ways of living as he put it, clearly referred to other study abroad students’ customs, positioning the writer as a person accepting that the high level of international posture favoured by the multicultural context in Pécs.

A Chinese study abroad student, participant no. 17, wrote about her encounter with the custom of hugging. She explained that after an unsuccessful exam, a friend of hers saw her despair and tried to comfort her with a hug. She also explained that the event stuck in her memory, because a “hug is not so common thing people will do in my country.” Many details of her story remain untold. She did not specify if her friend was another study abroad student, or a Hungarian student. The hug took place in a dormitory, so both are possible. She also did not disclose her feelings regarding the hug.

Participant 41, a Chinese student, was perplexed, and in this case, clearly bothered about a local custom. He wrote about being uneasy when people, as he put it, stare at him on the bus. This account contains a clearly linguistic and ethnic component to the situation. The participant clarified that the staring was especially visible/palpable when he was talking on his phone, presumably not in Hungarian. There also seems to be a cultural element to the student’s discomfort.

Participant no. 147, who described himself as an experienced international student with substantial previous study abroad experience, was similarly taken aback by a Hungarian custom, in this case, the complex and situation-dependent nature of Hungarian greetings. He wrote that people in Pécs greet each other “completely different than other parts of the world.” He identified respect and discipline as the main characteristics of the Hungarian greetings and

claimed to have learnt to adopt “this behaviour” and the Hungarian “norm.” He did not make it clear that he considered discipline and respect to be key characteristics not just of Hungarian greetings, but of Hungarian culture in general, but he equated them with the “norm” in Hungary, which makes this interpretation viable. Participant no. 147 therefore identified characteristics he deemed positive and worth emulating in Hungarian customs, attributed them to Hungarian culture in general, and found the motivation to adopt these customs. Another student also specified that she had to adjust to Hungarian customs. Unfortunately, participant no. 36 did not specify which customs she had to cope with, in what situation she encountered it, or how she managed to adjust. She only wrote about how “it was strange” to be a study abroad student at first, but after “a while things just went back to normal.” The students’ various reactions towards Hungarian customs were also mirrored by their various reactions to other cultural artifacts, for example regarding the Hungarian cuisine.

#### ***4.4.4 FOOD***

The topic of food was brought up in three accounts. As an essential combination of cultural product, practice and a focal point of important customs, food is often an important topic for SA students. As Hanna (2016) demonstrated SA students tend to legitimise and ascribe value to particular foods and related practices, as well as perpetuate their previous habits or demonstrate a reconstructed self through a shifting habitus towards food. Participant no. 27, a Korean study abroad student, demonstrated a lack of Openness for Experience in taking about food. He stated that he had two options: he either had to cook at home, at which he professed to be not very good, or he had to go Budapest “to eat some Korean food” as “there is not much restaurant for me” in Pécs. Usually, a lack of Openness of Experiences is indicative of a low international posture in study abroad students. Interestingly, after talking about the lack of

Korean food available to him in Pécs, he wrote that he “expect to meet Hungarian friend”, which might be a signifier of his beliefs about study abroad. Seemingly, his beliefs were not supported, as he also claimed that the “school or organisation doesn’t give chance to meet Hungarian.” Unsurprisingly, his expectation of making Hungarian friends remained unfulfilled.

Participant no. 27’s account stands in sharp contrast with participant no. 68’s short text, who wrote about his experience with the International Evening in the previous year, and about his excitement for the next event. The International Evening is an event organised by the Medical School, where students from different countries present their cultures, usually in the forms of food, music, and dances. Participant no. 68 highlighted that last time he “could eat many food from other countries”, and immediately linked the experience with managing to make “many foreign friends.”

Finally, participant no. 18, whose account I used to illustrate the coding process in section 3.5.2, also wrote about her experiences with food during her study abroad. She wrote about her negative experiences and claimed that she experienced negative health effects because of consuming more bread and white wheat flour in Hungary. Her case however differed from participant no. 27’s aversion to any non-Korean food, as she consumed Hungarian food, even if she had negative experiences. At the same time, she demonstrated positive attitudes towards Hungarians and an enthusiasm towards communicating with internationals, manifesting a high level of international posture in her account.

The question of food for these three Far Eastern students was a topic through which they demonstrated their international posture and either the perpetuation or the reconstruction of their selves. An openness to experiencing the food of an international community is directly related to the interest in the practices of the said international community, an aspect of international posture (Yashima, 2002). Participant no. 27 showed a perpetuation of his habits in his search for the food of his home country. Participant no. 68 highlighted his international

posture in his enthusiasm for the food of other cultures. A high level of international posture was also often shown by expressing interest in making friends with students from other cultures.

#### ***4.4.5 FRIENDSHIP***

Five participants wrote about how social interactions with friends helped them adjust to the study abroad context. Participant no. 1 met her first local friend on the airplane as she was flying to Hungary, and they “found our way together to reach the small city, Pécs.” During the first five months of her stay, which also coincided with the duration of their preparatory courses, they lived together. This was a difficult time as she “could not get used to the city in the beginning”, and seemingly this other student she was lucky enough to meet early was her most important social contact in an otherwise “quite boring” situation. Later, as her social circle widened, and she became more confident and comfortable in her new surroundings, the city of Pécs itself became a factor in her adjustment, and ultimately it became her “hometown in a short time.”

Participant no. 38 declared that the biggest change he felt as a study abroad student was having a multicultural friend group, and he specifically pointed out how “memorable” and “representative” of the change he thought “having a best friend here who is Korean.” Most importantly, he wrote about how having this multicultural friend group helped him adjust to the study abroad context by making him “feel I belong to a community, I am part of a multicultural society.” This sense of community was heralded by participants no. 59 and no. 89 as well. Participant no. 89 especially referred to it as a “strong community between all the foreign students” and presented it as the only unequivocally positive aspect of his study abroad experience.

Another study abroad student, participant no. 130 claimed that it is actually “very easy” to meet other study abroad students. He mentioned the Freshmen’s camp organised at the end of summer for first-year students, where he was able to make friends, even before the start of the academic year. He emphasized that developing a social network of international friends was a transformative event in what he called his “new life”, and that having international friends had made his study abroad experience a positive one.

#### **4.4.6 GOALS**

Two students mentioned how their personal goals have changed because of the study abroad experience. For participant no. 73 the experience itself was so positive and beneficial that “living in other countries than my home country” became his goal. He claimed that over his sojourn, he became more extroverted and more communicative, a change he attributed to the study abroad experience, and that his “vision”, or understanding of other cultures has “widened.”

Participant no. 125, on the other hand, had to reframe his goal. He discussed how he became a person who tolerates a “repetitive day every year” and tries to find “small happiness” in the daily routine of studying as his new main focus became solely to pass the final exam, and presumably to finish the study abroad. Study abroad in the research, and also for the participants of this study, is often a time when the self is in flux. The reaction is commonly the development of new identities, and experimentation with the limits of possible in a new environment. However, for this participant, study abroad became a time of stasis, a transitional period before returning to normalcy.

#### **4.4.7 HOMESICKNESS**

One of the most common problems study abroad students had to overcome as they adjusted to their new environments was homesickness, or a “longing and desire for familiar environments” (Hendrickson et al., 2011, p. 285). Ten students made references to the fact that in the early period of their sojourn they felt homesick, or that they are still feeling it.

Participant no. 11, for example, wrote about missing his family, country, foods, and friends as an ongoing issue in his life. He also claimed that the advantages of the study abroad experience, namely becoming more open-minded and knowledgeable about other cultures, make “all this things worth for it”, as it made him different from others. Participant no. 59, also wrote about her feelings of homesickness, but immediately contrasted these feelings with having a good student community. Similarly, another Norwegian student, participant no. 60, wrote that she also felt homesick, “as is natural”, and then moved on to write about getting “to know a lot of people of different nationalities’ in the next sentence.

Unfortunately, in some cases, the longing for familiar environments proved to be an insurmountable obstacle for students. Participant no. 13 wrote about liking the subjects, and his feeling of certainty in making the right decision when he became a medical student. However, he finished his account by stating that “there were a lot I missed about Germany”, which led to the realisation that he did not want to spend the full six years of his medical studies in Pécs.

Other students might not have reached the same conclusion, but two other participants wrote about a continuing homesickness. Participant no. 25 disclosed that despite the new acquaintances he made in Pécs, he felt “lonely deep in mind”, because he was missing his parents and old friends. Participant no. 42 was more positive in her general evaluation of the study abroad experience, but she also testified that despite having “many good friend”, and trying “to be social”, she often felt alone without the proximity of her family. Participant no.

84 started her account with a dramatic statement “I missed my family a lot” to continue it with writing briefly about the stresses she had to endure at the university. Participant no. 128 talked about a time when homesickness was a source of distraction from studies. In his case, when it started to snow in Pécs, he could not continue focusing on his studies, he had to go outside, because the snow reminded him of his home. Participant no. 93 also emphasized the difficulty inherent in being away from family while being engaged in “one of the hardest studies imaginable”, but she framed it as a personal development opportunity, claiming next that this experience “makes you really get to know yourself and is strongly developing.”

Research into study abroad students’ beliefs has shown that they perceive their stay as valuable in personal development. The participants in Nagy’s (2008) study viewed their stay abroad as a time period that allowed them to “grow up” and become more independent and self-confident, even as they often encountered difficulties during their stay. Similarly, even as the participants wrote about their feelings of homesickness, and in some instances expressed their plans to go home as soon as possible, viewed their experiences as valuable for similar reasons.

#### ***4.4.8 INTERNATIONAL EVENING***

The only annual event the students mentioned in their accounts was the International Evening. Participant no. 68, as was discussed, had the opportunity to try out the cuisine of many cultures in an International Evening, and consequently also made new friends at the event. Two other students, participants no. 121 and 123, also mentioned the International Evening, although with no added context. Participant no. 121’s single sentence text was a direct answer to the prompt, when he wrote “in the International Evening, I felt that strongly last year”, meaning that he particularly strongly felt being a study abroad student at the previous International Evening. Given that the International Evening is an event that gives the opportunity to the study abroad



students to present their home cultures, the multicultural nature of the setting is especially on display during the event; therefore, it is not surprising that a student, who was perhaps less involved with students from other cultures was confronted with the context there.

#### **4.4.9 LONELINESS**

Similarly to the feeling of homesickness, which was coded whenever a participant specifically mentioned missing something or someone from back home, loneliness was also written about by six participants; their accounts were paired with the descriptive code Loneliness.

Participant no. 77 presented loneliness as a minor issue. He claimed that since he was already living alone before the sojourn, his life did not become remarkably different in the new environment. Even as he also indicated that as a “foreigner” he was friendless in Pécs, together with his previous statement, this read as an insignificant problem. Participant no. 138 did not claim that loneliness was an insignificant issue for him, and he stated that it is “difficult to face with all problems in life alone”, the choice he made for the sake of his professional development was “worth a try.”

In some cases, loneliness was mentioned as a problem that affected the study abroad students early in their sojourn, and that was overcome over time. Participant no. 18, for example, wrote that her initial feelings of loneliness and wanting “to go back to my country” were solved with the help of a newly established social network. She is now “very happy to spend with friends” and in her new environment participant became less reliant on company, and she “started to go many place alone.” Participant no. 151 did not have any friends “for a while” after he arrived in Pécs and found it really hard to communicate with the other study abroad students and especially so with Hungarians. He specifically mentioned that he managed to build a social network with the help of the university, which probably refers to the study

abroad students in his social network. He mentioned that now he has “3 Hungarian friends”, but also that two of them were his neighbours. It is possible that the neighbours were also students, who he befriended at the university, but it is much more likely that the friendships he built with his neighbours were built outside the university.

For participant no. 91, loneliness was something she chose for herself. She stated that since she had found communication with the other study abroad students “hard”, she had decided that she did not “really want to have social life.” The linguistic shock she encountered triggered creating a subject position that would limit her opportunities for meaningful English input. Since study abroad provides positive outcomes mostly because it ensures meaningful, naturalistic input, it is safe to assume that participant no. 91’s reaction to her linguistic shock negatively affected her study abroad experience and outcomes.

#### ***4.4.10 NEW EXPERIENCES***

For some participants, their high openness to experiences was a decisive factor in being able to adjust to their new environment, or something they found joy and interest in. Participant no. 9 found motivation in having “to manage fee and bill and cost of life with different currency”, an experience that he found very interesting. For participant no. 21 “to experience vast amounts of new things”, while not linked with any tangible benefits, was overall great. In the case of participant no. 47, the study abroad experiences she lived through were at times “not that easy” but left her with a “lot of great memories so far.”

Another participant more directly linked his new experiences with his perceived personal growth. When participant no. 11 listed the benefits of a study abroad, besides getting to know other cultures and becoming more open-minded, he claimed that the new experiences

of the study abroad had led to his learning “how to arrange your own life – like time, money.” In other words, it opened the possibility to occupy new identities and subject positions.

#### ***4.4.11 PÉCS***

The characteristics of the location of the study abroad, Pécs, was the source of, or hindrance to adjustment for three participants. Whereas most current research does not consider identity to be entirely rooted in place-based language communities (Myles, 2010, p. 139), place attachment is still considered to be an important aspect of identity development. In the case of the participants, their new SA environment prompted a process of place attachment (Stedman, 2002, p. 563) that was either embraced or contested. All three participants who wrote about their feelings concerning Pécs commented on its size, namely that it is small in their estimation. Based on this comment, I believe it is safe to assume that they had come from bigger cities in their home countries.

Participant no. 4 found the small size of the city problematic, especially how the “restaurant close too early.” She claimed that the difference between Pécs and her home in China “kind of made me suffer.” Participant no. 16 also found the opening hours in Pécs objectionable, specifically the opening hours of shops. However, in other regards, he was positive about Pécs, claiming that the small size of the city leads to the inhabitants being more open-minded and accepting towards study abroad students, which in turn meant that “many experiences can be found here.” Finally, participant no. 152 wrote how he initially found it “hard to live in such a small city”, but after a time he found the smaller size advantageous, as “everywhere you want to go is near you”, which means that he had to waste less time commuting. Participants’ adjustment to their new locality mostly involved them coming to terms with what they observed as negative differences in commercial practices, and limited

opportunities due to Pécs's relative size. The participants seemed to have contested the development of their place attachment. Even participant no. 152 found solace in an aspect of his new environment that allowed him to spend less time out and about in Pécs.

#### ***4.4.12 NO ADJUSTMENT***

The descriptive code "No adjustment" was used to label accounts in which participants explicitly stated that they continued to live their lives in Pécs exactly as they lived before their SA. Ten participants claimed in their accounts that the study abroad context did not require adjustment from them. However, some of these accounts were somewhat ambiguous and pointed towards the participants' efforts to maintain a sense of continuity even amidst changing circumstances.

Participants no. 15 and 36 both claimed that their life did not change much after they moved to Pécs, and then they followed up this statement with examples of changes. Participant no. 15 stated that her life became "more hectic and school-oriented." Participant no. 36, on the other hand, wrote that initially "adapting to the Hungarian culture" was "strange." Similarly, participant no. 74 maintained that his life did not change much; however, in the next sentence he pointed out how being a "student in other countries" is "something different and special." Perhaps the first claim referred to his understanding that his general daily routine did not change that much, while at the same time he "learned a lot about the culture and the Hungarians," which made him "more open in my thinking." Participant no. 77's statement of unchanged lifestyle was less easy to explain, as she continued with how she feels "strange and friendless" in Pécs. For participant no. 122 the only significant change was "not being able to understand the language", which he characterised as a "little hard", but he emphasized that otherwise, as a

former study abroad student he was already used to “the international environment” and “being away from home.”

In the case of participant no. 86, the only important detail that made her study abroad experience different from her previous experiences was its length. She wrote about having been a study abroad student earlier as well, therefore not noticing much change in her life, except for the fact that this time she was “living alone” for a longer time.

Participant no. 37 was one of the students who claimed that his previous experiences had made it easier to adjust to his new context. In his case, the five-month-long backpacking tour preceding the start of the university allowed him to become more “independent.” He also claimed not to have found many differences between Hungary and Norway, and disclosed that he arrived with “a big group of Norwegians traveling down here together”, which had by all likelihood impacted his experiences greatly.

The distinction between lifestyle, or more generally one’s life, and the experiences of a study abroad can be detected in many accounts: participant no. 147 laid out the distinction clearly when he wrote “I do not believe my life became different being a student in Pécs. I have lived in many different parts of the world, which almost makes it seem that this is a usual habit. Rather, I would say that my experience had been different as a foreign student at Pécs.” He claimed to have adopted behaviours and customs he deemed positive and worth emulating, from Hungarians. Clearly, he did not consider adopting new behaviour patterns to affect what he considers his life.

The participant who claimed that their lives did not significantly change because of the study abroad in Pécs, while also giving evidence of the changes that did occur, maintained and signaled a continuing sense of self, unaffected by the study abroad experience in their discourse.

The most common descriptive codes in connection with students’ adjustment to the study abroad context were negative ones, describing the difficulties the participants faced in

their new environments. Loneliness, homesickness, and alienation over the unfamiliar customs the participants encountered in Hungary were frequent topics in the accounts. Although some participants wrote about a successful adjustment, and thus their experience followed the often observed trajectory of a brief honeymoon period followed by a process of crosscultural adaptation (Harrison, 1993). Wang et al. (2018) noted that in the case of the short term adaptation of temporary sojourners, individuals who feel “unfamiliar and uncomfortable in their new surrounding” may fail to adapt. The negative descriptive codes identified in the accounts pointed towards maladjustment to the study abroad context.

#### **4.5 EVALUATING THE STUDY ABROAD CONTEXT**

The third most common aspect of identity construction, EVALUATING THE STUDY ABROAD CONTEXT was identified in 48 accounts through 69 descriptive codes. The four descriptive codes associated with this aspect were “Hungarians”, “Hungary”, “Pécs”, and “The Medical School.” These descriptive codes were applied to the accounts when participants expressed their feelings and opinions regarding facets of their study abroad environment.

The situation study abroad students find themselves in their new environment plays a crucial role in language learning outcomes. Students are encouraged to seek out a study abroad experience with the understanding that a more naturalistic environment provides opportunities to engage with native speakers in various contexts, which improves their communicative competence (Isabelli-García, 2017, pp. 273-274). Study abroad students at the Medical School took part in English medium education with the expectation to become functioning members of a multilingual, global workplace. This is an exceedingly common expectation of study abroad students generally, which is also one of the more difficult language learning goals to achieve (Lord & Isabelli-García, 2014, p. 157). Integration into their host community is

important for study abroad students to attain advanced language competency, as meaningful interactions promote second language acquisition (Isabelli-García, 2017, p. 275). Recent research investigating changes in learner identity and agency, and learner perspectives about language learning analysed how impenetrable students believe the host culture to be (Isabelli-García et al., 2018, p. 451). Research has shown how invested students become in the community practices, or if they “may retain an identity that is distinct from a particular community” (Duff & Talmy, 2011, pp. 97-98). Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) argued that learners are active participants in “constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning” (p. 145) and they make choices about how or if they are going to participate in new language communities and communities of practice. In the language socialisation view of language learning, study abroad language learners appear as apprentices striving to gain participation in the practices of the host community. Moreover, the students likely understand the cultural significance of said practices. Language learning involves not only the acquisition of communicative competence but also the process of becoming a person in a society (Ochs, 2002).

I view the participants’ evaluation of their study abroad contexts as indicative of their subject positions, identities, and motivations regarding the process of their language socialisation in Pécs. Learner beliefs, including “student opinions on a variety of issues and controversies related to language learning” (Horwitz, 1988, p. 284), play an important role in not just language learning but also in the outcomes of study abroad experiences in more general (Zaykovskaya et al., 2017). Learner beliefs are complex and multifaceted in their manifestations, and among others, they encompass attitudes towards the learning context and towards the target community. According to Yang and Kim (2010), learner beliefs can act as catalysts in recognising and appreciating opportunities for participation. Study abroad learners’

evaluation of their environments is crucial in understanding how they position themselves in this environment, and it influences the outcomes of their study abroad.

Table 12.

*Descriptive codes and subcodes linked with evaluating the SA context*

| <b>Descriptive code</b> | <b>Subcode</b>     | <b>Participant no. where present</b>   |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Hungarians              | unfriendly         | 13, 17, 39, 41, 48, 76                 |
| Hungarians              | kind               | 5, 15, 41, 50, 53, 58, 120             |
| Hungarians              | racist             | 43, 105, 154                           |
| Hungarians              | open minded        | 16                                     |
|                         | negative           |                                        |
| Hungarians              | preconceptions     | 5, 26, 69                              |
| Hungary                 | cheap              | 57                                     |
| Hungary                 | interesting events | 5                                      |
| Hungary                 | strange            | 4,13,59, 69, 154                       |
| Hungary                 | familiar           | 37, 82                                 |
| Hungary                 | stores close early | 16                                     |
| Pécs                    | good for studying  | 9, 43, 145                             |
| Pécs                    | bad for sports     | 13                                     |
| Pécs                    | similar to home    | 14                                     |
| The Medical             |                    |                                        |
| School                  |                    | 29, 34, 49, 66, 77, 115, 117, 119, 144 |



|             |                      |                                    |
|-------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| The Medical |                      |                                    |
| School      | too much study       | 7, 50, 51, 93, 151                 |
| The Medical |                      |                                    |
| School      | too much paperwork   | 72                                 |
| The Medical |                      |                                    |
| School      | stress               | 11, 84, 140                        |
| The Medical |                      |                                    |
| School      | academic success     | 22, 119                            |
| The Medical |                      |                                    |
| School      | fulfilling ambitions | 13, 58, 67, 75, 101, 138, 153, 155 |
| The Medical |                      |                                    |
| School      | exams                | 145                                |
| The Medical |                      |                                    |
| School      | teachers             | 18, 98                             |

#### **4.5.1 HUNGARIANS**

Participants frequently disclosed their opinions and impressions on the members of the host community. Study abroad students' beliefs and attitudes regarding the host community have been shown to have a significant impact on SA outcomes (Wesely, 2012), mostly by contributing towards motivation and resilience (Zaykovskaya et al., 2017). The descriptive code "Hungarians", however, did not code the same or even similar opinions, which necessitated the use of subcodes.

Most often, the participants thought that Hungarians were kind people. For example, participant no. 5 wrote about her conviction that even as she heard about negative experiences

of other study abroad students about their exposure to “some racist situation”, she was convinced that in Hungary, just like in other countries, racists are “just the fewest”, and most Hungarians are nice people. She underpinned her point by telling a story about how she asked a Hungarian pedestrian for directions. The Hungarian lady she asked for directions turned out to be quite helpful, and participant no. 5 befriended her.

Participant no. 15 was less detailed in her explanation of why she found Hungarians to be nice. In fact, she prefaced her statement with “I haven’t had many experiences with Hungarians outside of the gym or restaurants”, nevertheless, she maintained her impression “that Hungarians are very kind and helpful.”

Some participants found that the kindness of Hungarians is not without conditions. Participant no. 41 wrote that she was perplexed by the reactions she encountered when she was speaking a language other than Hungarian or English as people “stared at me like I am doing something wrong.” However, she found that members of the host community were “kinder if I speak Hungarian”, which understandably led to her practicing “more Hungarian to communicate with them.”

In one case, Hungarians’ kindness was claimed in comparison to “people in developed countries in Europe.” Participant no. 50, before making this claim wrote about “mental problems, language barriers and difference in culture”, factors that made his life hard in Pécs. Following the comparison, he returned to the difficulty of the Hungarian language. He also claimed that he “really wants to learn” Hungarian and has not done so solely due to time constraints. He stated that the kindness he perceived in the host community was a source of motivation for language learning, but also admitted that at that time this motivation did not translate into effort, as he felt he did not “have time, I need to focus on my compulsory subjects.” In fewer words, participant no. 120 also wrote about how Hungarians were “really nice, if you can understand them, but the language barrier is hard to overcome.”

Participant no. 16 found the host community members to be accepting and open-minded towards study abroad students. He, in particular, attributed this open-mindedness to the small size of the city, perhaps because study abroad students make up a larger portion of the city's population than they would in a larger city. Interestingly, the participant felt it important to distinguish the local citizens from Hungarians in general, by pointing out how Pécs is a unique case due to its size.

These participants' positive evaluation of members of the host community was facilitating of participation and integrative motivation. In the case study Zaykovskaya et al. (2017) published, the participant's positive yet realistic evaluation of the target language community and culture helped him not get discouraged when he encountered negative aspects of the study abroad experience. Similarly, the participants' positive beliefs in the previous examples might have contributed to a better evaluation of their own experiences and be facilitative towards legitimate peripheral participation.

In three instances, students wrote about negative preconceptions about Hungarians. Participant no. 5's insistence that Hungarians are predominantly kind people is positioned in her story as an argument against the negative attitudes she encountered regarding Hungarians. She had "heard about Hungarians of not liking people coming from other countries", which prompted her story about how she asked for directions and received more help than she was expecting from a Hungarian. Another account followed a similar structure of the students' negative preconceptions being contradicted by receiving unexpected help from a member of the host community. Participant no. 26 also wrote about her negative preconceptions, but contrary to participant no. 5, she did not disclose the origins of her beliefs. Participant no. 26 started her account by confiding that she believed that almost all Hungarians "were unhappy about students studying in Hungary." However, an incident at a supermarket challenged her negative attitude towards Hungarians during her first week in Pécs. She was shopping at a local supermarket and

purchased a smoothie machine. Unfortunately, she had trouble finding a big and strong-enough shopping bag. Then a fellow shopper gave her his shopping bag and then “ran away.” She did not state unequivocally that this event changed her mind about Hungarians, but she positioned the description of this event as a counter-point to the description of her negative preconceptions. Participant no. 69, on the other hand, had negative preconceptions about her new environment, which she perceived as very dangerous, to the point where she was “terrified” by a strange guy who seemingly followed her. Fortunately, she managed to overcome her fright and later she became a member of a sports club. She ended her account on a positive note, claiming that she was “finding very nice aspects of Hungarian now.” Participation had improved her study abroad experience.

There is some evidence pointing towards a link between pre-SA beliefs and learner experiences during SA. In Isabelli-Garcia (2006)’s research, positive attitudes towards the otherwise unknown Argentinian culture helped the participant, Stan, develop a large social network and resulted in significant language gains. Alice, a student in Kinginger’s (2004) study, through stubborn efforts to engage in social interaction, fuelled by her preconceived beliefs about the French, managed to carve out a subject position and identity that lead to a positive outcome for her study abroad. The participants’ negative preconceptions in the previous examples show how participants challenged their pre-SA beliefs about their SA context.

There were, in total, nine mentions of adversary or outright racist attitudes exhibited by Hungarians. The students commented on the locals’ unfriendliness or hostility in six accounts and racist in three. Perceived unfriendliness had a wide range: from being stared at to verbal hostility and being unwilling to communicate. Participant no. 17 found the experience of being a study abroad student unfamiliar and disorienting initially, as he found it “hard to understand different culture and different environment.” He, a South-Korean student, felt that Hungarians were staring at him “like stranger”, and his coping strategy was to ignore the stares. Participant

no. 39 felt that although she had “met really good people”, for example her landlady, who was “a very nice person and I like her so much”, generally speaking, most people’s behaviour “was like they don’t care about foreign students.” In particular, she had an unpleasant experience in Budapest, when she and a fellow study abroad student wanted to visit Vienna and got lost at the train station. “Nobody tell us how we can find train, and where we should go. Nobody cares.” In her opinion, the problem stemmed from not being able to “communicate with each other to solve problem”, as Hungarians “didn’t understand English.” As an example of how things could be different, she ended her account by recounting how, due to her landlady’s English proficiency they “talk to each other if there is a problem we can solve it.” Participant no. 41 corroborated participant no. 39’s theory. Due to his belief that Hungarians’ would be nicer “if you speak Hungarian” to them he “started to practice more Hungarian to communicate with them.” Although he still felt stared at, when he spoke English in public, he also noticed that Hungarians are “kinder if I speak Hungarian.”

Participant no. 48 did not offer an explanation or a solution to bypassing Hungarians’ unfriendliness. His overall impression was, that “most of the people here are rather secluded and not very open to foreigners’ even if “people’s behaviour can vary from place to place.” Participant no. 76 also reported on the “harsher attitudes reflected in Hungarians towards me as a foreigner”, which made it harder for him to adapt to his new environment even as he “learned to be more patient with major cultural differences.”

For participant no. 43 the racism exhibited towards study abroad students was the most problematic aspect of his study abroad experience. In her mind, Hungarians’ lack of English proficiency is evidence of this racism as “even people do not want to learn English despite bunch of foreign students” being there. She claimed that racist attitude preventing Hungarians from learning English is to the detriment of both Hungarians and study abroad students. Hungarians able “to communicate better with foreigners have better salary”, and it would make

study abroad students experience more pleasant. Seemingly she was expecting to be able to communicate with the members of the host community and perhaps achieve participation in Hungary based on her English proficiency. Confronted with a linguistic shock, she found the culprit for her unfulfilled expectations in the host community. She ended her account with a message, “about her wish to be better and have more sociable and not racist people here in early future.” She likely addressed her comment to herself and me as a representative of the host community when she wrote this comment.

Participant no. 105, in a very short episode, recounted an event of “racial discrimination that happened to a friend of his, who was spat on in Budapest, which she remembers, understandably, as a “terrible memory.” Participant no. 154, on the other hand, did not specify any event that prompted his assessment of Hungarians being racist. He claimed that in his early days in Hungary he “got that how they are racist and could feel it in society and university”, even as he arrived with very little information about Hungary. He probably included the claim of arriving with little information as evidence that his assessment was not based on preconception but on personal observation.

There was no consensus amongst study abroad students on Hungarians. Seven of them described Hungarians as kind, with some of them providing examples of receiving help from members of the host community, whereas others wrote about how the key to unlocking Hungarians’ kindness lies in overcoming communication difficulties. One student reported on how this realization motivated her to learn Hungarian. However, nine participants described Hungarians as unfriendly, secluded or outright racist. Racism towards international students is a well-documented phenomenon. In the words of Marginson (2013) “non-White international students studying in English-speaking countries often experience acts of discrimination and abuse that limit the potential for self-formation by discouraging closer integration in the host society” (p. 14). Marginson referred to English-speaking countries as most research

investigating racism towards international students had been carried out in English speaking countries. Moreover, most research on study abroad has been conducted either in English-speaking countries, or on native-English study abroad students. Hungary, therefore, does not fit the mould of Marginson's statement, and yet, of the eight participants quoted on the racism and the unfriendliness of Hungarians three were Iranian, two were South-Korean, one Chinese, one Indian, and one American. Whereas the data collected asked for the nationality of the students and not their ethnic identity or how the host community members might perceive them, it is safe to assume that at least seven participants were what Marginson would characterise as non-White, and therefore often assumed to be internationals by the locals. The situation becomes a little more ambiguous if we consider the participants who perceived Hungarians as kind or open-minded. Of these students, two were Norwegians, one Jordanian, one Chinese, and one Vietnamese.

Interestingly two participants, who had markedly different impressions of Hungarians, have arrived at the same conclusion: Hungarians are nicer when study abroad students are able to communicate with them effectively. One participant claimed that this realisation and her view of Hungarians as mostly kind people had motivated her to learn Hungarian, whereas the other participant accused Hungarians of racism for not wanting to learn English, even though it would make life better for themselves and study abroad students as well.

#### **4.5.2 HUNGARY**

Agnew (2016) claimed that a place consists of three dimensions: 1) a physical location, 2) a sense of place, and 3) a cultural flavour or locale. The sense of a place is the attachments and meanings people attribute to a given physical location. Study abroad students have been documented to develop deep and diverse attachments and meanings towards their new places

(Stott & Hall, 2003, Harper, 2018). The descriptive code “Hungary” was applied to accounts where the participants expressed their sense of place regarding their wider locale, the country of Hungary. Unsurprisingly, these accounts revealed a range of opinions.

Two participants, no. 37 and 82, in their evaluation of Hungary focused on the familiar. No. 37, a Norwegian student, who before his sojourn backpacked across Europe for five months, claimed to not have encountered any culture shock in Hungary. He attributed this to the independence he learnt while backpacking, and to the fact that he arrived in Pécs with other Norwegian students, he had already studied with for a year. Participant no. 82, a French-Norwegian study abroad student, did not “feel a big cultural difference” to any of his two home countries, whereas at the same time claiming that “studying in a foreign country is just a big bonus for me.” The benefits of his stay in Pécs are derived from the fact that he is “forced to learn Hungarian”, which was a Ideal Self level motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010). The impetus to study Hungarian mostly came from environmental and contextual factors, perhaps due to his understanding that the familiarity of his new environment would be best exploited if he were proficient in the local language. He was, however, willing to learn Hungarian to cope with life in his new environment to the degree that he claimed that being “forced to learn Hungarian” was his “favourite thing about Pécs.”

Five other participants, however, found Hungary to be strange. Participant no. 4 went as far as to write that the difference between Hungary and her home country of China made her suffer, although the example she gave was that the restaurants closed too early in Pécs, without an explanation on how this caused her suffering. Participant no. 154 was taken aback by the racist attitudes and also the strangeness of Hungary but claimed that “since I choose here as my second country, I tried to accept it and continue my life and enjoy it.” Participant no. 13 drew a different conclusion. He also reported on adverse reactions to Hungary. He wrote that he arrived late at night without a blanket, an experience he found “kind of traumatizing.” His



remark showed a lack of familiarity with Hungary prior to his arrival. He was also home struck and found the sports offering lacklustre compared to what he was used to in Germany. These factors, coupled with the fact that he found it difficult to make friends in Pécs, resulted in him wanting to end his study abroad ahead of schedule, and perhaps continue his medical studies elsewhere.

Strangeness was not always presented as a negative attribute. Participant no. 59 claimed that although she was homesick, she was happy about the unfamiliarity of Hungary. “It is quite different from Norway, with prices and culture. Which is positive.” Participant no. 69, a Japanese student who arrived with negative preconceptions, and felt himself in danger at the start of his sojourn, as he became more “used to this environment” and started to participate in its practices managed to “find very nice aspects of Hungary.”

Participants most commonly characterised Hungary as familiar or strange. Besides these, participants used three other descriptors of the country, which were touched upon earlier. Participant no. 16’s only complaint was that the stores in Hungary close too early. For some Norwegian study abroad students, for example, participant no. 57, the most important attribute of Hungary was its cheap prices that allowed them to enjoy a different lifestyle than what they were used to in Norway. Amongst the perks of the cheapness of Hungary, students mentioned living in nicer apartments and being able to eat in restaurants more often. Participant no. 5 focused on and expressed interest in the holidays and events in Hungary and gave an account of a level of investment in the cultural practices of Hungary.

As Harper (2018, p. 309) noted, the importance of the academic curriculum is often minor compared to the SA students’ place experiences, which can enrich the participants’ learning experiences through lived-body experiences (Pipitone & Raghavan, 2017). Students who express interest in the cultural practices of their new environment find it easier to immerse themselves in it, and are usually more resilient in their efforts, which can lead to more

meaningful linguistic input. Altogether ten participants expressed their opinions on their host country. These opinions ranged from “strange” to “nice” and revealed mixed opinions. However, none of them revealed an interest in the cultural practices of their new environment, except for commenting favourably of the relative cheapness of Hungary. As it follows, none of these accounts pointed towards the participants receiving meaningful Hungarian linguistic input as a result of their study abroad.

#### ***4.5.3 PÉCS***

Besides Hungary, participants also expressed their sense of place regarding the city of Pécs. Not all students found Pécs different from their home cities. Participant no. 14 wrote that he likes Pécs, because “it reminds me my city”, which meant that for him, despite the limited communication “between Hungarians and English students”, ultimately “everything is OK.”

At the same time, other students who felt the need to evaluate Pécs wrote about the differences. Three students wrote about Pécs being a good location for medical studies, mostly due to its smaller size, the quiet and lack of distraction. Participant no. 9 wrote that “in Pécs I have a silence situation that very good for studies and concentration.” Participant no. 43 also felt that Pécs was a “calm city to study”, even though he perceived “lots of racism” in the people here. It was unclear if the calmness and silence that these students felt was beneficial for studies was overall a positive feature of the city. Participant no. 145, for example, wrote that although “the studies here are good” he found the city “not ideal for me.”

A German study abroad student, participant no. 13, complained about the lack of sports opportunities in Pécs. Together with his initial negative experiences in Pécs and his impression that the students of the English program mostly socialized with students from their own nationalities, being unable to continue doing his usual athletic activities in Pécs led to him

giving up on the study abroad and deciding that he did not want to stay for the entire length of his medical studies.

None of the students wrote about how Pécs made it possible to perform their selves, or perhaps what new opportunities they found that made new identities possible for them. None of them discussed the possibilities of participation in the cultural and discursive practices in Pécs. The only possibility offered by Pécs these study abroad students discovered for themselves was in the performance of their medical student identities, as they found the city to be a good environment for unperturbed studying.

#### ***4.5.4 THE MEDICAL SCHOOL***

The Medical School, the most intimate spatial unit, and also the organising force of their daily lives, was a common topic of evaluation amongst the participants. Participant no. 29 found the university to be a “much diff. system, both administrative and academic, to what I am used to/anticipated.” Participant no. 34 found the exams to be especially “different from Norwegian exams’ and the exam period to last longer than it did in Bjorkness. Another Norwegian student, participant no. 144, emphasised the “hard exams and how much we have to study” to be the most significant experience of her study abroad experience.

Study abroad students differed in how they viewed the difficulties posed by the Medical School. Participant no. 66 wrote about having “to overcome lots of difficulties as a medical students in the first year”, which, together with having “to live far from my family, my friends” and “struggling with the difference in culture” challenged her sense of self. She claimed that through social activities and “participating in some events’ she managed to overcome this crisis. On the other hand, participant no. 77 stated that being “friendless” and the stress of his first exam period made him “hard as a concrete.” Whereas both students wrote about a crisis of the

ecological self, for one of them the solution was being able to perform her subjectivity in social situations, the other participant re-negotiated his sense of self to fit his new context. Another student, participant no. 49, wrote that whereas the study and “failing a year was hard”, it made her “more confident” and “stronger.” Student no. 115 also wrote about the exam period in terms of an existential threat, as he “learned that I had to study really hard to survive” that led to becoming a “bit stronger” mentally. Participant no. 117 expressed his surprise over discovering “how strong I am and how competent I am.” A Persian student phrased it very nicely when she wrote that “exam periods are the hardest times, which proves to you how strong you actually can be when strong is the only thing you can be.” Perhaps the same sentiment echoed in participant no. 145’s admission that her most significant experience in Pécs was passing exams, which were “pretty memorable”, probably due to their difficulty. In these above cases, the students have demonstrated their mastery motivation fueled by their pride in being able to complete the exam at a medical school as a study abroad student, which was commonly understood to be one of the most difficult endeavours a university student can undertake.

In some cases, the expectations of medical studies kept students from participating or hindered them in other ways. Student no. 50 claimed that although the study abroad experience contributed to him “grown up day by day and become stronger”, the compulsory subjects he had at the university did not leave time for him to fulfil his ambitions. For example, he expressed a desire to learn Hungarian but felt he did not have time for it. Participant no. 51 wrote about how this situation required a conscious renegotiation of his identities as he had to pick “the lifestyle I wanted to live that would help me continue my education smoothly while having balanced social life.” Participant no. 151 was quite happy about the fact that after her initial communication difficulties, she managed to have “3 hungarian friends”, but expressed her sadness over not having enough time to spend with them.

Some students reported adverse reactions towards the high degree of difficulty they encountered at the Medical School. Participant no. 84 wrote about the panic attacks he experienced due to the “stressful situation.” Participant no. 140 “became more depressed” in Pécs because of the pressure he felt at the Medical School. Participant no. 72 complained of having administrative troubles at the university, as “there is a lot more paperwork at this university, compared to Norway”, which was also compounded by the difficulty of “talking English.”

Fortunately, not all accounts on the university were negative. Whereas the students’ complaints mostly focused on the high workload demanded by the program, most positive mentions dealt with their success concerning feelings of fulfilling their ambitions. For example, even though he was unsatisfied with his study abroad experience and the study abroad context, participant no. 13 wrote that he “immediately liked all subjects (except biometrics)”, and had feelings of success over being able to pass the exams, which further confirmed his belief that “general medicine was the right program for me.” Participant no. 67 felt that being able to do “what I want (studying medicine)” made his life better. For participant no. 101 seeing a cadaver in Anatomy class was an event that fit into her preconceived notions of what it means to be a medical student that helped her maintain motivation: “when I saw a cadaver (body) in the Anatomy class, I felt that I became really a medical student and I decided to hard work.” Becoming a medical professional was seen as a change fundamentally impacting their self: for example, participant no. 153 wrote that now that he is a medical student, he can finally be a “useful person for the world.” Student no. 155 also mentioned how merely becoming a medical student already fulfilled an ambition, already helped him realise a self, that previously was merely an Ideal-Self concept. In his words, before he came to Pécs he was “an ordinary high-school student with a dream” and being accepted to the Medical School was his “biggest milestone in this city.”

Participant no. 75 shared his belief that the study abroad experience helps him “improve my international way of thinking” which “will be useful in my future as a doctor.” In his case, changes of the self were evaluated in light of their fit towards the student’s Ideal-Self as a medical doctor.

A high level of international posture proved to be helpful for other students as well. Participant no. 22 at first had a lot of trouble communicating as she “was embarrassed because my English was very bad.” Her interest in the international community found in Pécs, together with her desire to avoid being embarrassed by subpar English proficiency, helped her “improve even faster than I expected.” This improvement in language skills “also made a huge difference in my studies here” and following her academic successes she had taken up a new identity, or as she put it “I became interested in studying from someone never have taken studying seriously.”

Finally, two students wrote about their impressions of the teachers at the Medical School. Participant no. 98 moving here from Norway was “surprised by how cool and kind the teachers/professors were.” Participant no. 18 also agreed that the professors were “very kind” and highlighted how they always answered her questions even though she “is not good at English, so I have lots of questions.”

These are the only two mentions of teachers and other staff; Hungarian students were not highlighted at all. Seemingly teachers, staff, and Hungarian students play a minor role in the minds of study abroad students when they evaluate their study abroad experiences. Furthermore, although the students made frequent comments on members of the host community, for example, their perceived kindness or unfriendliness, they did not comment on other international students. International students do come up in the accounts, in the context of friendships, and sometimes in connection with communication difficulties, but the

participants did not evaluate their fellow study abroad students in the same vein as they did the members of the host community.

#### **4.6 SOCIAL NETWORKS**

The category of SOCIAL NETWORKS comprises three descriptive codes: “Arrival,” “Socialization difficulties” and “Friendships.” These were mentioned in 56 accounts. Social networks are “the informal social relationships contracted by an individual” (Milroy, 1980, p. 174). I considered an account to be about social networks. In every case, a participant mentioned people they were in repeated informal contact with. Students brought up their informal relationships mostly in the context of building new friendships. They wrote about their efforts, successes, and failures in building new relationships with other international students and with members of the host community during their study abroad. As an aspect of identity construction, social networks are best explored as they relate to the language socialisation of the participants.

The importance of social networks in study abroad is well documented. The frequency of meaningful informal interactions study abroad students have with members of the target community has been demonstrated to affect both language learning outcomes and identity development. As Kinginger (2008) noted, meaningful L2 interactions, thought to be one of the main benefits of a study abroad, do not happen automatically. In Kinginger’s research, the students who managed to develop informal relationships with members of the host culture developed more in pragmatic competence and language awareness, and the same students also showed more positive attitudes about the host culture. However, not all students managed to develop social networks. In Tanabe’s (2018) research, social networking and forming friendships were key factors in the two Japanese SA students’ positive experiences during their stay in Hungary. In both cases, the participants were only able to expand their social networks

to include other international students and members of the host community by taking proactive moves and acting strategically (p. 258) in pursuit of social network expansion.

Allen (2010) found that students' initial motivations for an SA, their beliefs of the host culture, and the strategies by which they enacted agency in their language learning were the main factors that determined the levels of interactions between students and the L2 community. Norton (2013) suggested that language learning investment and participation in cultural and classroom practices are closely related concepts; therefore, participants' accounts on their participation in social networks also shed some light on their language learning investment.

Ochs and Schieffelin (1984)'s Language Socialization Theory emphasized the importance of memberships in social groups and on how identities, ideologies and narratives are shared between group members in language. However, membership in social groups is not automatic, as the investigation of the participants' social networks, based on their accounts, demonstrates. The level of acceptance experienced by language learners in discourse communities may differ on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, even if they are embraced by new communities, they themselves might reject participation in certain social networks. As possible reasons for such resistance Duff and Talmy (2011, pp. 97-98) named wanting to retain an identity distinct from a particular community, or being unwilling to conform to community expectations, or perhaps being confined by learner/performance demands.

In sum, social interaction with members of the target language community influences the development of both communicative competence and of identities and subject positions. Since socialization is a complex process concerning access, agency, subjectivity, relations of power, investment, and a myriad other factors, it often leads to unanticipated outcomes, and investigation of what the participants' disclosed on their social networks is important in exploring their learner trajectories.



Table 13.

*Descriptive codes and subcodes linked with social networks*

| <b>Descriptive code</b> | <b>Subcode</b> | <b>Participant no. where present</b>                                                          |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Arrival                 | with friends   | 1, 37, 98                                                                                     |
| Friendships             |                | 4; 6, 11, 21, 25, 33, 42, 49, 70, 115, 119, 130, 131, 138, 154                                |
| Friendships             | Hungarian      | 5, 39, 106, 135, 148, 151                                                                     |
| Friendships             | SA             | 10, 12, 18, 20, 23, 28, 38, 60, 68, 73, 75, 78, 94, 97, 99, 100, 110, 113, 117, 137, 148, 152 |
| Friendships             | in dorm        | 19, 46                                                                                        |
| Friendships             | relationship   | 6                                                                                             |
| Socialisation           |                |                                                                                               |
| difficulties            | difficulty     | 13, 14, 15, 27                                                                                |

**4.6.1 ARRIVAL**

The arrival at an SA destination marks the beginning of a new period of life for the participants. The circumstances of SA students' arrival in Pécs have a greater capacity to be translated into lasting memories, and social networks developed on arrival have a greater chance of becoming important relationships during the SA. Three students highlighted their arrival together with students from the same country as fundamental in their study abroad experience. An outlier was participant no. 1 who, although technically arrived in Pécs with a friend, she only met this other student at the airport in Budapest. For the first half year of her stay in Pécs this was the most important social contact she had made. She wrote about living together in a small dormitory for five months. In these first five months of her stay, she took part in a pre-med preparatory course, and she wrote that once she got admitted to the Medical School her "life was totally different,

I met lots of new friends. The small city started to become bigger and bigger for me.” The two other participants who mentioned arriving together with friends were from Norway. They started their medical studies in Norway, and they only moved to Pécs at the beginning of their second academic year. Consequently, when they arrived in Pécs they already had a social network of Norwegian medical students, even if the new environment is equally alien for them. Participant no. 37 wrote about how this, together with him already being quite experienced at living alone abroad, and his impression of Hungary and Norway being similar, spared him from the “big culture shock” he expected. Participant no. 98 also thought that since “we were many Norwegians moving down together” the transition was “from Norway → Hungary was easier.”

Interestingly, there were 38 Norwegians amongst the participants, a majority of them came from Bjorkness, and they had pre-established social networks prior to the start of their study abroad experience, but only these two Norwegian students mentioned the importance of these social contacts in their study abroad experience. A possible explanation is that arriving with and relying on a pre-existing social network of fellow nationals did not fit into participants’ beliefs and expectations of their study abroad experiences; therefore, they were omitted from the narrative telling.

#### ***4.6.2 SOCIALISATION DIFFICULTIES***

Four students mentioned in their accounts that they found it difficult to develop social networks in Pécs. One complaint was the difficulty of socialising outside of one’s nationality. Participant no. 13, a German student claimed that “it was hard to find friends because the English program students mostly stay with the people of their nationality.” German students’ number in the hundreds in Pécs, but an overwhelming majority attends the German program, and the different

class schedules make it difficult for Germans in the English and in the German program to socialise.

Other students complained about the difficulty of approaching Hungarians. Participant no. 14, a Swiss-Turkish student, also wrote about the difficulty of socialisation, highlighting the lack of communication among students in the Hungarian and English programs. Participant no. 15 wrote that she did not have “many experiences with Hungarians outside the gym or restaurants.” With this comment, she painted a picture where her encounters with members of the host community are predominantly transactional or highly context specific. She seemed to have expected the necessity to communicate with Hungarians more, and in circumstances more conducive to communication and socialisation. Participant no. 27 echoed this sentiment when she wrote about her expectation of meeting Hungarian friends. This Korean student blamed the program structure for failing to provide a context for study abroad and Hungarian students where they can socialise. In her words, “the school or organisation doesn’t give a chance to meet Hungarian.” Moreover, she also claimed that even given the opportunity, it was “hard to make Hungarian friend” as Hungarians “usually they don’t speak English.” At the time of the data collection, she had been in Hungary for over one and a half years, and she was attending Hungarian classes for the third semester. The possibility of communication with Hungarians in their native language was not featured in her account.

#### ***4.6.3 FRIENDSHIPS***

When it comes to social networks, by far the most typical mention was about the friends the participants have made while in Pécs. Most of these mentions were vague and general, merely a reflection of the fact that the respondents managed to build a multicultural social network in their new environment.

For participant no. 4, English language learning was a prerequisite for making friends. She claimed that her English language proficiency was poor at the beginning of her study abroad experience, and only the improvement of her English proficiency “made more confident to talk to others, because I not so confident used to.” It is unclear if she considered herself to be someone who found it difficult to talk to others by nature, or if she meant that her willingness to communicate was negatively affected by her low language proficiency.

Participant no. 6 mentioned one friend in particular who was instrumental for her in accepting her new environment. Initially, she felt “lonely and helpless” in Pécs, but a friend of hers helped her participate in the practices of the host country and the study abroad context when she “introduced her friends to me” and helping her in “getting off from staying at home all days.” These experiences convinced her that “Hungary is a nice place for me to study and I can get used to stay here totally.”

Students also mentioned friendships as a source of comfort in an otherwise stressful situation. Participant no. 11 wrote that he had “stressful days (mostly on exam period), on that time period these feelings increase rapidly but when you see your friends everyone has this feeling, so it is not only about you, so you get use to it.” Participant no. 138 emphasized the importance of new friendships especially since the study abroad context “has so many difficulty to face with all problems in your life alone.”

Friendships were also mentioned as a way of gaining participation in the practices of the study abroad community. Participant no. 21 wrote that these friendships allowed him to “experience vast amounts of new things” and “the opportunity to experience the different ways of living.” Participant no. 70 mentioned that “now with my friend we make good and bad memories.” For participant no. 130 the friendships he made in Freshman’s Camp were “the first step that allowed me to flourish” in his new life in Pécs.

Other study abroad students were often mentioned as instrumental in the personal development of the participants, especially when it comes to intercultural communicative competence. Participant no. 73 demonstrated both of these aspects in his account. He wrote about becoming “more communicative and more extroverted towards other people.” He also thought that meeting “so many people from different countries” had helped him widen his vision, and he admitted of considering “living in other countries than my home country.” This last point he raised indicates that his international posture has also changed as a result of the study abroad experience. Student no. 75 also claimed since he “met a lot of foreign students from various countries” his “international way of thinking” had improved. Participant no. 152 felt that his communicative competence improved, as at first, he found communication challenging, “but now I can talk to a lot of foreigners from all around the world and communicate with them.”

Many respondents mentioned friends as an unsatisfying substitute for the family members and friends they had at home. Participant no. 25 had “many new friends from my country and other countries here in Hungary (Pécs)” he still felt lonely deep inside. Participant no. 42 felt that his feelings were partially due to the rigorous workload all medical students had to manage. He wrote that in “an environment where everyone is studying really hard all the time and not doing much else, there can be times where you feel alone” even though he had “many good friends and we try to socialise.”

Three students mentioned specifically the environment in which they built friendships. For two of them it was the dormitory. Participant no. 19 wrote about the time she was living in a dormitory, where “I met a friend we lived on the same floor.” The experience she wrote about also took place in the dormitory, and involved her friend giving her a consoling hug after she failed one of her exams. The participant did not disclose any personal information about the friend in question, but since she was surprised by the unusual practice of hugging, it is safe to

assume that her friend had a different cultural background than hers. Participant no. 46 felt that living in a dormitory with friends made him “ready to leave alone, made me a bit stronger.” In his account, the dormitory acted as a safe space in a foreign land. Participant no. 68, on the other hand, “made many foreign friends’ during the previous International Evening, which was the highlight of his study abroad by that point.

The nationality of the friends the participants made was specified in 28 accounts. Twenty-two participants highlighted that they built a social network that involves study abroad students from other nationalities than their own. The nationality of their new friends was often brought up in mentioning how these connections helped the participants learn about cultures of other study abroad students. Participant no. 10 wrote that he had “really good foreign friend here” with whom they can share stories about their cultures. For participant no. 12, the study abroad experience was “a chance to be friend with students my age from different countries around the world.” This made it possible for him to learn “many things about their culture and ideas”, which he sees as a way “to improve myself as a future doctor.” Participant no. 23, after he moved away from Norway “met as lot of new people with different backgrounds and cultures” and as a result he feels he had “learned a lot about different nationalities and cultures.”

The simple fact that her social network now involved international students was surprising and significant for participant no. 38. “When I was studying in Spain I couldn’t have imagined studying with people from lots of different countries, making so many foreign friends.” She claimed that she found the fact that her best friend is a Korean national and the “multicultural environment I see every time I walk in the street” most relevant in her experience. She confessed that “in the beginning I felt I was only a foreign student, someone who lived abroad. Now I feel I belong to a community, I’m part of a multicultural society.” While initially she considered herself to be a study abroad student in a host country that was alien to her, her perceived context later became an international community without a specified location or

cultural backdrop. This change resulted from having an extended social network that involved international students. Similarly, she has renegotiated her subject position from a student on a sojourn to a fully participating member of a community. In the end, she could “say Pécs is now my second home.”

Six students wrote about friendly interactions with Hungarians in their social networks. Whereas the descriptive code Friendship was used for 46 accounts in total, only in six cases was it apparent that the participants’ social networks also comprised members of the host community. Two of these mentions seemingly provided little opportunity for meaningful Hungarian input. Participant no. 135 explained how she tried to “greet people (e.g., workers, cashiers) in Hungarian”, which elicited more favourable reactions from the interlocutors than English would. Participant no. 148 expressed her happiness over the possibility of meeting Hungarian people.

Of the four other students who wrote about having Hungarian friends, three met their friends due to their living arrangements. Participant no. 39 praised her landlady whom she liked enough to not change flats for years, an unusual practice among study abroad students. She claimed that the basis of their relationship was the landlady’s English proficiency. She saw Hungarians’ lack of English proficiency a serious problem facing study abroad students, which made her value the fact that her “landlady can speak English and we talk to each other if there is any problem we can solve it.” Participant no. 106 had a Hungarian roommate; however, she did not go into detail about their relationship. Finally, participant no. 151 admitted that while early in his study abroad “it was really hard to communicate” with Hungarian people, at the time of the data collection he had “3 Hungarian friends which 2 of are my neighbours.”

The only student whose Hungarian friend was not someone she met due to her living arrangement was participant no. 5, who wrote about the way she asked for directions from a Hungarian lady, which led to their friendship. Whereas it is perfectly possible that the

roommate of participant no. 106, the neighbours of participant no. 151, or the lady participant no. 5 asked for directions were medical students themselves, this is only a possibility. Overall, Hungarian medical students were noticeably absent from the accounts that mentioned social networks.

#### **4.7 COMMUNICATION**

The aspect of identity construction called COMMUNICATION encompassed mentions of communication attempts and explanations of the respondents' beliefs about language learning, or details about their language learning progress. Mentions of successful or failed communication attempts are also considered to belong here, if the participants made observations about the communication attempt itself. The aspect was mentioned in 36 accounts and is made up of two descriptive codes "Language Learning" and "Communication difficulties."

Communication is an important aspect of identity construction since identities are constructed by language use, and the identity of the speaker influences language use. One of the first researchers of identity, Mead (1934), claimed that a person's identity develops through social action and experience. Social identity is no longer understood as being rooted in place-based language communities or being entirely defined by the connections a person has to their ethnic background, nationality, or gender in the vein of Erikson's (1963, 1968, 1975) theories of identity. Indeed, identities are understood to be constructed and reconstructed through discourse (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) and dynamically constituted in relationships (Riessmann, 2008). Naturally, study abroad students' experiences with and beliefs about communication difficulties and second language acquisition are important aspects of their identity construction.



In the Language Socialization Theory of Ochs and Schieffelin (1984), language learning and participation in the cultural practices of a new community are key components of socialization into certain subjectivities or identities (Garrett, 2007). Potential language learning and communication success or failure is especially significant according to Duff (2007), since it is through communication and language that people can create new identities, rethink their ideologies, and their personal rituals.

Table 14.

*Descriptive codes and subcodes linked with communication*

| <b>Descriptive code</b> | <b>Subcode</b>         | <b>Participant no. where present</b>                |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Communication           |                        |                                                     |
| difficulties            |                        | 22, 24, 27, 47, 50, 89, 91, 107, 120, 122, 135, 152 |
| Communication           | Hungarians don't       |                                                     |
| difficulties            | speak English          | 9, 29, 39, 43, 57, 71, 72, 82, 139, 151             |
| Language                |                        |                                                     |
| learning                | English                | 10, 22, 43, 58                                      |
| Language                |                        |                                                     |
| learning                | Hungarian              | 50, 139                                             |
| Language                | English and            |                                                     |
| learning                | Hungarian              | 9, 53, 59, 116                                      |
| Language                |                        |                                                     |
| learning                | by necessity           | 82, 107, 135                                        |
| Language                |                        |                                                     |
| learning                | to the detriment of NL | 60                                                  |

#### ***4.7.1 LANGUAGE LEARNING***

Language learning was referenced by students fifteen times in their accounts. These mentions mostly involved the English language or the English and the Hungarian languages. It was sometimes difficult to decide if the allusions towards language learning referenced the English or the Hungarian language. Participant no. 139 focused only on the acquisition of the Hungarian language in particular. He lamented that he “couldn’t communicate a lady who is in a shop”, as he did not understand the shopkeeper’s Hungarian. Even though he grew to understand the context-specific language involving costs and payment methods, he still felt he should improve his “Hungarian speaking, hearing skill.” The Hungarian language proficiency he did acquire made it possible for him to take up the subject position of a consumer and a shopper in Hungary, but he wanted to carve out for himself different positions as well. The fact that he was focusing on oral skills pointed towards a Hungarian speaking Ought-to Self that participated in the practices of the host community.

Participant no. 82 claimed that his “favourite thing about Pécs is, I kinda feel forced to learn Hungarian, which is a good thing.” The student implied that the Hungarian language had been “forced” on him by the local’s lack of English proficiency. He wrote that “in the shops here they can’t speak English, so you are forced to try to and speak Hungarian.” Hungarian skills were therefore not part of his Ideal-Self image as a medical professional, or someone who participates in the cultural practices of Hungarians. The Hungarian language was only necessary for the day-to-day performance of tasks, it was an expectation put on him by his environment, and therefore Hungarian proficiency was part of his Ought-to Self image. However, he also claimed to not only be happy about having to learn Hungarian, but that this is one of his favourite things about Pécs. Perhaps this was a result of an understanding that learning the host culture’s language was an integral part of studying abroad, therefore being forced by

circumstances to learn the local language made the participant's identity as a study abroad student in Hungary more viable. This attitude was not typical in all responses. Participant no. 107 also seemed reluctant to learn Hungarian, a language she described as "sometimes confusing or confronting." She stated that this had led to her learning to communicate with "fewer words and with body language."

Learning Hungarian was mentioned in four more accounts in tandem with learning English. Participant no. 9 claimed that at first, it was difficult for him to follow the English language instruction at the university, but the "surrounding in PTE I can prepare a good condition to improving and growing up my English language skills." He also wrote about how he "had to learn Hungarian passing some requiring." Here he referred to the criterion requirement Medical Hungarian language classes, which he considered to be separate from the other classes that are taught in English. He felt that learning Hungarian was especially difficult due to his poor English proficiency and presented his success of passing the Hungarian classes as a major achievement of his study abroad. It is possible that the importance of the Hungarian language was elevated in the account since the data was taken in a Hungarian class, and the student was aware that I am a Hungarian teacher. The usefulness of the Hungarian language, as opposed to it being a criterion requirement, is only mentioned briefly. The respondent noticed that the "people in Pécs does not know English language", which would imply the instrumentality of the Hungarian language. The student, however, did not elaborate on this point, and even this sentence changes focus in its second clause: the student once again wrote about how he needed to learn Hungarian because it was an academic requirement.

There was one student, participant no. 135, who, in her account, made a connection between the Hungarian language and the university, but the university is merely the location of instruction. In her text, Hungarian language proficiency proved useful outside the university when she "greet people (e.g., workers, cashiers) in Hungarian." Although she felt it "would be

better to be more fluent because not many people can speak fluent English”, it is unclear if she considered Hungarian to be useful for her professional goals or for the performance of her identities.

The other three references to learning Hungarian were rather vague. In fact, participant no. 116 did not name the language she referred to when she wrote, “learning a new language has been nice and interesting”, it is only an inference that the new language she referred to was Hungarian. Participants no. 53 and 59 did reference Hungarian directly, but only briefly. The first student wrote that he had improved his English and Hungarian skills, and the second one claimed that he was trying to learn more Hungarian. Neither of them explained their points any further.

In two cases, the participants evaluated the Hungarian and the English language, but then they did not clarify if they consider themselves to be language learners. Participant no. 50 wrote that although he considered Hungarians to be nice people, the “language barrier and difference in culture” made his life harder in Pécs. He found the Hungarian language hard. He asserted his intention to learn the language and said that he “really want to learn it but I don’t have time, I need to focus on the compulsory subjects.” On the one hand, the student claimed to be motivated to study Hungarian, as he understood that even if it is difficult to learn, it would benefit his study abroad experience, he did not view learning Hungarian to be part of his medical studies, and himself to be a language learner. Participant no. 43 wrote about the usefulness of English proficiency in Pécs, but in terms of how useful it would be for Hungarians to be proficient in English. He put the responsibility of making the study abroad “easier for foreigners” on the shoulders of the hosts and blamed their unwillingness “to learn English despite a bunch of foreign students near” for the difficulties study abroad students face in Pécs. Clearly, participant no. 43 did not have a Hungarian speaking Ideal-Self, and did not position

himself as a learner of Hungarian. He did, however, mention his hope of the situation getting better due to language acquisition, without specifying who should learn which language.

Four other students wrote about English language learning. In participant no. 10's account the improvement in English skills was a by-product of his English medium medical education presented matter-of-factly without an explanation. However, he also claimed to "really like having a school with my foreign friends", which would not be possible without suitable English proficiency. Therefore, in participant no. 10's case, language learning was the result of the program design, however, the main benefit was not academic, but social. Participant no. 22 also differentiated between the social and the academic in his account. His motivation to study English originally came from uncomfortable social situations he encountered outside the campus, for example, when on arrival in Pécs he was unable to "carry out a conversation with the driver who picked me up from the airport." His English learning was facilitated by the preparatory courses offered to international students before they start their university studies at the International Studies Centre. He also claimed that later his improved English proficiency "made a huge difference in my studies here." Two students wrote about how they must almost exclusively communicate in English. Participant no. 60 stated that this had gone to the degree of first language attrition (Schmid, 2013), because he was "having difficulty articulating in Norwegian due to forgetting certain words but remembering them in English."

#### ***4.7.2 COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES***

The descriptive code "Communication difficulties" applied to accounts in which participants referred to their frustrations about interacting with members of the host community or other study abroad students. The category also included narratives of events when such interactions

were made difficult due to language proficiency issues. Communication difficulties were mentioned in twenty-two accounts, mostly in the context of lamenting Hungarians' general lack of English proficiency. Participant no. 29 wrote that not being able to communicate with the locals in English she had to "constantly use Google Translate, which to be honest sometimes just left me and the person I asking something more confused." She claimed that these situations lead her to realise the importance "to know some of the native language in the country I'm moving to." She wrote about this realisation without making a clear connection to language learning, as if knowing the language of the host culture was a prerequisite of a positive study abroad experience and not something she could achieve during her stay. Participant no. 122, a student who previously "studied abroad (in the UK) for my previous degree" therefore "was used to the international environment + being away from home", expressed his feeling of "not being able to understand the language has been a little hard." In this statement, his lack of Hungarian proficiency was presented as an unchangeable fact of the study abroad environment he had to live in.

Participant no. 39 identified Hungarians' lack of English proficiency as "one of the main problems here" for study abroad students, which prevented effective communication and problem-solving. He blamed Hungarians' indifference towards foreigners as the reason for this state of affairs, putting the responsibility of creating effective communication channels on the shoulders of Hungarians. Participant no. 57 was also frustrated by "the fact that hardly any Hungarians speak English." Participants 71 and 72 echoed this sentiment, as all three of them pointed out not just how "troublesome" they found that "not all Hungarians speak English", but also how they themselves found "talking English in everyday life hard." Participant no. 27 wrote about his expectation of befriending Hungarians, and how the study abroad program design at the university and the poor English proficiency of Hungarians made it "hard to make Hungarian friend." Another student, participant no. 89, asserted that communication "with

people that don't understand what you are saying" is a constant struggle for him. Participant no. 151 reported on initially finding it "really hard to communicate" with Hungarians but claimed to have overcome this difficulty as now he "got 3 Hungarian friends", without explaining how the communication difficulty manifested itself, or how it was solved.

As the previous example shows, not all students blamed the members of the host community exclusively for the communication difficulties. Participant no. 22 claimed that his initial communication difficulties were a result of his poor English skills, as he "couldn't even carry out a conversation with the driver who picked me up from the airport." This motivated him to improve his English proficiency, which also benefited his academic performance. Participant no. 135 viewed Hungarians' lack of English proficiency as the cause of her difficulties, however, she also claimed that she thought "it would be better to be more fluent" in Hungarian and that "it's nice to learn a new language."

For participant no. 24, the "language issues" she experienced were identity-related, as in her new study abroad context she had to "became independent, had to do everything on my own and be a grown person", which was made harder by the communication difficulties she had to endure.

In a few texts, students also wrote about communication difficulties they had with other study abroad students. Participant no. 91, for example, claimed that due to how hard she found communication with other "foreign students" she could not have a "social life." She did not write about communication with Hungarians, but her comment on not having a social life indicated that language issues prevented her from gaining full participation in the community of study abroad students. Participant no. 107's comment on how she learnt to "communicate with fewer words and with body language" also points towards participation in social encounters limited by language issues. Participant no. 152 expressed his pride over his progress in communicating with other study abroad students. He wrote that "at first it was hard to

communicate with” international students, but now, in his second year of studies at the university “I can talk to a lot of foreigners from all around the world and communicate with them.”

#### **4.8 SUMMARY**

The students’ personal accounts have revealed five aspects of identity construction in a study abroad setting: SELF-EVALUATION, ADJUSTMENT TO THE SA CONTEXT, EVALUATION OF THE SA CONTEXT, SOCIAL NETWORKS, and COMMUNICATION. Of the five, Self-evaluation was mentioned the most frequently, as it was present in 95 of the 133 personal accounts. The accounts have revealed that the students considered the study abroad experience to contribute to them developing new attributes, such as self-reliance, multiculturalism, and open-mindedness. Similarly, they also considered the study abroad experience to allow them to learn about other cultures, the world in general, and to a lesser extent about Europe and Hungary.

Adjusting to the study abroad was mentioned in 72 accounts and it encompassed fourteen different descriptive codes, and mentions of homesickness, loneliness and acclimatization difficulties were more common than descriptions of successful acclimatization or mentions of positive changes in student’s lives due to the study abroad context. Students’ evaluation of the study abroad context was equally mixed. They wrote about the kindness and unfriendliness of Hungarians in equal measure. They also frequently found Hungary to be a strange place, but in two cases, participants wrote about how familiar they thought their host country was. Unsurprisingly, the Medical School was the descriptive code participants most often commented on in this aspect of identity construction. In this instance, the students all agreed that the Medical School provided them with a time-consuming and difficult challenge.



However, they differed in their interpretation of this challenge. For example, five participants expressed their opinions, that the Medical School's expectations were unreasonable, where eight students wrote about how being a student at the Medical School helps them fulfill their ambitions.

Social networks were mentioned by 56 study abroad students, and most frequently in the context of developing new friendships with other study abroad students during their SA. Only six students mentioned that they have become friends with Hungarians during their stay. Of the five aspects of identity construction that emerged in the accounts, Communication was mentioned least frequently, by 36 students. This aspect encompassed two descriptive codes, communication difficulties and language learning. Of the two, communication difficulties were mentioned more, and the difficulty was mostly attributed to Hungarians' lack of English proficiency. In conjunction with this previous point, Hungarian language learning was mentioned by six SA students.

In conclusion, based on the participants' personal accounts, it was fairly common among the participants to consider their study abroad experience to be a time of identity construction and personal change, they had well-developed opinions and beliefs about their study abroad context, and wrote about their successes and struggles in adjusting to it. They also wrote about the social networks they developed with other study abroad students, and about their difficulties in trying to communicate with members of the host community. The mentions of developing friendships with Hungarians and of Hungarian language learning were infrequent.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS OF STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I explore the accounts of five study abroad medical students elicited through semi-structured interviews in February 2020. I will refer to the participants by their pseudonyms as Emma, Nora, Aiza, Jacob and Alim. The findings presented in this chapter reveal the complexity of the lived experiences of the individuals participating in the research through the cases of seven participants. Since each case is unique, I will look at them individually, relating them when possible to the aspects of identity construction discovered in the written accounts to unveil the complexity of the participants' self-systems, identities, and subjectivities, through which they position themselves in their new environments. The relevancy of the research stems from the fact that in study abroad research individual differences have been shown to be impactful (Isabelli-García et al., 2018, Kinginger, 2008, Coleman, 2013).

The semi-structured interviews were designed with the emergent themes identified in the personal accounts in mind. The topics of the interview guide (Appendix B) reflected the emergent themes. The topic-opening and the follow-up questions of the guide were also written with the accounts in mind. The interview questions probed into five topics: the participants' experiences and feelings concerning Hungarians and the Hungarian language, communication difficulties experienced during the SA, intercultural adjustments and culture shock, the participants' social networks in Pécs, and the participants' self-analysis. Unlike more structured interviews, where researchers often prefer to keep to the plan they have plotted for the interview (Murray, 2003, p. 103), my aim was not to ask all of the questions or adhere to some pre-determined sequence of questions, but rather to follow the interviewees' lead and elicit data

meaningful and relevant to the participants. For this reason, except for the ice-breaker opening question, the interview questions differed in each instance.

## 5.2 ALIM

Alim, a Chinese national of Uyghur ethnicity, had spent three years in Pécs at the time of the interview. He came to study medicine, but before his medical studies started, he attended preparatory language classes at the University of Pécs Library and Knowledge Centre, the city's main library. He arrived with a set of beliefs about study abroad language learning that valued both natural interaction, immersion, and classroom learning, with perhaps a stronger emphasis on the former. He claimed that one of the reasons why international students find it hard to communicate with the locals was due to the “lacking Hungarian language knowledge” (full interview transcripts are presented in Appendix C) of the study abroad students. Whereas he also had difficulties early on, his preparatory class where “we had books for that, it is like a formal class” played a central role in overcoming these difficulties. However, when asked if he consciously decided to learn Hungarian and “put effort and time into it” his answer was “not really. Cause I am living in Hungary. That means that I can learn Hungarian language from everybody... daily life... even though I don't... how to say... make effort on it, I can study.”

The language learning strategies he talked about during the interview also show him seeking out interaction and paying attention to and following up on vocabulary items. He valued talking to the Hungarian staff at the local shops and supermarkets he frequents, he presented these daily interactions as an important milestone in his experience. While at the beginning he said is “was hard to communicate”, but at a later stage he “started to learn the language with the help of the preparatory school. Later on, I start to communicate with Hungarians during the daily life, like ‘hello, how are you doing’ when I was buying stuff in Spar and TomMarket.”

He was glad for the legitimate peripheral participation he achieved and talked about how he “almost know every worker in the Spar.” Admittedly, these were short conversations of ritualized daily small talk with predictable question and answer patterns. He would ask questions “like, mizu? How are you doing? Everything is fine? What you been doing recently?” and the staff would answer “‘I’m good.’ ‘Everything is fine, thank you.’ And ‘How about you? How is your study?’ Something like that.” These questions and answers hint at a degree of familiarity between Alim and the staff, at least to the extent of the staff being aware of his student status.

Here and in other places of the interview, Alim demonstrated his comfort with codeswitching and use of Hungarian slang terms he probably did not learn in classroom settings, rather they were a result of immersion and naturalistic interaction with locals. By using these Hungarian words, he indicated expertise and a level of shared knowledge with me that transcended even his English proficiency. For example, at one point, talking of a Hungarian acquaintance he made in Thai boxing training, he said that one of his training partners was a high school student, who attended a vocational high school, however, he only knew this term in Hungarian. He also referred to his girlfriend’s adopted pet cat by its Hungarian child language equivalent, “cica.” Similarly, when asked how he managed to communicate in the shops early on during his stay, Alim said “I couldn’t express something I need, for example in Spar, I need to buy some... how to say, marhahús for example... beef. At that time, I do not know how to say marha, so I just go like this... múú kérek.”

Besides the use of the onomatopoeia “múú”, indicating the sound a cow makes, another example of child language, Alim also made sure to show how his Hungarian language knowledge has improved to the point where now he has an easier time to recall certain Hungarian words than the English equivalents. This use of an onomatopoeia coupled with expressive body language were two of the communication strategies Alim employed whenever

he had communication difficulties with Hungarians. Alim himself described his strategies as “first is using my mobile phone. Because I can translate my language into Hungarian, even though it is not that correctly translated. Second, is the body language, and the third is contact someone that I know in Hungary. A local.”

The ways in which technology is changing study abroad students experiences has been noted by researchers previously, mostly by pointing out how information technology and the prevalence of online social networking options make the distinction between presence and absence less impactful, by making it possible for study abroad students to keep in touch with their social networks in their home countries (Larsen, et al., 2006), to the point where “ready access to travel and technology-enhanced social networking (e.g. Facebook or Skype) has changed the nature of study abroad to the point where today’s experiences are fundamentally different from those of earlier eras” (Kinging, 2013, p. 345), a development that calls into question the salience of the identity categories that have been the focus of research.

Alim’s reference to the use of Google Translate, a multilingual neural machine translation service, demonstrated another aspect in which developments in technology have transformed study abroad. The use of Google Translate to overcome communication difficulties was mentioned by participant no. 29 as well. In her account, she claimed that the use of Google Translate did not solve her communication difficulties, as her overreliance on the service “just left me and the person I was asking something more confused.” Alim, however, used Google Translate in a more limited manner, for example, to translate certain Hungarian words his Thai box trainer, who is otherwise proficient in English, does not know. Participant no. 29 also wrote about using Google Translate in the written account, as I have shown in the previous chapter. The discrepancy in the relative success in participant no. 29’s and Alim’s use of Google Translate can be explained by looking at what Google Translate cannot do. “[A]lthough technology can certainly inform L2 learning, it cannot – at least at present – fully replicate

natural language production” (Ducar & Schocket, 2018, p. 784). Moreover, the service is still limited in its capacity to understand Hungarian pragmatics. Although participant no. 29 used Google Translate “constantly”, Alim only translated words in a conversation, limiting the possibility of pragmatic errors. In Alim’s hand, the translation service acted as a tool of extending the zone of independent action and helped him become more independent of expert guidance in his daily dealings. By integrating Google Translate into his mental and material activity Alim extended what Lantolf and Thorne (2006) would call his capacity to act and his agency.

The third option Alim mentioned as part of his strategy of dealing with communication difficulties was contacting “someone I know in Hungary. A local.” Having locals as members of their social networks was also mentioned by six participants in the written accounts. In three cases, the study abroad students and the locals became connected through their living arrangements, and in one case, the participant asked for help from a stranger on the street (who later became a friend). Participant no. 135 mentioned engaging into small talk in Hungarian, whereas participant no. 148 expressed her happiness over meeting Hungarians without going into detail.

The first meaningful contact Alim made with a Hungarian was his first landlady, similar to what participant no. 39 wrote about in the previous chapter. He valued her landlady so much that she stayed in her apartment because of her. Alim was also appreciative of his first landlady as she was “super nice. I couldn’t find any better landlord than her.” When the landlady visited them the day after the party and saw the mess Alim and his two roommates made the previous evening she was understanding and accepting, and even helped them with the clean-up. Later, when they moved out of the apartment, she gave back the deposit without an argument. Whereas the landlady’s behaviour does not strike me as extraordinary, Alim’s estimation was different.

“Compare this landlord with the other that I told you about. Huge difference! This surprised me. At time I was really touched.”

Alim compared her friendly behaviour to the stories he heard from other study abroad students and his girlfriend: Hungarian landlords took advantage of their international tenants. He mentioned asking for deposits Alim considers unreasonably costly for study abroad students, keeping the deposits for unjustified reasons, demanding more and more in rent, being threatening and unreasonable as some of the problems study abroad students face when renting apartments in Pécs. Alim’s admittance of being touched by his first landlady’s understanding and help even early in his study abroad demonstrates that he was aware of the stories of landlords’ taking advantage of study abroad students and this knowledge had influenced his expectations.

His story about his landlady did not mention any extended communication between her and the other study abroad students. In his praise of her Alim focused on her actions, and it is unclear how frequently they communicated and how. Alim started “to communicate with Hungarians during the daily life, like ‘hello, how are you doing’, when I was buying stuff in Spar and in TomMarket” only later. These are the first interactions with members of the host culture that he mentioned, where the interactions were not the direct result of being a study abroad student in Pécs. Previously Alim mentioned talking to real estate agents and to his landlady, interactions all study abroad students go through. However, not all study abroad students express their pride in knowing and talking to “almost ... every worker in Spar.”

Alim and the local supermarket staff’s familiarity provided him with daily Hungarian communication and meaningful language input because of his willingness to communicate. Alim codeswitched into using Hungarian slang terms to illustrate how the naturalistic language input he received helped him learn vocabulary items that were not part of his classroom learning experience. This statement is in line with the findings of Ryan and Lafford (1992) who also

concluded that students who are exposed to more natural input acquire vocabulary items in a different order than do students in classroom settings. As Jiménez Jiménez (2010, pp. 121-122) had shown, vocabulary knowledge is more likely to be acquired in study abroad contexts than in classroom settings if the students are “provided enough exposure to the target language in the second language community.” Even for grammar points that were part of the language classroom’s curriculum, encountering them in naturalistic contexts was helpful for Alim. In a great example of paying attention to the Hungarian used in his proximity, Alim told a story about how he noticed the difference between the singular interjection ‘szia’ and its plural form ‘sziasztok’.

I went to the restaurant MuMi, and I finished my kebab, I went out, I said Szia!, .. but, like the other one after me, who also came out said Sziasztok! And I noticed that there is a difference between these two words, and I checked, and Sziasztok for plural, Szia for singular. That time I learned it. I distinguished like what is what.

In noticing the difference and then following up on his discovery, Alim took agency over his language learning. His motivated language learning effort resulted, by his own admission, in this new knowledge becoming part of his lexicon. Alim’s expectation of the study abroad context was to provide opportunities for language learning through participation and meaningful input, which in his mind minimised the importance of classroom instruction. He claimed that learning the language of the host community was an important factor in becoming more self-reliant and having a more positive study abroad experience. While at first, he “went to school” and studied the Hungarian language in “like a formal class”, when I asked him if he put effort and time into studying the Hungarian language during his time of classroom instruction, he expressed his belief that the meaningful language input provided by immersion would make more active book-learning unnecessary.



Not really. Cause I am living in Hungary. That means that I can learn Hungarian language from everybody... daily life... even though I don't... how to say... make effort on it, I can study. Exactly.

Some written accounts provided by participants also showed their beliefs of the importance of being exposed to natural input. However a Turkish student, who participated in the pilot study, lost her willingness to communicate and motivation to participate in interactions. Ultimately she ended up with a social network that did not provide her with meaningful Hungarian input. She was initially motivated to learn Hungarian, and focused her attention on what service providers were saying around her. Her loss of motivation was a result of listening to the swear words restaurant staff used in connection with her.

Alim also had conflicts with some members of the target language community. The two stories he shared when I asked him in what ways Hungarians disappointed him were made complicated for him due to communication difficulties. In one case, he had a confrontation with a taxi driver over the placement of Alim's large backpack; after Alim failed to figure out how to operate the car's automatic trunk door the driver "said some swearing words that I know. The thing is I know that word." After an argument with the driver Alim decided not to take the taxi after all. However, unlike the Turkish student, who after overhearing the restaurant staff, employed an avoidance strategy, Alim sought out satisfaction from the taxi company, by calling them and asking them to apologise. Alim also mentioned the theft of his credit card in the context of being disappointed by the target language community.

One time I lost my wallet, and my bank card got... I think, yeah... I did not lost my wallet, my bank card got stolen from my wallet. That was last summer, and I noticed that there was a large amount of money substracted from my bank account that was 60 000 Hungarian forint.

After he noticed the theft Alim contacted his bank and the police, but "none of those police officers speaks English, that time it was afternoon", and even afterwards, with the help

of his Thai boxing instructor interpreted for him, he felt the police were unhelpful. “As you know, the police officers are... busyyy... so I just got a letter that oh, unfortunately they could not find the guy. Even I could find the guy via CCTV.” Here, and when he talked about how landlords take advantage of their international tenants, Alim showed his awareness of and critical attitude towards ethical issues study abroad students encounter. However, he made it clear that he is fully aware of the differences in attitudes shown by members of the host community. When I asked him if Hungarians surprised him in any way, he said he was surprised “by some individuals, but not the Hungarians. Some Hungarians made me disappointed, some Hungarian surprised me.” Although there was no consensus in the evaluation of Hungarians among participants of the survey, most accounts were internally consistent in their generalised positive or negative evaluation. Alim, however, refused to generalize what he saw, when I asked him to evaluate members of the target language community.

Alim was critical of the host community in other regards as well. He was concerned about the amount of alcohol Hungarians consume, in his opinion, and expressed his inconvenience of encountering inebriated Hungarians on the streets.

Because, you know, in a public area, in most countries, it is bended, it is forbidden to have an alcoholic drink, and you drink, for example in the bus, or... yeah in public area. But in Hungary I found out there are guys drinking beers in the bus, in the park, everywhere.

This was the only instance where he expressed his wish for a change in the host community in a sentiment that was perhaps informed by his experiences with the governance in China, when he stated that public drinking should be “controlled by the government a little bit, by publishing some laws.” Alim commented on the lack of English proficiency among Hungarians, similar to the ten participants (participants no. 9, 29, 39, 43, 57, 71, 72, 82, 139, and 151), who wrote about Hungarians’ lack of English proficiency complicated their study abroad experience. Participant no. 82 wrote about his Ought-to level motivation (Dörnyei &

Ushioda, 2010), as he was forced to learn Hungarian by environmental and contextual factors. Alim, when I asked him how he managed to overcome the communication difficulties he faced due to the lack of Hungarians' English proficiency, also pointed towards language learning as the solution.

At the same time, Alim expressed his interest in the culture and history of the target language community, and his strategy when it comes to language learning was to participate in the Hungarian community and to build a social network that also involves local members. In Alim's view, learning about the history and the language of the target language community was part of having a successful study abroad experience. "Now, later on I started to learn some historical backgrounds a bit. And then I started to learn the language with the help of the preparatory school." Initially, he was intrigued by the prospect of tying his identity to the history of the target language community. When I asked him why he felt that learning about Hungarian history was meaningful and helpful for him he said this:

Because, you know, it depends on...how to say it? I am a minority in China. Ethnic minority called Uyghur. So, at the beginning I heard that Hungarian, the original Hungarian is from the East side, the Asian part of the world. So, I am curious about it... I was curious about it. So, I looked through some information, some materials. But they are all different. Some may say the Hungarians are Hun, or Mongolian, something like that.

Kinginger (2013, p. 351) noted that the role of ethnicity was rarely investigated in study abroad research, and when "the topic has surfaced, it has usually been framed as a source of difficulty for the participant." A rare exemption is Anya's (2011) case studies of African-American study abroad students in Brazil, who, after living as racial minorities in their home country, studied in a country where they were part of the racial majority. Alim, who belonged to an oppressed minority in China, once in Hungary, he looked for a shared origin and history with the target language community. He did not find a definitive historical connection between

his Uyghur ethnicity and Hungarians, but he was able to recall the stories of Hungarian pre-history that would make such a connection plausible.

Trying to find a shared ancestry, Alim raised the topic of the pre-history of Hungarians with one of his teachers. The teacher “said somehow about this, yes the Hungarians are from the East side. And I said I am a minority, Uyghur. She mentioned something about onogur, also from the Asians time. So, at the time I got really curious. I thought that I may have some, how to say... testvér...” Alim’s codeswitch and use of the Hungarian word “testvér” underscores the message of the excerpt, as his teacher’s answer verified his belief in a shared history between Hungarians and Uyghurs. Thus Alim, a member of an oppressed ethnic minority found an opportunity to align his identity with the target language community. Whereas he tried not to overemphasize the importance of the connection he discovered, he found it “amazing” and looking at Hungarians through the lens of this shared history he found other similarities as well. Besides the similarities in the traditional folk costumes, he also found several words in the Hungarian language that were Turkic in origin, therefore sounded similar to the corresponding Uyghur translations. “And some words in Hungarian, but I found out that they are also Turkic words as well. Like alma, and .. oh.. we say apa, ana.. that is like anya.”

Several studies have investigated heritage language learners in study abroad contexts and found that their motivations and experiences are markedly different to L2 study abroad students (Shively, 2016). Whereas Alim was not a heritage learner in Pécs, and he did not choose Hungary because of the connection, his exploration of the history of Hungary and of Pécs reflected similar experiences of heritage learners.

In contrast with his efforts to find a connection to Hungarian history, language and culture, whereas Alim also identified himself as a member of the community of international students in Pécs, his participation remained markedly peripheral to his identity. He admitted that his academic social network, or in other words, the social contacts he made at the university,

only involved other study abroad students, and he de-emphasized the importance of these contracts.

Internationals?... My experience with them?... We have class together, we have fun together during the weekends, but didn't really go travel somewhere together, only in Pécs. Yeah, we contact with each other, and that is it.

He seemingly spent a significant amount of time in the company of other study abroad students from different countries. He specifically mentioned Norway and Korea, as two countries where a larger number of students originate from. However, in his mind, the time he spent with these students, while enjoyable, does not seem to be of consequence to his self-development. Unlike his awareness of cultural, historical and linguistic nuances when it comes to Hungary, he saw the multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural study abroad community in Pécs as homogenous.

The thing that surprised me, is I thought there might be huge cultural differences, and I might not get in good relationship with them, but in fact, I cannot feel so called like cultural diversity. We have no bias on issues. That thing surprised me. I've been knowing them for 2 years, more than 2 years. We are good.

Whereas most study abroad students exhibit a high level of international posture, demonstrated by the fact that the most frequent descriptive code applied to participants' accounts related to their friendships with other international students from different cultural backgrounds, they rarely showed similar interest in members of the host community. Participants in Juan-Garau et al.'s (2014)'s research improved their willingness to communicate in the target language because of the development of their sense of belonging in an international community. In the same vein, participants in this research wrote about their increased willingness to communicate and improved language abilities in English in connection with their sense of belonging to the international student community. Alim, however, emphasised his

journey in finding meaning in the shared history of Hungarians and Uyghurs, he positioned himself as a peripheral member of the study abroad student community, and his interest lied in developing social contacts with Hungarians, and in the activities and history of Hungary.

Developing social contacts with members of the host community was an important goal for Alim. Unfortunately for him, he found study abroad students and Hungarian students to be segregated by design. When I asked if he had any social contacts with Hungarian students, he said that due to having different schedules he had “zero” contact with them. The different schedules probably refer to not having joint classes, where both Hungarian and study abroad students participate.

His most important relationship with a Hungarian in Pécs was his Thai box trainer, whom he consistently called “mester”, the Hungarian word for master, a sign of cultural familiarity and respect. He is also someone he considers to be a friend and an emergency contact. He originally met him through a PE class at the university, and after the semester he signed up at the Thai Box trainers’ gym. “So, day by day we communicate, we get to know each other.” Alim was familiar with the trainer’s personal history and held him in high regard. Alim considered him to be “tough”, “responsible” and “humane.” He also became a source of information on his new environment. In their frequent conversations they often talked about the “history of Pécs.” Since he is a local, Alim looked at him as an authority on Pécs, and accepted his opinions and recollections as a representation of what Pécs used to be. His trainer’s personal narrative became the lens through which he viewed and understood Pécs. His information regarding Pécs’s past came from the stories his trainer told him. For example, the trainer told Alim, that “ at that time, I mean 20 years ago, or 10 years ago, this city was relatively rich because of the factories, uranium...” According to the trainer “this city was rich, and there were many places to go, for example bowling, but nowadays many places are shut down, there few

bars.” In this telling Pécs became a city in decline “only because the factory, the industrial factory shut down. The main source, right now, is the university. That is the truth, I guess?”

The doubtful tone of Alim’s last sentence in the above quote shows that Alim was aware of the possibility that the picture of Pécs painted by his trainer’s personal narrative might not correspond to everyone’s lived experiences in Pécs, and he was looking for validation from me. The interest in the other person and his culture was reciprocated by the trainer. I asked Alim if he also told stories.

Yes, I do. About China. He is curious about China, so I tell him where I am from. And which part of China. I tell him about the differences between my ethnics and the majority, and ... you know the eastern part of the China there are many modern cities, like Shanghai, and I tell him what is happening there. Like the economy is growing fastly. Yeah, something like that.

In his stories about China, Alim emphasized his identity as an ethnic minority and contrasted what his trainer told him about Pécs’s recent history, and the situation of his “part of China”, with the rapid development characteristic of the eastern coastal area of China.

Alim gained legitimate participation in the practices of a community in Hungary through his trainer and the gym. When I asked him if besides his trainer and the workers in his local supermarket he has regular social contacts with other Hungarians, he highlighted the focal role of the gym in his social network. “Yes, but they are all from this training centre. This is the source.” Although his participation was peripheral, nonetheless it was legitimised by the interest his trainer took in him. As proof of his trainer’s humane personality Alim talked about how he included him in the group events of the Thai Box team.

Yeah, and ... humane. So, for example here are... there were some events. He took me to Orfű, for swimming. Not sure how to say, there was like, a beach, during the summer time, it is a park. He took me there. And we went to Budapest. He took me to Budapest for watching matches, so ... yeah.

Initially, I was confused by his phrasing and presumed that these excursions only involved Alim and his trainer, but later as the interview's topic became his relationship with the other students at the gym, Alim revealed that these trips were group events. Alim viewed his inclusion in these group events by his trainer as further legitimation as a member of the group. Furthermore, his assertion of the link between the trainer's humane personality and his inclusion in the group events might be rooted in his identity as a minority in China, and an expectation that study abroad students would not be afforded legitimate participation in Hungary.

Communication difficulties still existed for him in this space, and it kept his participation to be peripheral, as he would most often just listen and try to understand as much as he could. During the training sessions, as his trainer was talking to Hungarian students "I would listen and I would understand somehow, and then he would translate it into English to say it to me again, and then I would know if I got the information or not." Here and in the story about how he noticed the difference between the Hungarian words "szia" and "sziasztok", Alim demonstrated that active listening was an important part of his language learning strategy. Several of the codeswitch words Alim peppered his interview with came from his interactions in the gym, pointing towards the community of gym being his primary source of meaningful Hungarian input.

His participation with the training group led to Alim developing social contacts with some of the students there outside of the gym as well. These relationships made up for the absence of having Hungarian students as members of his social network. The absence of peers can be a serious limitation of SA student's language socialization. Since language learning partially depends on the quality of social interaction (Lantolf, 2012, p. 57), access to peer-interaction broadens the range of developmentally appropriate interactions that is conducive for study abroad students' language socialization (Kinginger & Wu, 2018, p. 119). After he



participated in the group events with the Hungarian Thai Box students, they became members of his social network in Pécs. Alim talked about an instance when he had some issues with the plumbing in his apartment, and he contacted one of the students in the group, who was also an apprentice plumber at a vocational school in Pécs. Alim had the phone number of the student, and although they had to work out some communication difficulties, they managed to fix the problem in Alim's apartment.

Taking agency over the problems arising in Pécs seemed to be an important part of Alim's identity. When I asked him if he found it easy or difficult to be self-reliant in Pécs, he proudly declared that it was "easy, for me." In the next turn he stated that his girlfriend had an easy time managing her life in Pécs, "cause she has me." Most of the positive experiences Alim talked about in Pécs involved overcoming some difficulty. Two of the stories were resolved with the help of local language experts. When his wallet got stolen, he asked his trainer to help him communicate with the police. When he had an issue with the plumbing in his home, he asked a fellow student from his gym to help him out. In the stories where Alim did not rely on help from the target language community the resolution was less positive. Alim also told the story of his girlfriend having a contentious relationship with one of her previous landlords. In the story, Alim's girlfriend and her landlord finally had a falling out over Alim's girlfriend having a pet in the apartment and the landlord not respecting the renter's rights to the property. In the end, the landlord noted her complaints in a letter.

As I remember the landlord sent a message in Hungarian to my girlfriend, that "I saw you have a pet right now, and yeah, you damaged the flat, the cat scratched the wall everywhere.

They were able to understand the message together, with the help of Google Translate, but even with Alim's help, his girlfriend had to move out of the apartment and lost the deposit, a predicament, that according to Alim, affects study abroad students quite often.

For example, they ask you to pay the first two month's renting fee in the beginning and later, when you want to move out, they say: "oh, you damaged the flat, I cannot give back the money." To be honest that means a lot for students, for international students living here.

Alim also talked about an incident with a local taxi driver that had an unfavorable resolution, and once again, he did not get help from local language experts. Alim's reliance on local language experts was a conscious strategy. He claimed that when he is having trouble communicating with someone, one of his strategies is to "contact someone that I know in Hungary. A local."

Alim's identities as a self-reliant person, as an ethnic minority member related to the host community by history, and as a member of a Hungarian community of practice were all helpful in including members of the host community in his social network. Being a member of the Thai Boxing gym gave him easy access to Hungarian input, to an expert, and to a peer group of target language speakers. By identifying himself as a relative of the host community he became invested in the history and cultural practices, a phenomenon Alim viewed as an element of language acquisition. In interaction with his Thai Box trainer, who was the most important Hungarian member of his social network, Alim positioned himself as an apprentice of Hungarian culture and local history. And finally, for Alim being self-reliant presupposed the ability and the willingness to communicate in the target language when necessary with the help of expert members of the target language community.

Alim took agency over his language learning. He practiced active listening in his daily interactions in Hungary and followed up on new grammar points and lexical items he encountered. He sought out input in social interaction with his gym teacher and with the staff of his local supermarket. He developed a strategy that involved machine translation and expert help. Being self-reliant and being a member of a local community of practice in the gym both presumed communication with members of the host community, and Alim demonstrated a high

level of willingness to communicate even in contentious situations. During the interview, I had the distinct impression that Alim had a positive attitude towards Hungary, and that he viewed his study abroad experience positively. An important part was played by how he reflected on his identity development, positioning, and agency affording him legitimate participation, and opportunity for language development through meaningful input.

### **5.3 NORA**

Nora, a Norwegian national, had spent three years in Hungary at the time of the interview. Nora started her tertiary education in Pécs as a study abroad student. Most Norwegian students at the Medical School spend their first two academic semesters in Oslo at Bjørknes University College. In their first year, these Norwegian students build social networks and study the Hungarian language as well as medicine, so when they transfer to Pécs in their second year, they arrive under entirely different circumstances than Nora did.

Nora was aware of these differences and she had considered starting her tertiary studies at Bjørknes University College but decided against it. She explained that after high school, her friends moved to Oslo, and she was afraid that it would have been harder to move from Oslo to Pécs after a year with her friends in college. So instead, although she enrolled in the medical program in Norway, she had decided to start her study abroad right after high school. Before she could start her study abroad, Nora had to choose between Hungary and Slovakia, and in her own admission “it was kinda fifty-fifty.” She did not know much about either Pécs, or Martin in Slovakia, and she only chose Pécs, because she “thought it was easier to fly” to Hungary and because a friend of hers “went to Budapest a lot” on vacation. Her knowledge on Hungary was limited to a tourist’s perspective: she heard that Budapest was a “nice city”, and it was cheap to come here for a summer vacation for people who wish to combine city and beach destinations.

Nevertheless, she arrived with beliefs and expectations regarding Hungary and the Hungarians. Throughout the interview Nora hinted at her initial belief that she also attributed to Norwegians in general of Hungary not being a desirable destination for study abroad. When she befriended a Mongolian study abroad student, she mentioned her wonderment over finding her in Hungary. She found the Mongolian girl's studies in Hungary intriguing enough to ask her "why does she choose a school in Hungary?" The implication being that Hungary is not an academic destination desirable enough to travel long distances for. She also talked about how she believes Norwegians consider the education in Hungary to be of lower quality compared to Norway. Although Nora stated that she thought "it is totally the opposite now", the qualifying time expression at the end of the sentence is evidence that initially she shared in this belief.

Her expectations were low not just about the university in Pécs, but also about Hungary in general. At the beginning of the interview, she admitted that initially she found Pécs nicer than expected, because she had "lower expectations." Due to her lack of knowledge regarding Hungary and her low expectations she "was thinking my life will be only about school." She had no expectations or goals of building social networks, and she did not talk about any interest in learning more about Hungary. Zaykovskaya et al. (2017) claims that positive, yet realistic initial beliefs of the target language community are conducive to a positive study abroad experience. In their case study, their participant's positive beliefs about and attitude towards members of the target language community ensured he did not become discouraged in situations he otherwise viewed negatively. Even as I am careful not label anyone's beliefs "right" or "wrong", Nora's initial beliefs and expectations of her time in Pécs were prohibitive of a productive and enriching study abroad experience.

Although Nora talked about how Pécs was "nicer" than she expected, she gave little concrete example of what she meant by this. Instead, she talked about how she was "happy with the teaching" as the teachers were "very educated" and the school was harder than she expected

it to be, giving further evidence of her initial beliefs of quality of education in Hungary. After this interjection, she returned to her evaluation of her new environment. Instead of elaborating on what she meant by “nicer”, she stated that “Hungary as a country is a bit behind compared to Norway.”

Here, and in other places, Nora indicated that she considered Norway to be the benchmark by which other countries and especially Hungary were to be measured. She presented Norway as model to emulate, a country whose customs will be replicated by Hungary in due time. Speaking of the use of cash in Norway and Hungary she said that Hungary “is going towards the same thing as Norway of course.” She was also disappointed about the lack of digital optimization in administration in Hungary. “For example, when you have to get a student card, or whenever we have to do something in university, it is a lot of steps. It is a process, instead of one click.”

Even as Nora was generally appreciative towards Hungarians, for example, she praised the knowledge of her teachers, and considered Hungarians to be helpful by intent, she presented English proficiency as an expected norm, and Hungarians who lacked English proficiency as peripheral participants in social interactions. When talking about her experiences with Hungarian administrators she claimed that the reason some Hungarian clerks are less helpful than others was their frustration over their lack of English proficiency which “might be because of the language, they feel helpless, maybe.”

When I asked Nora to talk about her experiences regarding communicating with Hungarians, she once again presented English proficiency as the norm. She claimed that it is hard to communicate with Hungarians, especially outside the university, and with older people, as they “don’t know much English, some does not anything.” She had noticed that this lack of English proficiency made Hungarians “insecure” in themselves and “angry” when approached.

Speaking of an occasion when she needed help at the post office, Nora claimed that since the people there “don’t know the language, so they probably don’t know what to do.”

As I noted previously, allusions to communication difficulties were a frequent topic in the written accounts of participants. Ten participants made comments on the lack of English proficiency they witnessed among Hungarians, and some of them expressed their beliefs that this lack of proficiency was one of the main factors that made study abroad experiences more difficult. Much like them, Nora also expressed her frustration over this state of affairs. She talked about how she got “a little bit angry” at the post office over the communication difficulties and claimed that communication was “not a problem” within the university as “most of the teachers knows English good.”

Her strategy in overcoming communication difficulties in situations where her interlocutors could not communicate with her in English was to “try to ask again. And eventually someone is trying to help, because sometimes they have just to point or... but it takes some time.” She noticed that Hungarians feel helpless when they encounter an English speaker, but she also positioned herself in this statement as someone in need of help, bereft of agency over the situation, waiting for assistance.

Whereas research suggests that most study abroad students’ experiences follow a pattern of positive experiences and emotions at the beginning, which give way to more nuanced and often disillusioned opinions after a period of cross-cultural adaptation (Harrison, 1993), Nora’s time in Pécs is highlighted by negative experiences. Upon arrival, she was overwhelmed by the demands of the university and the bureaucratic difficulties imposed on her by the Hungarian state. She found these demands especially taxing due to the novelty of having “to do different things, like you went to the office to do something and they said before you can get here, you have to do this, this and this.” Nora remembered her first semesters as times when she was “stressed all the time.”

When I asked her if she developed a strategy for dealing with this stress, she said that her approach was to expect the complications and acquiesce. “Not to be surprised, not to be annoyed. If it takes two hours, it takes two hours.” It took Nora “a couple of years” to resign herself to the realities of her situation in Hungary, but in her fourth year of study abroad she does not “get so frustrated or stressed out if something doesn’t work out at first.” A couple of years is a long period of time, and resignation and acceptance of difficulties is hardly a positive outcome. Since Nora viewed Norway as the norm and viewed Hungarian bureaucracy as needlessly complicated compared to the Norwegian norms, her annoyance and frustration with the situation only subsided when Pécs “felt more like home” for her.

She viewed Pécs as her home because her pre-study abroad social networks lost their importance for her. She noticed that she did not want to go home as often, “maybe because I understood that most of my friends moved to Oslo, and they were busy with their things.” She accepted that her connection to her friends back home in Norway became more distant, members of her family were still important members of her social network, and part of her support system. She had several visitors from Norway. A friend visited her once, before she moved to America. Her parents have “been here I think once in a year, or at least my mom.” Her boyfriend “has been here several times.” Given that she had also travelled home regularly, recently once a semester, but initially more often than that, it is safe to say, that she had been in the presence of members of her original social network in Norway every few months.

At a time when people are more interconnected and online than ever before, Nora often communicates with her family and friends in other places and considers them part of her support system. She claimed that her brother was instrumental in helping her to resign herself to her new surroundings. “I talked a lot to my brother. He studied in Krakow, in Poland. Before. Then I was younger, so I did not understand his problems, but now I understood. He also called home and cried sometimes. And that is okay.” She also often calls her parents, when she has

“problems outside school”, as even if they cannot directly help her, it comforts her to be able “say it out loud I think, and then I usually figure it out myself.” As Larsen, Urry and Axhausen noted, new communication technologies have made it possible that “people near emotionally may be geographically far away, yet they are only a journey, email or a phone call away” (2006, p. 262). These intermittent visits and long-distance communications made it possible for Nora to spread her “social networks beyond cities, regions and nations.”

Besides her family back in Norway, Nora also relied on her friends in Pécs, mostly other study abroad students, but mostly with “small things, like where to find your class.” Nora also mentioned that her classmates were also present when she had problems with her student card at the beginning of her studies. However, it must be noted, that both mentions concern the early days of her study abroad experience. Also, it is unclear if her classmates were present accidentally, as they had similar problems themselves, or intentionally, because Nora asked them for help. Nora, for one could not recall if she were the one to ask for help.

Nora stressed repeatedly that the study abroad experience had made her more resilient and independent, capable of relying on agency when facing problems alone. When I asked her who is her help in Pécs, her first answer was “first of all, myself”, earlier she mentioned her parents or her classmates. Her feelings regarding her newfound independence were mixed. She talked about her belief that her study abroad experience has prepared her for life after the university. “You just have to rely on yourself, because things doesn’t work out well, if you don’t follow up.” “That is how it is gonna be when you start working.” She also believed that students who studied in Norway, therefore lacked her study abroad experience will be at a competitive disadvantage to her at the workplace.

But I think when you go to... not always, but some of the people of Norway, would always think that things always work out. You can just relax, and things will work out. And then you come to adulthood... where you are actually already, but when you start



work, and then you are on your own. You have to solve the problems yourself. And I feel like, here we already have to do that, and that is a good experience.

Participants often wrote about their belief that the study abroad experience had made them more self-reliant. In fact, self-reliant was the by far most frequently identified subcode in the accounts. These participants often perceived their autonomy, agency, and independence as having to manage personal finances, take care of administrative tasks, “having to handle a lot of situations without help.” Whereas many participants felt that as a study abroad student, they are expected by the program design, and by virtue of being physically dislocated from their support system, to exercise agency and act more independently in their lives, their reactions were mixed. Some participants resisted their new subject positions as independent, self-reliant students, whereas others embraced it.

Nora’s reaction to this repositioning was ambiguous. On the one hand, she insisted that she saw the hardships she faced in her study abroad experience as facilitative towards self-development.

N: I’m glad, I am not studying in Oslo, now I am.

I: Why?

N: I would never have this experience.

I: What exactly do you mean by that?

N: Both the good and the bad. I don’t think there would be any problem compared to going to a medical school in Norway. When you are... for example in my first practice it wasn’t that scary. Because they treated you much nicer than the teacher for example in the Anatomy Department here. So it was nothing, compared. And I guess you have to believe in yourself in another way. Take the consequences and also... how to say it... you become more independent, because you have no other choice.

It is important that Nora insisted that she became more independent not by choice, but because she had to. Whereas she viewed her independence as a positive development that had prepared her for her life after the university better than a non-SA education would have, this independence was not expressed in agency and action in the interview, but as being more

resilient when faced with setbacks and difficulties. “If you fail an exam... if that was in Norway, like, you would be, like out of yourself. But here you go: OK, I failed, I will try again.” Research has shown that resilience is an important trait that correlates with successful study abroad experiences. For example, successful students in Goldstein and Smith’s (1999) investigation of the effects of cross-cultural training on cross-cultural effectiveness scored higher on the Emotional Resilience dimension of the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory questionnaire. A similar result was found by Kitsanas and Meyers (2001). In contrast, in Nguyen (2017) Emotional Resilience was one of the dimensions of the measured intercultural competencies that did not change significantly over time in the investigated population. Nora believed that it was the improvement in emotional resilience that made her study abroad experience worthwhile. Whereas in the studies of Goldstein and Smith (1999) and Kitsanas and Meyers (2001), emotional resilience was a factor in making a study abroad experience successful, and in the case of Nguyen (2017) it had no statistically significant relationship with it, Nora believed that her study abroad experience was successful not because of emotional resilience, but because during her study abroad she developed in emotional resilience.

Besides seeing her improved emotional resilience as the outcome of her study abroad experience, Nora was ambiguous about the need to be more independent. Although she insisted, as noted previously, that “you have to solve the problems yourself” and “that is a good experience”, she also elaborated on how distant she felt from her teachers, and received less support and help than she would have gotten in Norway. As a result, she viewed the university in Pécs as “rougher” study context and talked about how “it is not like your teacher is your... it is YOUR teacher. She is just there to teach you.” She felt abandoned by her teachers. “You asked the teachers, and the answer is... more like if you have a problem it is on you.” Nora was expecting to have a more personal relationship with her tutors, based on her understanding of the Norwegian practices in tertiary education.

For example, if you go to university in Norway, you don't have these small classes, these seminars, as we have here. You usually don't. But still, your teacher is there to kind of... it is a follow up, all the time. It is not like, if you have a problem it is your problem. It is also the teacher's problem, kind of.

She also stated that she had found Hungarians to be surprisingly "very nice people, most of the time of course", and that "most of the people are very helpful" who are only kept from helping study abroad students by their insecurities because they "don't know any English." However, two turns later, she talked about feeling "like nobody wants to help you", and then told the story of how she got angry at the post office, when she felt that the clerk was not sufficiently helpful. The independence Nora talked about in the interview does not seem to equal self-efficacy. She felt pushed to be autonomous by her environment, when she was not yet ready to be.

Self-efficacy, a concept introduced by Bandura (1977), refers to people's beliefs of being able to complete tasks successfully. A belief in self-efficacy has been linked to students' willingness to undertake challenging tasks, expanding effort and increased persistence in the face of difficulties (Vuong, et al., 2010). Research has found that study abroad tends to increase students' self-efficacy perception in communication, foreign language learning and cultural adaptation (Covert, 2014, Cubillos & Ilvento, 2012, Milstein, 2005, Petersdotter et al., 2017). In Nora's case, however, the over three-year-long study abroad seemingly has not resulted in an increased belief of being able to communicate with members of the host culture or self-efficacy in cultural adaptation. As seen in her narrative, Nora's strategy when facing communication difficulties was to either "figure it out myself" or hope that "eventually someone is trying to help, because sometimes they have just to point." As I noted previously, she considered communicating with members of the host community to be hard at the time of

interview, and English proficiency on the part of the Hungarians to be prerequisite of successful communication.

As for cultural adaptation, on the one hand, Nora claimed that at first she was surprised by how similar Hungarian culture was to Norwegian. She was “maybe surprised that they are the same as us” and that “Hungarians also, I feel like they act the same way.” It is important to point out that here Nora clearly identifies herself as a Norwegian, and positions Norwegians as the group to which others are measured. She has offered Norway and Norwegian customs as the norm several times in the interview, and claimed that Hungary, although a “bit behind compared to Norway” “is going towards the same thing as Norway, of course.” Whereas she saw the host culture as similar to her own, she expressed her frustration about the differences, for example about the difference in teacher’s approach towards teacher-student relationships.

She was interested in talking and befriending other international study abroad students. For Nora “it was very easy to get friends”, which she attributed to the fact that she, unlike most Norwegian students, did not arrive together with other students from Bjørknes University College. She found it “very nice to get to know other nationalities, because I never do in Norway”, and found that the three-week-long summer school she took before her first semester fostered socialization, since “there were fewer people, so it was easier to get friends early.” In this regard, she demonstrated a high level of international posture. Nora took low risks by befriending other Norwegian students as she developed closer relationships with her co-nationals, and she rented a flat with her cousin and other Norwegian girls.

Nora was critical of some study abroad students, who she identified according to their home regions. Although she claimed that she found Germans and Hungarians to “act the same way” as Norwegians, she was put off by the classroom practices of Iranians. She contrasted the respect “some nationalities” pay to the teacher to how an Iranian student “just speaks whenever they want, come to the class when they want, go out from the class when they want.” She also

complained that she found “some from Asia” to be hard to approach. She thought that they “stick together”, and they acted friendly in school, “but not after school.” Her depiction of the study abroad students did not necessarily give the impression that she viewed them as part of an international community.

She gave no indication of being interested in immersing herself in the host culture or developing social networks that include Hungarians. She said that she had some Hungarian friends, but she immediately clarified that these were “more like a friend of a friend”, and that there were “not many” such relationships. At the time of the interview, there have been some months since she talked to any of her Hungarian friends, and their interactions were constrained to small talk. “How are you doing? What are you up to? It is often about school. Like, if I met them now, I would ask about how the exam period went.”

She believed that for her to learn the language of the host community she would have to “do it every week to remember something, its such a new language”, and expressed her lack of investment in such language practices. “It is hard to use your time on Hungarian, because you know that you are not gonna use it later, like after the university.” The construct of investment (Norton, 2013) is a useful concept to understand Nora’s lack of motivation to study Hungarian. Norton claims that students make a conscious choice to invest time and effort into learning a language if they believe that proficiency in their target language will equip them with more cultural capital and social power. Nora did not believe Hungarian to be a source of value. She was not interested in the cultural practices of Hungarians, saw them as similar to Norwegian practices, or dismissed them as being “behind.” She did not view Hungarian proficiency as the source of social power, as she envisaged herself back in Norway, and she viewed communication difficulties she encountered in Hungary as a result of Hungarians’ lack of English proficiency, which should be solved by Hungarians improving their English. In this sense the communication difficulties were a consequence of Hungarians’ lack of social power.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that Nora felt she “know less Hungarian now, than I did first year”, when she had Hungarian for specific purposes classes, and was required to pass a Hungarian language exam. Although she was required to visit Hungarian patients in the hospital as part of her studies, and to be able to take their medical histories, this requirement remained unmentioned in the interview. She also did not give any indication that she viewed herself as an English language learner. The only occasion when she mentioned her initial anxiety about not being able to use her first language in her environment, as “you feel kind of lost with the language, like you are not speaking Norwegian anymore, you have to speak English, and then some people think you speak Hungarian as well.” The demands of the English and Hungarian speaking Ought-to Self, which her study abroad context expected of her were met by resistance.

Nora’s identities were not conducive to language learning in her new environment. She viewed herself first and foremost as a future doctor in Norway. Her expectations regarding her study abroad and her evaluation of her experiences in Hungary were formed through the lens of her Ideal Self as a medical doctor. She believed that her study abroad experience had made her more emotionally resilient, which had prepared her for her future career as a doctor in Norway, which in turn helped her accept what she perceived as a difficult time in her life as useful and valuable. She had little motivation to learn languages as she viewed it as a poor investment of her time and effort. Whereas she expressed some interest in developing social networks, and demonstrated her international posture, the social networks she developed were of less import than the networks she had in Norway. She continued to rely on her safe Norwegian social network for emotional support and companionship. Nora viewed her study abroad experience in Pécs as a difficult but beneficial interim period before she can return to her home country.

#### 5.4. EMMA

Emma, a Norwegian study abroad student, had also spent three years in Pécs at the time of the interview. She arrived in Pécs in her second academic year, after a year of studying medicine in Oslo at Bjørknes University College. Students at Bjørknes University College also study Medical Hungarian. They use the same textbook that is in use in Pécs. Once they arrive in Pécs, they integrate into the ongoing Medical Hungarian classrooms, with the expectations that their language education in Oslo followed the same general pattern as the classrooms in Pécs. As they proceed they will take the same language exam at the end of the second year, as the students who have already been in Pécs for a year at that point.

The structure of her study abroad program heavily influenced the construction of Emma's social networks. The friendships she built in Oslo, with students who were also preparing for their SA experience proved to be lasting. Emma talked about how she met "a lot of" her friends in Oslo, and how she "still talk to and hang out with" these students. She had managed to build new relationships with other students at Pécs, "both Norwegians, and Persians, and Jordanian." She was aware of the different nationalities of her friends. She claimed that while her social network was multinational and multicultural, as it contained "maybe one Jordanian friend, one Iranian friend, you know", what she called her "main group" consisted of her fellow nationals.

Her social network was also fractured into separate groups of friends. She believed that the reason for this fracturing was animosity between the different groups; it was merely a natural evolution, something that "just happened. You know, like you fit in with different kind of people." However, Emma also attributed this situation to the circumstances of her arrival. She said that one of the groups consisted of "people I knew from Bjørknes, and then the other one that I... it was kind of they were already a group as I got to know them here." Of the 38

Norwegian students who have submitted written accounts, three wrote about the importance of arriving in Hungary with fellow Norwegian friends. Befriending study abroad students from a wide variety of nationalities, on the other hand, was one of the most frequent topics. This would suggest that Emma's emphasis on the relationships with study abroad students she built before her arrival was uncommon.

Group identity was an important issue for Emma. She perceived the study abroad students to belong to separate groups "because some people enjoy something more than the other stuff." She believed that these groups were organised around shared interests, as "there are definitely people, that enjoy the same hobbies more, and maybe, therefore, hang out with other people that enjoy the same things." Emma explained that she was a member of an unusual number of communities of practice that were organised amongst the study abroad students. "Sometimes I do something with one group of friends and then you know I want to keep up with the other group of friends and then we do something with them a week later." Seeing how these communities were organised around shared interests, Emma traced back her involvement with multiple groups to her wide range of interests. "Like for me, I enjoy a lot. Like, I don't have one thing that I enjoy." She explained that her interests included not just "makeup" and "fashion", but also "gaming."

Based on what Emma told me about the organisation of her friend groups, it seems that while some groups organised around similar interests and hobbies, with a multi-ethnic membership, her main social group was more homogenous. The "Bjørknes-students", that is, the Norwegian students who met before the study abroad and arrived in Pécs together remained a separate group over the years, even as individual Norwegians gained memberships into other groups, groups that possibly predated their arrival.

Interestingly, Emma was surprised by the "cultural differences" she encountered in Pécs. As a Bjørknes-student she was more prepared for her study abroad experience than most



other study abroad students in Pécs. In their first academic year, Bjørknes-students visit Pécs on a field trip, study the Hungarian language, have a language teacher of Hungarian nationality, all features unavailable to other students before they start their study abroad. Even so, she admits that she “did not really realize there was such cultural differences before I came to Pécs.” Perhaps due to her multiple memberships in both a multi-ethnic and in a more ethnically homogenous communities, Emma felt that she was well situated to examine these differences, “like, you have to get to know someone before you kind of realize these sort of things.” Of the 133 participants of the first half of the study, only two of them wrote about their difficulties in adjusting to the customs of their new environment, and five of them wrote that they found Hungarians to be strange. More participants wrote about the diversity of their friend groups, and in some cases, they elaborated on the cultural differences as well. Emma’s insights into the cultural differences between Hungarians and study abroad students, and amongst study abroad students as well, was by no means the most common topic in the written accounts, but it was present in several accounts.

Despite her awareness of the cultural differences between study abroad students, Emma refrained from generalisations. “But then again, it also differs from people within the same ethnicity.” She was able to view the question of cultural differences as a complex and multifaceted question where culture and individual differences interact, but do not negate each other. “So, it is a bit hard to say, because I feel like, it is very individual, but there is definitely cultural aspect to it as well.” In Emma’s views the differences manifested themselves in the different “views” and “values” people exhibited. “But you would not notice from just having a superficial friendship with someone”, as these differences were not immediately obvious. Emma was surprised by the diversity of ethical views she observed during her study abroad. “In the hospital, some things that I might view as not ethically OK, someone else might not think is ethically wrong.”

Emma's focus on differences between the treatment of patients in her home community and host community led to her expressing two aspects of her identity that were difficult to reconcile in this instance. Emma viewed herself as both an open-minded individual, who avoids generalisations and accepts other cultures and ethnicities, and as someone whose professional identity hinges on being empathetic towards patients and defends their interests. Emma has noticed that patients in the teaching hospital were treated with less respect than they deserved. The treatment of patients is hardly a neutral issue, and Emma made it clear in later parts of the interview, that she is highly critical of what she perceives as the needlessly cruel treatment of patients in Pécs. But, since she claimed that the differences in the treatment of the patients is derived from cultural differences, and she viewed herself as accepting of cultural differences, she also felt the need to indicate that her opinion was based on her subjective feelings and she was open to the possibility that her judgment was erroneous. "I don't know, what is actually correct or not, I guess it is just like, differences, you know."

Emma's self-image as an open-minded person, accepting cultural differences was also challenged by other cultures "expectancies of a gender", especially Hungarian's beliefs about gender roles and chivalry. Emma explained that her pre-SA experiences with gender roles were different than what she observed in Hungary. "I feel like gender roles are a bit more accepted here, than for example, where I grew up." Once again, she could not help but express her negative feelings about something she perceived as a cultural difference, which led to her being a little defensive of her identity.

E: Yes, in Hungary as well, I noticed. Like, I talk to Hungarians, and they are like, yes of course, the woman is supposed to be home with the kid. You know? These kinds of things. And I guess... is that a cultural thing?

I: Yes, it is. Everything is cultural. Culture is everything.

E: It is scary to say, because I don't want to offend.

I: You are not going to offend me.

E: Like, these kind of things. I guess that is what I noticed the mostly, because it really bothered me.

Besides her hesitation over expressing her feelings, for fear of offending not just the interviewer, but one assumes the readers of this study as well, Emma once again made sure to explain that she merely expressed her opinions, and she is open to the possibility of being wrong. Emma found Hungarian men's behaviour on a date to be "old fashioned." She talked about how they wanted "to pay on the first date", and tried to "take care" of her, behaviour she found unagreeable. However, she also insisted that, the Hungarian men were only trying to be nice, and that this was their way of expressing "romanticism." Emma also left open the possibility of being at fault for not finding Hungarian men's date behaviour charming. "[M]aybe I am the problem."

Emma was wary of declaring definitively that she did not view Hungarians as suitable romantic partners. When I asked her, if she decided not to date Hungarians any more, she asked me if it is going "to sound racist, if I say yes?" While she admitted that she was more on her guard with Hungarians and might have avoided dating them "a little bit, definitely," she maintained that this preference "was just for me as person. I guess, I talk to other Norwegian friends about it, and they are like, super stoked, like: that is so nice of him." Emma's self-image as an open-minded individual, accepting of cultural differences kept her from passing judgment over something that she perceived as backwards cultural practice. On the other hand, her opinion did influence the development of her social networks and limited her exposure to Hungarian input.

Other aspects of her identity have also influenced her social contacts with members of the host community. As a previous quote has already demonstrated, she was empathetic towards patients, and in their defence she was critical of her fellow study abroad students. Emma saw the handling of Hungarian patients by the study abroad students in the teaching hospital as sometimes needlessly rough and inconsiderate, to the point where she felt "this needs to stop,

you know?” Some of the unease Emma felt over these situations resulted from the incompetence she observed from the study abroad students. Her main concern, however, was with what she understood as an exploitative situation resulting from a power imbalance between the patients and the medical students. These two issues were linked in Emma’s interview, as she felt that patients’ privacy and comfort were sacrificed for the benefit of medical education, and she wished to change this dynamic.

Like for example, if someone is trying to put the PBC into a patient, and they just keep trying, and it is like: OK, it is enough, like you have tried enough. Like, let’s get someone who can actually do it.

She felt that the patients’ interest should be protected even in a teaching hospital. Emma explained how the patients’ comfort was sacrificed in the service of medical training. “For example, if someone; like you have to take the blood pressure of a patient, and the patient is in pain, you don’t need like seven students looking at the patient in pain, while one person does something.” In her own dealings with patients, she tried to communicate her identity as an empathetic, supportive doctor. She explained that in her interactions with patients she was “trying to make them understand that I feel what they feel.” Emma talked extensively about her goal to make patients understand that she was “there for their comfort, and like, for their best.” She admitted, however, that communication with patients was an issue for her.

Emma talked about how her lack of Hungarian language proficiency meant, that she had to rely on “mostly eye-contact and smiling.” Even as their verbal communication was limited, Emma tried to spend more time with patients and took care of them. She liked “being gentle”, stayed with them, and helped them “after doing the examinations and stuff, not just drop everything and leave them.” She was clearly fond of working with Hungarian patients, who she described as “very cute” and “very sweet.” She also felt that the patients were receptive to her efforts and understanding of the communication difficulties. “They understand that we don’t

speak the language, and that we just want to learn, and there is a lot of people, that want to... they want to help us learn, you know, even if it is a bit uncomfortable for them.” Emma, who viewed herself as highly empathetic and caring, and had a very favourable opinion of Hungarian patients, unsurprisingly saw her patients as also highly empathetic and helpful.

In Emma’s experience, the patients were “willing to participate” and tried to make the communication more successful. They signal their support by being “very smiley” and were patient and helpful despite the communication difficulties. “[L]ike even if the Hungarian is pretty bad, you know, they still try to make you understand.” This rapport with the patients probably helped Emma gain confidence when communicating with patients in a hospital setting, even as she experienced that her learned strategy had its limits.

I guess we have memorized some phrases... so usually just say it, you know. Like, you just do what you have been taught. You introduce yourself, say what you are going to do, and why you are there. But a lot of the time, also, there is a Hungarian speaking person with us. Or, at least, I noticed that a lot, with the clinical subjects that we have now, so even if there is something that you don’t know how to say, they can translate it for you. So, I guess I just have to ask the questions, I’ll ask a lot of yes-no questions, to make it easier.

Emma’s communication strategy when talking to patients in the teaching hospital relied on the phrases she memorised in her Medical Hungarian classes the first two years of her medical training. Memorising phrases is a common strategy in preparing for the criterion requirements exam. Students in the exam are required to start their mock history-taking interview by introducing themselves and telling the examiner what they would like to do. Using mostly yes-no questions is also advice medical students receive from their teachers at the Medical School, and another advice Emma followed in her dealings with patients. Emma was expected to communicate with Hungarian patients, but she was not trusted to do so without supervision, as often there were Hungarian-speaking supervisors present to interpret for the students, when needed. However, she could not always rely on interpreters at the hospital. The

day before the interview Emma got lost at the teaching hospital and was unable to ask for directions from the hospital staff, as “the secretaries, they don’t know any English, at all. Like, I was at the wrong place first, and there was no communication.” Emma had to rely on the help of a patient who knew English. Later, she had to guess where she was supposed to go based on a number on a note, and she “ended up in the wrong place, and someone had to come to get me, and tell me: no, you are going over there.” In these situations, the phrases of medical history taking she memorised in the first years of her studies proved to be useless, and she was unable to use her limited Hungarian language knowledge to communicate.

She was conscious of the limitations of her Hungarian linguistic abilities and her communication strategies. She faced difficulties in situations her Medical Hungarian classes did not prepare her for. She claimed that her Hungarian was “limited to the hospital” but did not point out the over connection between her limitations and the study abroad program design. In restaurants, she relied on body language and pointing at the menu items she wished to order. However, she tried to avoid social interactions and locations where pointing was not enough to communicate intent as much as possible. One such location that she could not avoid consistently was the post office. Emma explained that she found dealing with the post office especially difficult, since “people don’t speak English there generally.” In a specific, especially memorable instance Emma wanted to return a package, but she was unsure if she managed to fulfil her goal or not. “But I gave the package, and I think got sent, because I got... I paid something, and I got the receipt, but on the page, on the website that I ordered from there is not return.” Emma found this experience so stressful, that it had reinforced her resolve to avoid the post office and similar situations in the future. She was willing to pay extra fees to have her packages delivered to the university, or to a post office with less foot traffic and fewer packages coming in, so Emma just had to “give them the note, and then you give them your passport, and then they give you your package, you don’t have to say a lot of stuff.”

Twenty-two participants in written accounts mentioned communication difficulties. Participants mostly pointed at Hungarian's lack of English proficiency as the reason for the communication difficulties. These participants wrote that communication difficulties were among the main problems study abroad students faced, and that they made their stay harder and more confusing. Emma repeatedly called her experiences in Hungarian language communication "stressful" and once also described them as "restraining." She avoided to "explore what happened" with the package she tried to return "because it is very stressful when you don't know the language." She also called her adventure in miscommunication across the hospital "stressful." In contrast to the patients at the hospital, who were very understanding and helpful, she found, that members of the host community are sometimes rude and unhelpful outside of the hospital.

When they get rude for example, or like, they don't want to help you, like they don't want to try to understand, they are just like: "nem tudom, nem tudom, nem tudom," or like "nem értem," you know? It is... that is the hardest part.

Emma felt it was important to share the stories she heard about how landlords take advantage of study abroad students, and her stories echoed Alim's reports. Not knowing the language of the host community, study abroad students often found themselves in situations where they were unsure what contracts they signed. "And you know, in the contracts as well, it is in Hungarian, and then in English, but it says if there is any difference, the Hungarian one is the one, that counts." While Emma personally had a "very nice landlord", she knew someone who had negative experiences with her landlord. Emma's friend had a disagreement with her landlord, that was only solved once she managed to find "English translation of the Hungarian law, like the actual tenant law, and it turn out that the landlord was breaking the law." Emma explained that in similar situations study abroad students relied on their friends, and that information about who are the landlords they should avoid are. She also sought out a real estate

agency with English-speaking personnel when she was looking for her own apartment. In the end however, she would “maybe also use the google for laws. You know, if it was a very big thing.”

She also felt abandoned in Pécs. “It is like you are just on your own, and you just have to figure it out yourself.” This feeling of abandonment was perhaps partially a result of another aspect of identity. Emma talked about the stereotype of a Norwegian, who does not want to bother others, as something that describes her as well. “Maybe it is a Norwegian thing, but like, you don’t want to bother anyone.” As a result, she found it difficult to ask for help from strangers, and it contributed towards her problem-solving strategies in situations involving communication difficulties. Emma also felt that this aspect of her identity, namely being “bad at taking initiative” in social situations hindered the development of her social networks in Pécs. By far, the most frequent descriptive sub-code identified in participants’ written accounts was self-reliance, as many of them felt that the study abroad experience has made them more self-reliant and independent. They interpreted this as a positive development of their selves. Emma, on the other hand, did not consider her self-reliance as something that developed because of her study abroad. Neither did she present it as an unequivocally positive attribute, but rather something that occasionally causes her difficulties and makes her study abroad experience less positive.

On the other hand, she also described herself as a talkative and socializing person, who, when given the chance “just ended up talking to other people in the class” and “would just kinda go to someone, and maybe ask them to translate a bit.” The discrepancy in self-description came from the different contexts in which the points were raised in the interview. At the beginning of the interview, I asked Emma how she feels herself in Pécs, and she talked about how she enjoys her study abroad experience despite being only involved with students, a telling statement I will come back to later. Emma described herself as talkative in situations where she



acted as a medical student. She asked for help and made friendships with Hungarian students in physical education classes. She willingly spent more time in the company of patients in the teaching hospital and used body language to communicate messages beyond the memorised phrases she learnt in Medical Hungarian classes. However, in situations where she could not act as a medical professional or a fellow student, for example in the post office, or when she got lost in the hospital, she felt abandoned and did not want to bother anyone. In these situations, Emma was looked at, and perhaps felt as a foreigner, an outsider, which negatively affected her willingness to communicate.

As Emma has pointed out, she also only socialized with her peers at the university. She found it “easier to meet students”, with the most important social group being the Norwegian students she met at Bjørknes University College. Developing friendships were mentioned in forty-six of the 133 accounts. All mentions concerned social connections with other students, and most commonly with other study abroad students, which would suggest that Emma’s experience was typical among study abroad students in Pécs. Emma’s social network included some Hungarian students she met in physical education classes. In these dancing classes she found it “easier to talk to someone, because you share the passion for dancing.” Emma was aware of her own strategies, that the context, and her previous knowledge made these social contacts more successful. She explained that the first dancing class she went to “the class teacher made us aware, that she did not speak much English, and asked if there were someone else, that could be like my translator as well.” She also found that “usually students are really nice, Hungarian students, even if you don’t ask, they will try to translate.”

In a similar vein, as we already saw, Emma found patients at the teaching hospital helpful and relatively easy to communicate with. On the one hand, she could rely on the memorised phrases she learnt in Medical Hungarian classes, and on the other the patient in the teaching hospital put themselves in a subject position conducive of communication for the

study abroad students. Emma explained that the patients want to help them and “willing to participate”, presumable in the learning situation.

However, Emma’s experiences with the clerks at the post office and the secretaries of the hospital were less positive. In these situations, where her interlocutors did not see her as legitimate participant in a learning situation and were not invested in helping her, she felt uncomfortable and stressed. Finding administration of everyday life tasks challenging and stressful is a recurring theme in the interviews.

Emma claimed that she really enjoys staying in Pécs, even if she “usually stay in between the university and the city centre” and she is “usually only involved in... with the students”, it hinted at her beliefs regarding what a study abroad experience should entail. Emma, like many other study abroad students, believed that a study abroad experience should involve being a tourist as well, visiting attractions, experiencing the host culture. Besides usually staying around the campus and the city centre, Emma also talked about “trying out different things that are possible to do in Pécs”, and she mentioned some local attractions – the Mecsekextrém Park, the vineyards of Villány and the popular Polláck community pool – by their name, demonstrating her knowledge of the area.

She also talked about how the demands of the university limit her opportunities for socialization and taking advantage of her environment’s offerings. Emma claimed that she has failed to cultivate her social connection with the Hungarian student she got to know at the P.E. class, due to time constraints. “You don’t really have a lot of time as a medical student. You know, so then you have to like hang out with the friends you already have, and then make plans with the new friends, and catch up with the old friends.” Emma had to prioritise her friendships, and her budding connection to a Hungarian student fell victim to her busy student schedule.

Time was an important factor in her language learning motivation as well. On the one hand, Emma felt that she ought-to learn Hungarian as a study abroad student in Hungary. She

explained that she felt personally responsible for her communication difficulties and inability to manage administrative tasks in Hungarian. “I think it is my fault, because I am living in Hungary, and I don’t know Hungarian.” As we had seen she also felt that her Hungarian language was limited to medical situations and that she felt stressed and restrained by her lack of Hungarian knowledge. She also so the connection between her troubles and her lack of language proficiency, and admitted, that “I should have learned more Hungarian.” She was also interested in participating in free time activities in and around Pécs, some of which she was familiar with. Emma was also open to building friendships or even romantic relationships with Hungarian students, even if she did not prioritise these relationships.

Despite the trouble that the lack of language proficiency caused her, Emma was disinvested in language learning. Emma had clear ideas of what it means to learn a language. She explained that to learn a language.

Yeah, no, because a language has to be repeated all the time. You cannot just learn it for two years, and then you just remember it. You have to keep reading it, and talking it, and using it, and I also had this app, the Duolingo app, I did a lot of that for Hungarian, but you forget it so fast. Yeah, you just have to like keep doing it. Almost like every day, or every other day, if you want to actually get good at the language. And a lot of time, also, it is hard when you don’t really use it. Because it is just once in a while I go to the post office, or like, once in a while I have to use it to explain something.

As we have seen the context, she found herself in, and her behaviour and priorities were at odds with her understanding of language learning. Since, Emma believed that language learning came from sustained use and meaningful input, her decision did not prioritise her Hungarian acquaintances and avoid stressful situations where she was expected to use Hungarian limited her exposure to the Hungarian language.

The interactions Emma talked about involving Hungarians fell into three categories. Most commonly, when she initiated a conversation in Hungarian, and her Hungarian interlocutors felt that her “Hungarian is not really good, like the grammar isn’t right, they just

talk English back at me.” In these situations, Emma felt compelled to switch to English herself, as she felt uncomfortable “trying to talk Hungarian to this person at the store when they are just talking English back to me.” The phenomena of Hungarians initiating English language communication around Emma was also present when the non-English speaking dance instructor made sure she has an English-speaking interpreter, or when her teachers at the hospital make sure there is an interpreter at the patient’s bed with the study abroad students.

Alternatively, she found the instances when she had to interact with Hungarians, who did not speak, or were unwilling to communicate in English stressful and frustrating. Emma felt that people “just refuse to understand” and, similar to other SA students, found Hungarians to be unhelpful. She mentioned the post office, Spar and the hospital lobby as places, where she felt she did not receive enough help from Hungarians. While Emma mostly experienced the unhelpfulness of the older generation, she expressed her opinion, that the main factor was not the age of the Hungarian interlocutors, but their language skills. “But a lot of the time, especially the younger ones are really nice. And they also know a lot of English, or someone will translate for me. That happened a lot of time actually, that Hungarians that are there as customers also just come and translate for me. That is nice.” Therefore, for an interaction to be successful most of the time, Emma had to rely on an English-speaking interlocutor.

One exception was her interactions with patients in the teaching hospital. These interactions were different from the more naturalistic but ultimately less successful interactions Emma had with non-English speaking Hungarians in several respects. First of all, in these situations Emma could rely on the Medical Hungarian knowledge she acquired in the first two years of her medical studies. Secondly, the patients, who were willing participants in these communicative events, seemingly have accepted their roles in Emma’s the language learning. And finally, Emma’s identity as a caring and empathetic medical professional helped her seek out more and more interaction, even if it involved relying on body language and memorised

rote phrases. These situations were created by the university for the students, and they served a purpose in Emma's medical training. Both Emma and the patients were aware of this and acted accordingly. Their willingness to communicate was a result of program design.

Ultimately Emma explained that she felt Hungarian was not worth the time and effort. She was willing to learn Hungarian when it was a requirement in her medical studies. "Like, you had time because it was a subject that you had to pass. Like, you had to study it to pass, so I think when you don't have it anymore it might take away the motivation." She of course referred to the first two years of her studies, when she had Medical Hungarian classes during the semester, and passing a simulated history taking exam in Hungarian was a criterion requirement for continuing her studies. Of these first two years, Emma spent one of them in Oslo, and besides her Hungarian teacher, she had no regular contact with any native speakers. After her second year of studies, Emma could have signed up for more, optional Hungarian classes, but these classes did not interest her.

Emma did not mind learning Hungarian; in fact she felt as a study abroad student in Hungary she should have learnt more Hungarian. She also thought her life in Pécs would have been easier if she had better Hungarian proficiency. Even so, she has decided that learning Hungarian would be a bad investment. "As well, you know, when you are tired and you come home, the motivation for the opening a grammar book and studying a language, when you are leaving in two years and you are never gonna use it again, I think that is the main problem for a lot of people, yeah." Admittedly, Emma's reasoning is sound. Given the circumstances it is not surprising that despite her friendly and outgoing personality, beliefs about study abroad, and identity as an open-minded study abroad student and caring and empathetic medical professional, she did not progress in her Hungarian language knowledge after her second year, and in talking to patients in the hospital she still relied on the phrases she memorised for her Medical Hungarian Final exam at the end of her second year.

## 5.5 AIZA

Aiza, a Swedish student with Pakistani heritage came to Pécs as a study abroad student four and a half years before the interview. In Sweden, she was part of a big, close-knit, multilingual immigrant family, and she was able to rely on her family for help. In Pécs, she found it “hard to adapt”, but after all these years living without her family, “here I feel so independent.” Aiza now feels that being constantly among family is something she finds difficult to cope with, and she is considering finding her own place in Sweden once she graduates from the University of Pécs. A development in self-reliance and independence was the most common topic in the accounts provided by the participants. Similar to Aiza, many study abroad students accredited their study abroad experience for this development and rationalised it as a positive one. Aiza did not commit to a positive evaluation of the change in her self-concept, but she did consider it to be a lasting change.

She also felt that the study abroad had increased her self-confidence and resilience, mostly because she believed finishing medical school in Hungary to be an extremely demanding task. “I feel like I learned one thing and that is: there is nothing impossible on Earth, and if I can do medical school in Hungary, I can do anything else.” The medical school was a common topic among the participants, and it was often characterised as difficult and hard. Some of them, for example participant no. 117, whose account I discussed in the previous chapter, also claimed that overcoming the difficulties at the medical school made them realise their own competence and resilience. Participant no. 50 also stated, that while his study abroad experience at UPMS helped him grow up “day by day and become stronger”, the demands of the university have also kept him from fulfilling his ambitions that were not directly related to his medical subjects.

Namely, he expressed his disappointment over not having had time to learn Hungarian. Aiza also talked about how a lack of time has affected her study abroad experience.

In her case, the demands the medical school put on her time resulted in a diminished social circle and limited experiences in Hungary. Aiza talked about the typical free time activities she engaged in with her friends and claimed that they spent most of their time indoors, playing card games and watching movies.

I: Do you always stay indoors?

A: Actually, yes. We have had sometimes, when we always used to say, OK we should go biking, or hiking, or, I don't know, horse-riding. Go to Orfű. But it is usually always that plans never work.

I: Why not?

A: I think lack of time, I should say.

Participants in five written accounts mentioned not having time to fulfill their ambitions as study abroad students. Participant no. 50 specifically wrote about not having time to learn Hungarian, while participant no. 51 explained that she had to adjust her lifestyle to one that would allow him to continue his education in Pécs. Aiza also talked about how the students found the exam periods, as it condemned them to “staying one and a half months at home, constantly studying for the exams.” She called these times depressing, much like participant no. 140, who felt he became “more depressed” during his study abroad.

While time clearly played an important role, language was also a significant factor in Aiza's frustration over not being able to participate in local activities. She explained that even when they tried to execute their plans, “there is nowhere we can contact easily, or someone who speaks English, so it is hard, because nobody speaks English.” Aiza and her friends were unable to go horseback riding or shooting at a range, because they were unable to overcome the communication difficulties. In the case of horseback riding, they wanted to go to a trainer, whom Aiza already knew from a physical education class. At the time of the physical education

Aiza had help from a “Hungarian student, who spoke English, and throughout the semester each class he helped me... explaining what the coach... or the horse-rider wanted to tell.” Without the help of this Hungarian student, Aiza felt unable to arrange the horse-riding session. Shortly before the interview Aiza and her friends wanted to visit a shooting range and learn shooting, but and they found a place and a phone number online. Unfortunately, the person they contacted spoke only Hungarian and Russian, two languages nobody in Aiza’s social network spoke. “Even my friend who speak German, and I thought maybe he can help us with German, and he says no, like, unfortunately he does not speak German or English. Now, I don’t know what to do.” Aiza demonstrated a significant amount of knowledge of Hungary, by assuming that the shooting range’s owner might speak German, but even so, she was unable to breach the language barrier.

Ten participants mentioned communication difficulties resulting from Hungarian’s lack of English knowledge in the written accounts. Participant no. 39 echoed a sentiment likely shared by Aiza, when he called Hungarians’ lack of English knowledge “one of the main problems here” for study abroad students. Participant no. 57 claimed that “hardly any Hungarians speak English”, and Aiza almost repeated her claim when she stated, that “here people hardly speak English.”

Aiza also complained of communication difficulties in clinical settings.

Yeah, this is the experience, since you asked me about experience in Pécs, that I find it difficult the clinical practices, and that is again because of the lack of the communication between doctor and patient, and student and patient.

Aiza felt that she was “not very welcomed” by the patients. She believed that the patients of a teaching hospital “should be willing to help” the students with the language, but they were uncooperative. In communication with the patients at Aiza had to rely on a few memorised phrases she remembered from her Medical Hungarian classes of the first two academic years,



on miming and showing instructions, and when these strategies failed, she fell back on the use of Google Translate. Google Translate was used by other study abroad students in Pécs as well. As we have seen, the software was mentioned by Alim, and participant no 29 also frequently relied on it in communication with the locals.

Having her phone in hand and looking up words and expressions on Google Translate made her feel unprofessional, and she considered this a “very bad strategy.” Aiza explained, that she felt frustrated by this situation at the hospital, and why it was important for her to “look and sound professional.” In her mind, her study abroad experience in Pécs was an ordeal she was willing to endure in the hope of fulfilling her ideal-self motivation of becoming a doctor. Her experiences of not being able to properly communicate with patients in the hospital made her question the soundness of her investment and her progress towards attaining her goal.

Me paying this amount of money, now paying a huge amount of money, living a very kind of difficult life, being already very independent, to, you know always cook for yourself, spending all this time, and obviously here is very difficult. You know, to be able to pass all your exams and not fail anything, all this efforts I made all these years, I do want to look and sound professional. And to be taken seriously.

Unlike Emma, who described her experiences with patients in overwhelmingly positive terms, Aiza felt that study abroad students were often wasting their time at the hospital. During the clinical practice classes in the semester, Aiza approached the patients in a group of study abroad students, where only one person at a time talks to the patient, and the others merely listen to the history taking. While they tried to involve everybody, as “in a small group one person can like ask, and then those who can speak some Hungarian, or they try. We all try. We do it in a group, so it is not like one person doing it, so it is more comfortable than doing it alone.” Taking medical histories in groups, taking turns in who asks the questions limits each student’s communication. Aiza felt that taking medical histories in groups was safer and more

comfortable. However, the patients reacted to the situation by being unwelcoming and unwilling to communicate, which in turn alienated Aiza from the situation.

Aiza's experiences with the summer practice were also negative. Medical students must take part in four summer practices. They can choose where to fulfill their summer practice if they match the requirements. For her first two summer practices Aiza stayed in Pécs in the practice hospital, and then she decided to go home, to Sweden, for the following two summer practices. Her decision was mostly influenced by her conviction that study abroad students benefited less from the summer practice than Hungarian students.

Hungarians are... there it is their own language, so when they go to the patient and they ask the, you know... the things they ask, talk to the patient... so the patient is... they communicate, that is why they are good with the practical things, they are not afraid of, you know, talking to the patient, or doing something.

Aiza explained that the study abroad students are "very good with theory", but "lack a big chunk of this experience, practical things." In class it might be due to the sheer size of the groups, "there is too many of us, so we don't get to do the practices", but in the summer practice the doctors do not take the students seriously, and they do not give the students clinical tasks to perform. "But in the summer practices, usually that is obligatory to do, but when we do, we just waste our time here. We just stay the entire day in the practice place, and then there is nothing to do." she felt study abroad students were "not really helped" and due to communication difficulties, "because we don't speak the language, we don't even dare to ask... so it is like hard. Both communication and lack of experience makes it hard to dare."

Ultimately Aiza has decided to her summer practices in her third and fourth year in Sweden. She felt she was taken more seriously there. She liked that she was described to patients in Sweden as a colleague by the doctors, "and then also the very fact that they actually let us do something with the patient" made her "more comfortable" and confirmed her hope

that “the four-five years of study here is for something.” Being more comfortable in Sweden and being trusted to perform clinical tasks stand in stark contrast with Aiza’s feelings in the summer practices in Hungary.

Aiza was frustrated by her experiences and study opportunities as a study abroad student being limited by lack of language knowledge, and her frustration was exasperated by her identity as a multilingual and competent language learner. She proudly talked about being able to speak five languages and explained that having a shared language others cannot understand was the basis of her most important friendship in Pécs. She described her primary social network, the group of her closest friends as a multinational, multicultural group. Her best friend was a Burmese-Norwegian, who “spent a couple of years in India”, she was also close friends with a Filipino-Norwegian and multiple Jordanians. Although her primary social network was very diverse, her closest relationship was with another student she had similar experiences with. She explained that besides sharing a language, he also “spent time in India, and I spent time in Pakistan, I was born in Pakistan, so these... the school experience and the culture is pretty similar.”

Being a competent and successful language learner was an important aspect of Aiza’s identity. She mentioned the fact, that she speaks five languages multiple times over the interview, and she also talked about her belief that “it should be easier for me to learn” Hungarian. Unfortunately, she found Hungarian to be “the hardest language I have ever... I have ever had experience with”, and she was unhappy about her lack of progress in acquiring the Hungarian language.

Aiza explained that she was partly to blame for this lack of progress. She said she “could have done a better job at” learning Hungarian, and that she “could have done more.” She felt she had been “lazy to learn Hungarian”, because she “did have the opportunity to do so if I wanted to.” Unfortunately, I failed to follow up Aiza’s statement, and therefore no detail was

given about the specific actions Aiza believed she could have taken to learn Hungarian. She did talk about, however what she perceived as the university could have done to help the study abroad students learn Hungarian.

Firstly, Aiza felt that the university kept the Hungarian and the study abroad students separated and thus prevented the development of social contacts between them. At the university, Aiza explained, “everything is so totally separate that we don’t meet.” She believed that the only way for study abroad and Hungarian students to meet was at parties, and since she did not go to parties, she had no close Hungarian friends. Somewhat contrary to her statement, Aiza did mention Hungarian students she met at physical education and a Hungarian girl she met in summer practice, who she “late on became friends with.” Both social contacts happened in educational settings, but outside the regular, obligatory classes. They therefore support Aiza’s claim that contacts between Hungarian and study abroad students primarily develop in classes, and that having more classes together would result in more social networks that contain both Hungarian and study abroad students. The situation in which she met these two Hungarian girls were similar: Aiza took part in a class where Hungarian proficiency was expected of the students, and she received help from an English-speaking Hungarian student who interpreted for her. In physical education class the horse-riding teacher did not speak English and the instructions were entirely in Hungarian. In the summer practice, while there was other study abroad students as well, and in fact the study abroad students might have been the majority of the class, the instruction and the bedside communication took place in Hungarian, and the sole English speaking Hungarian student “had to translate to the others.” Neither of these acquaintances became close or important friendships for Aiza. She believed that she did not have any Hungarian friends she could rely on if she had a problem in Hungary.

Aiza also believed that the university is to blame for not requiring her to take Hungarian language classes. Aiza declared that the university “should include Hungarian in the obligatory

programs, from the beginning of the school, when we start from the beginning, till the fourth-fifth year.” She believed that there were complex reasons why she failed to learn the Hungarian language, but ultimately she traced back most of them to the university’ decisions and failings. “If it was obligatory, I would like to go to the classes, I would have more chances to learn more, to practice more. Maybe if there was like, better books, I don’t know, like assignments to do.” One reason she mentioned, why obligatory language classes would have contributed to her language learning success was being able to “practice more.” As she explained in other parts of the interview, she felt separated from Hungarians, had no regular contact with Hungarians, and even in clinical practice classes she had limited opportunities to speak the language. Therefore, it is not surprising that even by her fifth year in Hungary, she considered the language class her primary opportunity to practice the language.

Her insistence on the importance of the language classes being obligatory shows Aiza’s complex motivational system when it comes to learning Hungarian. As we have seen Aiza viewed herself as a competent, and successful language learner, and language proficiencies were important parts of her self-image. She expected herself to be able to learn the Hungarian language during her study abroad and knew that Hungarian proficiency would be useful. “Most of the time, when you go to the store, you know, daily life, other than school, it is very hard. Because we always have to use Google Translate, or someone who speaks tiny bits of Hungarian.” Language knowledge was also important in building her social networks. Her most important social contact, her friendship with a Swedish-Burmese student was based on their shared knowledge of the Urdu language. Her self-image and beliefs about study abroad language learning did not translate into motivation and investment. The university did offer language classes beyond the second year, and Hungarian language classes and tutors are available to study abroad students who seek them out. Aiza felt that the university should have made Hungarian language classes obligatory, “because at the end of the day, that we students

are. We never study on our own. We always rely on the exams, tests.” She expected the university to “push us to study”, to provide the external motivation for the study abroad students.

Aiza’s Ideal Self was a competent and caring medical professional who was also at odds with her experiences with Hungarian patients. She explained that she saw herself as someone who thinks of her patients as family members and connects with them on a personal level. At the teaching hospital in Pécs however, she had a hard time communicating with patient, and she felt “not very welcomed” by them. Her complaints of the Hungarian patients were focused on the communication difficulties, namely when she perceived as the patients unwillingness to communicate and her discomfort over using communication strategies she believed were unprofessional.

Aiza did not exert agency over her own language learning. She did not take proactive steps to learn the language or to engage in self-directed engagement (Mercer, 2011c). She looked at the university to provide not only ought-to motivation for language learning, but also to create the circumstances for interaction. She expected the university to provide her with language practice opportunities in language classes and by putting study abroad and Hungarian students attend the same classes. She also avoided interaction with Hungarians. Aiza and her friends spent most of their free time indoors, playing cards and tabletop games, even as they would have preferred to try other activities. They gave up on the idea of horse riding because the instructor did not speak English.

## **5.6 JACOB**

Jacob, a Norwegian study abroad student, had arrived in Pécs two and a half years before the interview, which made his stay in Hungary the shortest among interviewees. He, just like

Emma, started his medical studies in Oslo, at Bjørknes University College. Accordingly, he arrived in Pécs with a larger group of study abroad students he already knew, and who he shared a background with. He also had more information on Hungary and Pécs than most study abroad students did, and he started his Medical Hungarian studies before his study abroad experience started. He initially decided to study medicine in Hungary because he was not admitted to a medical university in Norway, and he did not want to spend a year earning better grades to gain admittance to a Norwegian medical school. “So I had two choices, either redo some exams, and use maybe a year or one and a half year on that. Or to come here. And I thought, well, why not?” His main motivation for applying for a study abroad program was unconnected to language learning, experiencing other cultures or seeing more of the world. It was mostly a step taken to avoid what he saw as investing time and energy into the speculation that he might be admitted to a Norwegian university. Once he looked up Pécs on the internet he found it agreeable, but he maintained that his reasons for coming to Hungary were unrelated to his perception of Hungary.

During his year at Bjørknes University College his Hungarian teacher prepared him for his study abroad. They took a trip to Pécs to “get to know the city” and “meet the people down here.” She also told him what to expect in Pécs. Jacob talked about not being surprised by the cheapness of Hungarian commodities and services. Being able to live comfortably and afford activities that would be too expensive in Norway was an important topic for Jacob.

You can afford to do more activities. Like go to paintball, you can do that more often. You can go to parties more often, because it is not only food, alcohol as well is cheap. When you go to bars, a beer might cost you maybe 800 forints, maybe, I am not too sure, but back home in Norway, the price of that would be 2500 forints for one beer, so it adds up very quickly.

He was also happy about the living conditions he could afford for himself in Hungary and compared his rental apartment favourably to his previous accommodation in a student

collective in Oslo. In his first academic year he lived in an apartment with seven other students. He had a 10 square meter room for himself, but he had to share one kitchen, two toilets and two showers with his numerous roommates. In Pécs he rented an apartment of comparable size with only one other Norwegian study abroad student, all while paying less. He was surprised by the quality of rental apartments in Pécs. “And the apartments were very nice. I did not think they would be, to that degree. I think I did believe it would be more like the situation in Oslo.” Perhaps, he expected Hungary to compare unfavourably to Norway in the conditions it can provide for the students, and although he was aware of the relative cheapness of Hungarian prices, he did not expect to find living in Hungary to be more comfortable than it was in Norway. He also referred to Pécs as being “down here” which was likely a reference to the fact that on the most frequently used map north is up, and south is down. Norway, therefore, is portrayed to be upper than Hungary. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue that the metaphors we use show and influence our thinking and one of the most basic conceptual metaphors present in our minds is one that equates up with good and down with bad. Jacob’s use of the phrase “down here” and his surprise over the quality of affordable student housing in Hungary might be signs of this thinking.

Jacob also exhibited an identity of being good at budgeting and spending money wisely. He explained that he was “living currently only on the student loan, and on what I made during the summer. As well as trying to save up money, of course.” He claimed that Norwegian students could “live comfortably, eat enough food, so if you are good at spending money, if you are good at budgeting, you live more comfortable throughout the whole year.” Jacob claimed that in Pécs he was able to afford “to do more activities.” He mentioned going to parties whenever they have “time and energy”, going “to the movies”, “going to some restaurant in the city centre”, playing football, boxing, and paintball as the activities he mostly engages in.



Jacob had a core group of friends he did the activities with. He distinguished between his closest friends, an “inner circle” made up of five or six guys he “went to school with in Norway”, and between a “larger circle” of maybe 30 friends. Being a Bjørknes University College student was an important factor in the development of his social network, just as it was important for Nora. He already had a group of friends, with similar experiences and in a similar situation, when he arrived in Pécs. As I noted earlier, arrival to a study abroad destination marks the beginning of a new period of life for the participant, a period that tends to prompt extensive renegotiation of the study abroad students’ identities. In these circumstances social networks are an important source of support for study abroad students, and accordingly, Jacob felt that his friendship with the other Bjørknes-students he arrived with became stronger on arrival. “Because, we only had each other down here, to begin with.” Jacob believed that the basis of their friendship were their shared experiences, most notably the communication difficulties they are shared. “Because we all had the same struggles, with the exchange of course, and, like, the language barrier is the same for all of us. English is not always spoken here, to a certain degree, and the culture is a little different.” Gender might also have played an important part in the formation of the “inner circle” of his friends.

Jacob’s “inner circle” of friends consisted of “5-6 guys.” Among the people who at one point belonged to this inner circle, but not anymore, Jacob mentioned the “ex-girlfriends from me and other friends, who suddenly started talking shit, and is now very little liked, or not very liked at all by a lot of people.” Seemingly women were only granted access to the “inner circle” through their relationships to men in the circle, and their membership lasts as long as their relationships. Jacob also observed a marked difference in how male and female study abroad students built their social networks. While nationality was an important factor for both men and women, Jacob maintained that it was more influential in developing social networks among women.

Grouping after nationalities. And to me it seems like, groupings are more amongst the girls maybe, because I have a lot of different nationalities as friends, and they are mostly boys, because well.. we meet through physical education, we meet at some different parties, classes. Whatever. And we form a bond from that, but most of my female friends only have female friends from those nationalities, that are closer to them.

He attributed this situation to Norwegians' social awkwardness, which he believed to be more pronounced among girls. To explain what he means by calling Norwegians "very socially awkward people" he claimed that Norwegians "do not like conversation", "do not like small talk", and they "respect personal space" more than Hungarians. To demonstrate his point, he talked about how Norwegians would rather stand on the bus, than sit next to a stranger. "Back home we might respect it too much. Way too much. I mean, if there is two seats, meant for two people, not for one person and one free seat." Jacob also told the story of a Norwegian girl, who experienced Hungarian's impatience and intolerance of people taking up two seats on the bus. As the story goes the Norwegian girl frequently put her expensive bag on the seat next to herself, and "a couple of times" she was told to move her bag in rather unfriendly terms. Jacob himself seemed agree with the Hungarian passengers. Concerning the respect for personal space, he claimed that "back home we might respect it too much." In the story of the Norwegian girl, he partially blames her for the confrontation. Jacob explained that the girl "is very small, and she might look very angry, when she is relaxed", probably implying that her appearance invited confrontation. He also called taking up two seats "being a dickhead."

Jacob's evaluation of Hungarians was centred around two topics, small talk, and commuting. In contrast to his statement on Norwegians not liking small talk, Jacob considered Hungarians to be more direct in service encounters, and engagement in small talk to be less of a requirement in Hungary. "It is not rude, but it is more direct. You are there for a reason, get it finished, basically. I am not sure if I like it or not." In this clear comparison to home norms, Jacob expresses his ambivalence. Where Emma always insisted on expressing her accepting

and open-minded identity when evaluating Hungarian norms, even as she talked of her personal aversion of these norms, Jacob remained ambivalent in his evaluation. As previously stated, his evaluation of Hungarian's behaviour and customs on buses was more positive. He was disapproving about what he perceived as Hungarians hostile attitude towards cyclists and pedestrians. Jacob felt Hungarians were impatient with pedestrians crossing the road and acted downright dangerously around cyclists. Hungarians in these situations made Jacob uncomfortable and confused. Being confused by Hungarian norms and behaviour was also mentioned in a few written accounts, although never in the context of commuting. The fact that Jacob's evaluation of Hungarians focused on service encounters and commuting is indicative of no Hungarians being present in his social networks.

Some study abroad students also commented in the accounts on the racism they encountered from Hungarians. Jacob has also observed a level of racism some groups of study abroad students had to face in Hungary. "It seems that my friends, who are more Iranian, Pakistani, such, they might feel more... more forms, smaller forms of racism, maybe. Prejudice." He added that he never experienced this prejudice being directed towards him, as he is white, only towards people in his "larger circle" of friends.

Jacob's "larger circle" of friends consisted of maybe 30 people of various backgrounds. Besides his compatriots "there is a couple of Germans, one guy is half-Hungarian and half-German", "Turkish guys, some Iranians"; a "Norwegian-Serbian", "Jordanian, some Asian, Korean, maybe, mostly." While his "inner circle" of friends was made up of people he knew before he started his study abroad, the people in this "larger circle" he met in class at the medical school. In specific they met "through Hungarian" "and through Anatomy class as well." Both classes are taken by a vast majority of the study abroad students in the second year of the medical studies, which of course was the first year Jacob spent in Hungary. They talked and got to know each other while walking to and from the Hungarian classes, which at the time were

located off-campus. By my estimations, the walk from the medical campus to the Medical Hungarian classrooms took about fifteen minutes each direction, which gave the students about one hour of walking time each week to bond.

Jacob explained that university classes in general were the sites of developing social networks. He met most of his friends in classrooms, or through people he went to class with in the first place.

Well, I mean, it is maybe, if you have class with someone all the time you might start out with doing... or maybe you are put into groups and then you are in groups with them and you start talking. And after class you might talk to them, you say see you later, and you see him the next day. You start talking more, less and less about school and more and more about other things. So it develops. And more like, oh, are you going out? And if there is something happening, like, International Evening, or the semester opening party, or such... you may, if there is a pre-party for example, and you meet them, they are talking about going, you might just invite them.

Importantly, developing social networks centred around the classroom left Jacob with very little chance to include Hungarians in his social networks. "I have not met too many Hungarian students down here. At school." "Because, well, they are not in the English program, they are not in the German program, they are in the Hungarian program." Jacob called the Hungarian students "secluded" from the study abroad students. The only exemption from this rule he could think of was physical education. As we have already seen in previous interviews, study abroad students did indeed meet Hungarian students in physical education. For Alim physical education turned into participation in a Hungarian community. Emma met the only Hungarian students she considered to be friends in physical education, even though their friendship was distant and cursory. Aiza met Hungarian students who translated for her during physical education classes. Jacob took boxing classes at the university, and while he did not meet any Hungarian students in boxing class, he did meet three Hungarians, who "got to other universities, other places", in the gym where he goes for boxing training. Just like Emma, she

developed a cursory relationship with these Hungarians, and he called them his friends. “If I see them, I talk to them, I ask how they are doing. We might do something together in the spare time... if we have time, of course, and the schedule allows it.” Their communication was limited to talking about “how they are doing. What they did last weekend, for example, whatever” and happened exclusively in English.

Besides these fellow gym members Jacob only had regular contact with his landlords and neighbours amongst members of the host community. Jacob met his landlords, a Hungarian couple “maybe twice a month” at which time they spoke “about anything” and engage in what seemed like friendly banter based on Jacob’s description. “For example handball. They are both very interested in handball, and Norway played Hungary not too long ago” and Jacob “just had to make sure, that they knew that we won.” They communicated in English, which only the man spoke and only a little. Jacob had little interaction with his neighbours. He mentioned that some of them did not speak English and seemed “very uninterested” in Jacob. But even with the neighbours who knew English Jacob barely communication beyond typical politeness formulas. “It might be hello, good day, and how are you.” Jacob was unmotivated to meet and befriend Hungarians. He expressed his positive evaluation of some Hungarian customs in comparison to Norwegian ones, but he showed no signs of being interested in learning more about Hungary.

Jacob used the Hungarian language “whenever I have to talk to people in regard to everyday things”, which seemingly consisted of service encounters, such as shopping at the supermarket or taking a taxi. He admitted that roughly half the time he found that he had ask his conversation partners if they could continue the conversation in English. Jacob clearly felt that his Hungarian knowledge was inadequate for the purposes of his stay in Hungary. “Maybe it is not too, not necessary to ask how they bowel movement is, maybe. So not really too much Hungarian, because we do not know the small talk.” He referred to the curriculum of the

Medical Hungarian classes, which focus exclusively on preparing the study abroad students for taking medical histories and interviewing patients, and neglect everyday topics usually covered in the first chapters of beginner-level language textbooks. For example, the textbook used in the first academic year in Medical Hungarian classes includes chapters like patient's biodata and numbers (chapter 4), patient's biodata and history taking questions (chapter 5), or a body parts, pain, and symptoms (chapter 11). Other chapters are concerned with daily routine and activities, but the examples given, and vocabulary included always come from the field of medicine.

Jacob in his interview did not mention using Hungarian in any medical context, and for the contexts he mentioned his language knowledge was ill fitting. He considered this to be the main reason why some of his friends "don't use Hungarian at all. Almost. So, they simply do the obligatory subjects in Hungarian, they finish that, and they almost never use any." For Jacob, the use of Hungarian required effort, and made his daily life more complicated. "I try to use some Hungarian, but that is because I want to try to learn it." When he uses Hungarian to communicate with members of the host community, he has to deduct meaning from body language and from "certain words in the sentence", and he has to limit his own language use to short answers. "So, I can simply say igen, or nem, or whatever would fit the conversation of course." This is a problem often encountered by low-proficiency language learners, that is exacerbated in Jacob's case by the more specialised nature of his language knowledge.

Jacob attributed his language learning motivation to having a language learner identity. "I've always been more interested in languages. Yes, in general." However, he did not mention anything that would indicate being invested in learning the Hungarian or having a Hungarian-speaking ought-to or ideal-self. Since he did not talk about communicating with Hungarian patients, he gave no hint if he saw the Hungarian language as useful for professional development. In fact, by pointing out that some of his friends do not use Hungarian at all once

they are finished with their Medical Hungarian classes, Jacob hinted at a view present among study abroad students, of Hungarian being unnecessary for their continuing studies, once they had successfully completed their criterion requirement language exam.

Jacob also did not consider Hungarian to be useful for living in Hungary. He told the story of how he needed to ask his neighbours for help, when a “main switch for the apartment” went off while he was studying for an exam and desperately needed the internet. That was perhaps his longest conversation with his neighbours, as they had to discuss the situation “in more detail, but that was in English, because I don’t know the name of the power generator or such in Hungarian.” Since he mentioned how he had to use English in this situation due to limitations in his vocabulary knowledge, I asked him if he seized the opportunity and asked the Hungarian words for power generator from his neighbours, he dismissed the premise of my question and stated that he was “more interested only in getting my internet to work.” Jacob did not consider that it would have been useful for him to know how to ask his neighbours for help.

Jacob also felt that he became more “mature” while in Hungary. He attributed “living away from parents” for this change, as well as the influence of the Hungarians he encountered, who he described as “more focused” and “more solution oriented.” “You are there for a reason, get it finished, basically.” He also thought that being a study abroad student in Hungary helped him achieve independence, although by necessity. “They won’t contact you, you have to help yourself, they won’t help you.” Self-reliance the most frequently identified code in written accounts, and it was also mentioned in other interviews, which shows that Jacob’s experience was not uncommon among study abroad students. While Jacob considered these changes in his self-image to be related to his study abroad experience, he did not connect them language learning.

Jacob’s identity as a language learner provided him with some motivation to learn Hungarian, but this motivation was not rooted in investment or a Hungarian speaking Ideal Self

image. He considered himself to be a student of English. Lack of English proficiency only came up with regards to Hungarians, and Jacob attributed communication difficulties to Hungarians' lack of English skills. He talked about his desire to learn Hungarian, and he took agency over his language learning. Jacob expended limited effort on learning the Hungarian language, but he considered his attempt at Hungarian small talk in supermarkets and taxis to be language practice. Unfortunately, his access to meaningful Hungarian input was limited by his social networks. Neither the "inner circle" or the "larger circle" of his friends included people he used Hungarian with. He had regular contact with three Hungarian students in the gym, with his landlords, and with his neighbours, but he preferred not to engage with them in Hungarian. Despite his identity as a language learner and his agency over his language learning, and due to his lack of motivation and lack of access to meaningful Hungarian input, Jacob remained unable to converse in Hungarian beyond "a certain point" in his third year in Hungary.



## CHAPTER SIX: A SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In my dissertation, I aimed at identifying and exploring some aspects of identity construction central for the study abroad students at the Medical School of the University of Pécs. In doing so, the work also shed light on how the interviewees' identity and agency related to their participation in social networks and subsequently their study abroad experience. The findings revealed issues the participants face during their study abroad pertinent to curriculum design and program development, and the strategies they employed to cope with them. The insight gained through the analysis and discussion of the data allowed for a better understanding of the lived experiences and identities of the study abroad medical students at Pécs.

The first research question asked what were the aspects of identity construction that emerged from the written accounts of study abroad medical students. Based on the content analysis of 133 written accounts five main aspects emerged: self-evaluation, adjusting to the study abroad context, evaluation of the study abroad context, social networks, and communication. These aspects were identified in a large number of accounts. Self-evaluation was the most common among participants, with 95 mentions in the 133 accounts. The frequency counts for the aspects can be seen in Table 15. Each of these aspects were made up of multiple related descriptive codes and subcodes.

Table 15.

*The frequency counts for the aspects of identity construction identified in the written accounts.*

| Aspect                      | Frequency count |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Self-evaluation             | 95              |
| Adjusting to the SA context | 72              |

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| Evaluation of the SA context | 69 |
| Social networks              | 56 |
| Communication                | 36 |

Two subcodes made up the aspect labeled SELF-EVALUATION, attribute and learning. The descriptive code “Attribute” was applied to every account that contained information on the participant’s self-image in relation to the study abroad experience. The accounts revealed that the students commonly considered the study abroad experience to have contributed to their growth into a self-reliant, autonomous adult. Some form of growth in self-reliance was mentioned by 36 students. Becoming more open-minded and multicultural was also a frequent topic in the accounts, and once again participants generally attributed becoming more open-minded to their study abroad experiences. The descriptive code “Learning” was applied to every account that contained information on how the study abroad experience contributed to the participant’s knowledge. Most commonly, the student wrote about how they have knowledge of the world and other cultures has increased due to their study abroad experiences. Learning about the host country or culture was mentioned only by three participants.

The descriptive codes that made up ADJUSTING TO THE SA CONTEXT were less homogenous. Students wrote about their strategies in acclimatisation to their new environment and new responsibilities entrusted to them in the study abroad. The unfamiliar customs and behaviour of Hungarians was also something they mentioned in connection with adjustment. Some of them found certain new customs perplexing and off-putting, such as showing affection by hugging or the complex and situation-dependent system of greetings. Ultimately, most participants framed their adjustment to new customs as a positive process, as it gave them opportunities to experience the different ways of living. Some of them found that they could

afford to live more comfortably in Pécs, due to the higher living standards they could afford in Hungary. Five participants mentioned that they managed to adjust to their new environments with the help of new friends and newly developed social networks. Unfortunately, homesickness was also commonly mentioned. The students wrote about missing friends and family, and feeling that homesickness proved to be a distraction from their studies. Loneliness was another difficulty the study abroad students had to overcome, which they were typically able to do with the help of their social networks. Most participants had considered the adjustment to their new study abroad environment to be a necessary difficulty. They expressed their feelings that it was worth enduring homesickness and loneliness to realise their dreams of becoming medical professionals, or in their process of personal development as a result of their sojourn.

Besides writing about their adjustment to their new environment, the participants also often commented on and evaluated their study abroad context. An EVALUATION OF THE SA CONTEXT was present in 69 written accounts. This aspect of identity construction consisted of the participants' evaluation of Hungarians, Hungary, and the Medical School. The study abroad students' opinion on members of the host community was mixed. In seven cases, they described Hungarians as kind, and in one as open-minded. However, in six other accounts the writer thought them to be unfriendly, and three students thought them to be racist. These opinions were mostly formed on the basis of personal experiences, although three other participants wrote about their negative preconceptions regarding Hungarians. Students' perceptions of Hungarians' unfriendliness seemed to correspond to them being non-White. Of the eight students who found Hungarians to be unfriendly or racist three were Iranian, two were South-Korean, one Chinese, one Indian, and one American. Interestingly, a participant, who considered Hungarians to be unfriendly, and another one, who thought them to be kind, have both found them to be kinder when study abroad students are able to communicate with them

in Hungarian. Apart from evaluating the members of the host community, the students also shared their opinions on the host country, and similar to their evaluation of Hungarians, the accounts revealed mixed opinions. Participants most commonly characterised Hungary as strange, but with varying value judgment. Some of them thought that Hungary's strangeness was a source of difficulty, while others expressed happiness over the differences. The students were more consistent in their evaluation of the Medical School. The accounts that evaluated the Medical School paint a university that is very demanding of the participants' time and effort. Some students reported of adverse reactions towards the high degree of difficulty they encountered and claimed that it had negatively affected their abilities to pursue extracurricular activities. However, they also expressed their happiness over being able to fulfil their professional ambitions and their belief that the academic difficulties they faced contributed towards their identity development.

With regards to SOCIAL NETWORKS most students wrote about the contacts they developed during their study abroad period. Three participants mentioned the importance of the social networks that have already existed before they arrived in Pécs. Apart from them, the other students who wrote about the importance of social networks in their study abroad experience either wrote about the friendships they developed in Pécs, or, in four cases, about socialization difficulties they encountered during their sojourn. Of the four, a German student claimed that students at the English program mostly socialise within their nationalities, and the other three wrote about the difficulty of approaching and befriending Hungarians. The remaining 49 accounts that mentioned the development of social networks showed that the participants usually managed to build multicultural social networks in their study abroad environment. The participants expressed their opinions that building multicultural friendships with other study abroad students had been instrumental in the development of their intercultural communicative competence and in the development of their identities as open-minded study

abroad students. In fact, the nationality of the friends the participants made was highlighted in 28 accounts. Six of these accounts contained information on the study abroad students having repeated friendly interactions with Hungarians, who are part of their social networks. Of these six, two had mentions of habitual daily small talk with members of the host community, and three had mentioned having access to Hungarians due to their living arrangements. Only one of them claimed to have multiple Hungarian friends.

COMMUNICATION was the least often mentioned aspect of identity construction. Mentions of communication attempts and the participants' beliefs about language learning and their own language learning progress belonged to this aspect. Communication difficulties were written about mostly in the context of students being frustrated by Hungarians' lack of English proficiency. Although not all participants felt that it was Hungarians' responsibility to learn English, but their lack of English proficiency was often described as one of the main problems study abroad students face in Hungary. Mentions of communication difficulties the student had in communication with other study abroad students were less common, and even when these issues were mentioned, the students wrote about their pride in the progress they made in overcoming these communication difficulties. Language learning was referenced fifteen times in the accounts. In only two of these mentions, did the students specify that they were writing about learning the Hungarian language, and in four more cases they wrote about learning both Hungarian and English. In some cases, it was difficult to determine which language the participants were writing about. The participants rarely presented themselves as language learners, and more rarely as learners of the Hungarian language. With regards to English language learning the students wrote about how the English-medium education and their new, multicultural social networks contributed to their language development. Meanwhile, only one participant who connected her Hungarian language learning to her university studies, but even

her thought that Hungarian proficiency would be useful in her daily life outside the university. It remained unclear if she believed Hungarian to be useful for her professional development.

Based on the aspects of identity construction identified in the accounts, international medical students in Pécs seemed to consider their study abroad experience to be a time of personal change and identity construction. They believed that it made them more open-minded, self-reliant, and multicultural. They thought that they became more knowledgeable about the world in general and about the cultures of their fellow SA students in particular during their study abroad. Participants frequently evaluated themselves along these lines in their accounts. Not only was this the aspect of identity construction most often mentioned by the participants, being self-reliant, open-minded, and multicultural was the lens through which the participants presented other aspects of identity construction as well. In adjusting to the study abroad context, the students the participants wrote about how being open to new experiences and to other cultures were an important part of the adjustment process. Homesickness and loneliness, two frequent topics of the accounts, were described as difficulties one had to overcome to “grow up” and become self-reliant and autonomous. Building a multinational social network of study abroad students was often connected to becoming more open-minded and multicultural in their outlooks.

The accounts pointed to a limited interest in the host culture and members of the host community. Evaluation of the study abroad context was the third most common aspect of identity construction in the accounts, and it revealed the students’ mixed opinions about Hungary, Hungarians and Pécs. Some participants considered Hungarians to be kind, whereas others described them as unfriendly and racist. Hungary was described as strange by five students, but familiar by two. Pécs was discussed in only five accounts, and three of those highlighted how, due to the lack of distractions it is a good place to study. Interestingly, only six participants mentioned having Hungarians as members of their social networks, and only

three wrote about learning about the host country. In a related point, the participants also frequently wrote about having difficulties in communicating with Hungarians. Learning the Hungarian language was mentioned by a total of six accounts. Whereas the study students were capable of evaluating their new study abroad context based on their personal experiences, they had only limited exposure to members of the host community and little investment in gaining access to them.

The second research question asked how study abroad students' identities related to their access to social networks. The written accounts suggested that study abroad medical students in Pécs rarely manage to build social networks that contain members of the host community. The semi-structured interviews revealed the relationships between the interviewees' identities and social networks.

Alim looked for and found a historical connection of his ethnic identity to the host community in Hungary. This supposed historical connection led to an interest in Hungarian customs and possibly his interest in learning the Hungarian language. He also viewed himself a self-reliant person, who looks for opportunities to gain membership in the host community. As he became a member of a Hungarian community of practice through his participation in the Thai boxing gym, this interest in the host community served as a frequent topic of communication with the trainer of the gym. He was the only student among the interviewees, whose contributed towards involving Hungarians in his social networks.

Meanwhile, Nora viewed herself mostly as a future doctor in Norway, and she evaluated her experiences in Hungary through the lens of her Ideal-Self as a medical doctor in her home country. She continued to rely on her at-home social network of friends and family members for emotional support and showed little investment in learning the Hungarian language or involving Hungarians in her social networks.

Emma, another Norwegian student had similarly little investment in learning the Hungarian language, and despite her identity as a talkative and socializing person and an empathetic medical doctor, who looks out for the interests of the patients, her social networks in Pécs did not include Hungarians. She befriended a Hungarian student in Jazz Dance class and another one in summer practice, but neither of these friendships developed into regular contacts.

Aiza's identity as a multilingual and a successful language learner was at odds with her failure to learn Hungarian during her study abroad. She illustrated the importance she placed on language proficiency in social network development. Having a shared language other members of her social networks cannot understand was an important factor in the friendship she built with a Swedish-Burmese student. In conversation with Hungarians, she often relied on the Google Translate algorithm, and in the Hungarian language medical classrooms, for example in the clinical practice classes, Hungarian students translated for her. Both of these situations contrasted with her identity as a successful language learner, and made her feel unprofessional, which further exacerbated her negative feelings, and turned her away from situations involving Hungarians.

Finally, Jacob talked about his evaluation of Hungarians, who he perceived as more focused, and solution-oriented, less open to small talk, when compared to Norwegians. He also believed that the study abroad experience made him more independent and self-reliant, mostly due to a lack of support he received from members of the host community. He had only limited contact with Hungarians, mostly with Hungarian students that attended the same boxing gym as he did. He also met his landlords twice a month, at which times they engaged in friendly small talk in English. Apart from these occasional contacts Jacob's social network, just like every interviewee except Alim, only contained other study abroad students. Jacob also talked about his identity as a language learner but gave the impression that this despite his intention



to learn Hungarian, his investment in learning the language was lacking. The interviewees' identities rarely led to seeking out access to members of the host community, or in the otherwise rare occasions when they had regular contact with Hungarian students, to value these connections and attempt to involve them in their social networks. The only exception was Alim, who found a meaningful historical connection between his identity as an ethnic minority and the host culture. His interest in the host culture, together with his identity as a self-reliant person, led to a legitimate participation in a Hungarian-speaking community of practice and regular meaningful Hungarian input.

The third research question asked how the study abroad student's agency related to their access to social networks. In the written account SELF-EVALUATION was the most frequent aspect of identity construction, and the students often wrote about their belief that the study abroad experience had made them more independent and self-reliant. Agency is often understood as a person's capacity to act on the world (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112), and students' belief in the growth of their own independence is also a belief in their own capacity to act and bring about effects (Karp, 1986). The participants also believed that due to the study abroad experience they became more knowledgeable about the world and other cultures. The period of their study abroad was viewed by the students as a time of personal growth and learning. This belief was exhibited by the interviewees as well. A crucial question concerning agency is how much individual choices are restrained by their sociocultural contexts. Since conceptions of agency differ in different cultures (Skinner et al. 1998), by becoming more knowledgeable about other cultures, the study abroad students at Pécs have also come across new conceptions of agency.

The interviewees shared the participants' belief that the study abroad experience contributed towards them becoming more independent. Jacob talked about his conviction that he became more mature and independent during his stay in Pécs. For Aiza, being alone in Pécs

was a difficult, but ultimately worthwhile experience that led to her increased independence. Nora also talked about her belief that the study abroad experience has made her more independent and emotionally resilient, and while she talked at length about her struggles in adjusting to her new environment, she felt that these difficulties prepared her for the realities of a medical professional's life. In other words, Nora thought that the study abroad experiences increased her future agency, or capacity to act as a medical professional.

Despite their beliefs of the study abroad being a time of personal growth and learning, and despite the proclaimed language learner identities of some of them, most of the interviewees did not exercise their agency over their Hungarian language learning or over constructing social networks that involve Hungarians. Nora talked about her lack of investment to study the Hungarian language, which she believed required immense effort and time to master. She showed little interest in involving Hungarians in his social network. Emma took responsibility over her lack of Hungarian proficiency and claimed that she “should have learned more Hungarian” during her study abroad. She was open to participating in local activities and building relationships with Hungarians. She explained however, that she viewed Hungarian language learning a bad investment of her time, if she is only going to use the language occasionally. Whereas Nora and Emma were convinced that it would be necessary for them to take agency over their own language learning, and refused to do so, Aiza felt a lack of agency over her language learning. Aiza talked about her conviction, that her lack of Hungarian proficiency was mostly a failure of the Medical School. In her opinion, the university should have imposed more rigorous language requirements on the study abroad students and provided them with more and better learning opportunities.

The difference in Nora and Aiza's conceptions in their agency over their language learning demonstrates the difference individuals might perceive in their choices (Kramsch, 2012). However much or little agency they believed to have over their own language learning,

neither of them acted on their environment to facilitate their language learning, which might point towards the sociocultural context's negative effect on the students' Hungarian language learning, which would be in line with a structuralist view of agency in language learning (e.g., Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, Wen & Clement, 2003).

In this case as well, Alim was the outlier among the interviewees. He took agency over his language learning and did not lack the investment to spend time and effort on his language learning. The most important part of his learning strategy, which provided him with continuous meaningful Hungarian input, and with integrative motivation, was his success in building a social network that involves Hungarians. Alim achieved this by taking every opportunity to talk with and befriend Hungarians: he had daily talks with the staff of his local supermarket, was on friendly terms with his landlady, and most importantly, he became a legitimate member of a Hungarian community of practice in the form of a Thai Boxing gym. His Thai Boxing trainer was perhaps the most important member of his social network, and his welcoming attitude and interest in Alim's culture and history was an important factor in the construction of Alim's social networks. However, at first Alim had to sign up for the gym.

Alim's participation in the Thai Boxing gym started within the structures of the Medical School, as a voluntary physical education class. Other interviewees also took part in physical education classes where they mingled with Hungarian students. Aiza signed up for a horse-riding class, Emma took part in two different dancing classes, in Jacob's case it was boxing. For various reasons, these experiences did not yield the result as Alim's. Emma became friends with a Hungarian girl in the dancing class, but their friendship waned over the months. Jacob takes boxing lessons with Hungarians ever since, but their relationship did not progress beyond mere acquaintances. In contrast with Alim, who saw his Thai boxing trainer as an important asset in gaining knowledge about his environment and a guide in becoming a legitimate member

in a community, neither Emma nor Jacob seemed to attribute importance to the Hungarian students in their physical education classes.

The fourth research question asked how the SA students constructed the image of their training institution in narrative. Accordingly, the Medical School was mentioned in thirty-one written accounts. Although most participants did not comment on their training institution in their accounts, it was still one of the more frequently mentioned topics. Students' writings, where it was mentioned, were uniform in depicting the Medical School as an entity that poses difficulties and challenges for the SA students, but the evaluation of these challenges differed between participants. Some participants expressed their displeasure over the high-workload and wrote about panic attacks and stress. Others welcomed the challenge and wrote about the difficulties as formative factors in their identity construction. They believed that these difficulties have made them more resilient and stronger.

Interestingly Alim, talked the least about the role of the training institution in his SA experience. Alim exhibited the most success in building a multiplex social network, had the most positive SA experience and took the most agency over his own SA and language learning success amongst the interviewees. One of the few instances in his interview, when the training institution came up happened when he raised the issue of a possible shared Hungarian-Uyghur ancestry with one of his teachers. He met the most important member of his local social network, his Thai Boxing trainer in a PE class organised by the university, but their relationship soon surpassed the confines of the university. He also de-emphasized the importance of the social network he built with other SA students.

The importance of the training institution was more pronounced in the other interviews. Nora talked about her initial belief of Hungary being a less than desirable destination for SA, and how the main reason she chose Pécs as a destination was travel related. Once she arrived in Pécs she found that the teachers were "very educated", and the university was harder than

expected. She recounted being stressed all the time at the beginning of her academic career. Ultimately, she believed, that the difficulties she encountered at the university, and the lack of help she received from the instructors were formative in her identity development, and prepared for post-academic life better, than a Norwegian education would have.

Two other Norwegian students, Emma and Jacob arrived in Pécs after a year of studies at Bjørknes University College, and therefore by their arrival they already had a social network of Norwegian SA students. Emma believed that SA students at the university build their social networks among ethnicities and talked about how her closest friends were other Norwegians. She also talked about her dissatisfaction with the treatment of the patients at the teaching hospital, and of her efforts to treat them more humanely, than the local norm. The story she told about getting lost at the hospital illustrated her feelings of being an outsider in Pécs. Even so, the training hospital was the only place in Pécs, where she felt comfortable talking in Hungarian. Although she believed that an SA experience should involve language learning, she regarded Hungarian a bad investment of her time. This led to a lack of motivation and a diminished willingness to communicate in Hungarian, and she tried to avoid social interactions and locations where pointing was not enough to communicate her intent. Consequently, her life in Pécs had been confined to the few places she felt comfortable in. She emphasised repeatedly that she only built new friendships in Pécs with other students, and besides students the patients at the teaching hospital were the only people she sought out. Although she believed that an ideal SA experience also involves being a tourist in the host country, she also talked about how the demands of the university limit her opportunities for socialization and taking advantage of her environment's offerings. For her the training institution was the focus of her SA experience, both by choice and by program design. The image of the training institution she constructed is one that limits her possibilities and puts inordinate pressures on her time. Alternatively, the

training institution provided her with the only contacts she had with members of the host community, and it was the locus of her social networks.

Jacob remained closest to the people he met in Oslo. Any new friends he made in Pécs he met in university classes. Since he only had classes with other SA students his “outer circle” of friends only contained SA students of other nationalities. Jacob talked about his training institution relatively little, and mostly as a place of building social networks, that consequently outgrew the confines of the university.

Aiza was the most critical of the training institution, although she also subscribed to the notion that her SA experience led to her becoming more independent and resilient. She believed that finishing the Medical School in Pécs was extremely difficult, and her academic success gave her pride and confidence in her abilities. She also felt that the demands of the Medical School had a detrimental effect on her social networks and limited her experiences as an SA student. She was frustrated over not being able to participate in local activities and being underutilised in the teaching hospital. She also felt that the university failed to provide her with adequate opportunities and external motivation to study the Hungarian language. She blamed program design for this situation, and for her lack of Hungarian friends. Ultimately, she decided to fulfil as many of her academic requirements away from Pécs as she was able to do. In her telling, similar to what Emma believed, the training institution in Pécs contributed to growing up and becoming more independent, through the difficulties they had to overcome. Both felt the institution constraining. Aiza’s relationship with the training institution was fractious, as she found the program design lacking, and looked for opportunities to supplement her medical training elsewhere.

The interviewees construction of the image of the training institution was varied. However, the three interviewees who talked about the institution the most viewed the Medical School as a difficulty to be overcome. This sentiment was also present in the written accounts.

They reacted to the challenges imposed by the training institution in diverse ways. One frequent narrative described how the pressures and the difficulties of the university made the SA students more resilient and independent, and in turn, according to Nora, equipped to be effective medical professionals. Alternatively, the pressures and difficulties were compounded by failures of the program design, that had needlessly limited their experiences as SA students.

The last research question inquired about the implications of the present narrative study for the educational institution. The SA student population is a growing and ever more important stakeholder in the global, as well as in the local academic context. Therefore, I believe that it is paramount that we investigate the possibilities of improving SA student experiences and outcomes using their accounts. As a language teacher my focus is on the language learning success of the SA students and on their ability to receive regular, meaningful Hungarian input.

In the written accounts, participants frequently wrote about how study abroad had contributed to their self-assessed identity construction, evaluated their study abroad environment, and discussed their new, multicultural social networks they developed while in Pécs. However, mentions of developing friendships with Hungarians and of Hungarian language learning were rare. Fortunately, the interviews allowed me some insight into the reason for this situation.

I must mention first that the structure of the Medical School the study abroad students find themselves is counterproductive towards them receiving regular, meaningful, and naturalistic Hungarian input. Second, even if some students consider themselves capable and willing language learners, like Aiza did, and others believe that better Hungarian skills would help them become more autonomous and successful in Hungary, like Nora did, study abroad medical students usually have a low level of investment in learning Hungarian. As Emma explained it in her interview, it is hard for these medical students to invest time and effort into learning a language they do not consider necessary for their future professional goals. And

finally, in some cases, the students did not feel they had the necessary agency over their own situations. Nora expected the university to put in place structures that would necessitate her language learning, and Aiza talked about how the university separates study abroad and medical students by its structures.

However, Alim's case highlighted that given the right ingredients, it is possible for study abroad students to gain access to regular, meaningful, and naturalistic Hungarian input in Pécs through the development of a social network that contains multiple, central Hungarian members. In his case, a combination of investment, born out of finding a historical connection with the host community, that he felt important for his Uyghur identity, and agency over his language learning was the key to success. Alim's case is unique to him, but I believe that it demonstrated the importance of identity development, investment, and agency as necessary for study abroad medical students in Pécs to achieve similar outcomes.

## **6.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

Although I carried out the research after thoughtful planning, its limitations need discussing. One such limitation is that I had to emphasize certain aspects of the data, that I felt were meaningful and relevant, and a large section of the data collected for the purposes of this research could not be included in the report. As it stands, I believe that the study provides a thick description of the research, that allows the readers to understand the findings, but the possibility of alternative readings and findings cannot be denied. Therefore, the full dataset on which the study was based is included in the appendices for the readers' perusal.

The study's case study design was another such limitation. The semi-structured interviews' structure was based on the descriptive codes and emergent themes identified in the written accounts to ensure that my questions in the interviews were relevant to the life



experiences of many study abroad students at Pécs. However, as is the nature of case studies, the interviews only provide insight into the five interviewees' lived experiences. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised, they are merely reflective of this sample.

The qualitative methods made it possible to provide a detailed picture of the context and of the interviewees. Investigating the experiences of study abroad students at the Medical School in Pécs I was able to highlight the issues important for study abroad students in Pécs, and how they impacted their study abroad experiences.

The aim of the research was to highlight the lived experiences of the participants. The research relied on the memories, beliefs and opinions, and the factuality of the participants' statements was incidental for the purposes of the research.

Researcher bias was present in the study. Since I was also a study abroad student in the past, and as their teacher at the Medical School, I was able to employ an emic perspective and build a good rapport with the interviewees, which helped in the interpretation of the data and with the conduction of the interviews. On the other hand, my own experiences might have also clouded my judgment, and my identity as their former teacher might have influenced the participants' responses.

## **6.2 FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF RESEARCH**

The dissertation yielded some questions that would merit a follow-up in the future. One of the main functions of qualitative research is to generate hypotheses for further research to investigate. In this case, for example, the research suggests that for study abroad students in an English-medium education context to receive regular, meaningful input in the language of the host community it is necessary for the students to demonstrate identity development, investment, and agency. A logical next step would be to design a study to test this hypothesis.

The study focused on the perspectives of the study abroad students, and to get a fuller picture of the context, it would be desirable to investigate relationships of study abroad students and members of the host community from the perspectives of other stakeholders, including locals, university staff and Hungarian students.

Since the research only involved medical students in Pécs, an investigation of study abroad students' experiences in other Hungarian faculties and universities might highlight how the specific circumstances of different universities might impact study abroad students, and to uncover similarities and differences in the experiences.

My hope is that even without the follow-up studies, this research has enriched our understanding of study abroad students lived experiences and might improve our abilities to ensure a successful study abroad period and the development of individuals taking part in them.

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## APPENDIX A

The following written accounts follow the order in which the written accounts were digitized. Spelling and grammatical errors were preserved during the digitization. The numbering is not continuous, as some participants handed in empty papers.

### **Participant 1**

2 years ago, I came to study in Pecs. When I was in airport I met with a girl, luckily she also arrived Budapest to study in Pécs. We found our way together to reach the small city, Pécs. We found our dormitory and we lived together in a small dormitory room together for 5 months.

I was in Preparatory course first, it was quite boring because I could not get used to city in the beginning. At the end of the first 5 months I took entrance exam for Medical school. After that my life was totally different, I met w lots of new friends. The small city started to become bigger and bigger for me because when you have really nice people with you it is more enjoyable to discover new places in this city. I like Pécs because it became my hometown in a short time, I learned how to deal with lots of problem myself. I feel much more stronger and confident.

When I started Preparatory course I have never thought I will miss this city when I go home, Turkey. This city became addiction. :)

### **Participant 4**

I came here, my english has since improved, and made me more confident to talk to others, because I not so confident used to. Also I met many people from different countries it increased my seesight, and knew more about different countries' culture. The most importantly I have been well trained with chemistry, ??ology and so on so on. It was a good experience, but the

difference between my country it's kind of made me suffer. the restaurant close too early. Anyway the most thing is good in my life. for now. There is some big thing in my life. I kept a cat. for now he is six-months old, I call him Luzi, like little tiger in Chinese. He is soooo cute, but little too active, maybe is because he is too young. Times will change him to a better cat. Haha. I met a guy. He is nice and warm. So I made a relationship with him and it's the luckiest thing I had during these years.

### **Participant 5**

Hungary taught me how to rely on myself. during my time abroad, the responsibility I gained here would taken me more time to gain it back there in Jordan, I'm more open to choices my myself too.

The culture difference wasn't a problem at all, I liked how they like celebrating certain days here, the events are a bit different that what I used to but they are all great.

I've had a really shent nice story, tho all what Ive heard about hungarians of not liking people coming from other countries, especially some people were exposed to some racist situation, but as I always say those are just the fewest in each country you can find, so the story was when I came here in the first weeks, I was on my way from the medical school to Kórház to have my hungarian class, I needed help since I didn't know where is everything in Pécs, so I saw a young hungarian lady in front of the bus station of Petőfi utca, I asked her how can I walk to Kórház, the beautiful thing she did is that she was on her way to her work but she didn't take the bus but rather she walked with me, leading me to Kórház, specifically to the class that I had, we're friends now, and I think she shows how nice people can be here.

### **Participant 6**

I started to know more people and knew a lot about other cultures. I like learning the difference between countries so came here indeed help me a lot. Hungary is very far from my country, so I always felt lonely and helpless before, but one of my friends helped me a lot, like she introduced her friends to me and hanging out, visit more places in Hungary, even if she's in Budapest now we still contact each other. She helped me getting off from staying at home all days and starting learning new things, then I found that Hungary is a nice place for me to study and I can get used to stay here totally.

### **Participant 7**

the first things is that I can live ???

### **Participant 8**

Here is good, but I think it's hard to find foreign friends. Most of time I'm alone and I want to improve my english skill, but I can't maybe most of the pharmacy student are Iranian, and we always speak persian! and I really want to find foreign people and Hungarian friend as well. I think because we can't speak english very well and Hungarian language also, we are alone. It's so hard and bad. It's sometimes hard living without family and friends. at the end i want to say Hungarian people are best and kind.

Thank you for this best question

mohammad shahsavari

I don't like just study here, I want live as well.

**Participant 9**

It is a new experience for me because I never have been foreign countries for long time ( just trip). It is so interesting to manage the fee and bill and cost of life with different currency.

In Pécs I have a silence situation that very good for studies and concentration.

It is my first experience to starting course with English language and it was too hard at first. but surrounding in PTE I can prepare a good condition to improving and growing up my English language skills.

But people in Pécs does not know English language and I had to learn Hungarian to passing some requiring. My english language skill not good at first and life switch to English suddenly. So I was very hard for me to learning other language for example Hungarian and get suitable point and then pass.

Fortunately I could pass Hungarian by 3. and I can speak Hungarian in a basic level.

My life is changing now and I trying to improve my life into better ( I hope so :))

**Participant 10**

After I become a foreign student at Pécs, I had really good foreign friend here and talk many stories and cultures together. Also I studied a lot of medical knowledge in english and this make me improve my english skills and knowledge. Sometimes, the studying or living alone makes me tired but I really like having a school life with my foreign friends.

**Participant 11**

Being international student has advantageous and disadvantageous. But mostly it is a great experience.

You see everyone from all around the world and know their culture, foods, traditions. And being a friend makes you open-minded, you understand the world is not only your country and your culture and you learn how to arrange your own-life like time, money... and for disadvantages you miss your family, your country, foods, friends... but all these things are worth for it. It is a good opportunity. It makes "difference" from others.

I've been here for 1.5 years. I made lots of friendships. These relations are good. And I also had stressful days (mostly on exam period), on that time period these feelings increase rapidly but when you see your friends everyone has this feeling so it is not only about you so you get used to it.

### **Participant 12**

I feel great, seriously to tell the truth: I feel great since I started my life as a medical student in this university. because this is the first time in my life that I've been far from my family and living by my own. I became a new person with new ideas and lots of experiences. here i had a chance to be a friend with students at my age from different countries around the world. I learned many things about their culture and ideas and I'm still figuring out how to improve myself as a future doctor to be complete.

### **Participant 13**

I arrived at 2 am. with no blanket in Pécs, which was kind of traumatizing.

I immediately liked all subjects (except biometrics), which was great.

Still, it was hard to find friends because the english program students mostly stay with the people of their nationality.

Also the sports offers in Pécs are quite bad, so I couldn't do as much sports as I did in germany. After passing the exams I felt really good because I knew that general medicine was the right program for me. and that I could finish these studies, but there also was a lot I missed about germany that I don't like about Pécs and hungary so I also realized that I don't want to stay for 6 years.

#### **Participant 14**

Everything is OK

I like Pécs, it reminds me my city.

The only thing I don't like in here there is almost no communications between hungarians and english students.

#### **Participant 15**

My life hasn't changed much since moving to Pécs, except it has become hectic and school-oriented. I haven't had many experiences with Hungarians outside of the gym or restaurants, but my impression is that Hungarians are very kind and helpful.

#### **Participant 16**



Many experiences can be found here in Hungary, especially here in Pécs, regarding the fact that it is small city and the people living here mostly are open minded to students coming to study here. I just really wish stores open for a longer time :).

### **Participant 17**

I hadn't studied on foreign country before I started in this university. So it was hard to understand different culture and different environment. And I sometimes feel some of people starring me like stranger. It is uncomfortable but now it's okay. These days I try to ignore others seeing. I also try to adapt different environment, culture and different studying.

### **Participant 18**

My life style have changed..

The biggest change was food.

I usually didn't eat bread and food containing flour but in Hungary there is lots of flour containing food and sometimes I feel sick about those food. That's why I try not to eat them. This is bad change. but I have also good change in my life. I can communicate with lots of other countries students. At first I felt alone and I wanted to go back my country but now I am very happy to spend with friends and Hungarian is kind. When I lost the way some young guys told me the way and professors are also very kind. I am not good at English so I have lots of question in the class and I asked many questions but they always answer to my question. ANd I started to go many place alone. When I was in Japan I didn't do that. I don't know the reason but I became going outside more.

**Participant 19**

When I was live in dormitory I met a friend we lived in same floor. During last exam period I failed one of my exams and felt disappointed and upset, so I stand in corridor and called my parent. After I finished my phone call I saw her just back to dormitory. She saw my upset face and asked me 'are you ok?' and gave me a hug. I remember this event until now because hug is not so common thing people will do in my country.

**Participant 20**

For living in a foreign country you need to change and after a while you feel more independent than what you've been before. you communicate with people from different countries and you can learn some new things while you are the new place.

**Participant 21**

Probably just meeting all the new students in the orientation week. Being thrown into the foreign environment and having to adjust to learn the various different cultural backgrounds of the students allowed me to experience vast amounts of new things. Visiting all the new students home's has also given me the opportunity to experience the different ways of living for different cultures. It's been a great experience overall.

**Participant 22**

The first day I got here. I was very embarrassed, because my English was very bad that I couldn't even carry out a conversation with the driver who picked me up from the airport. Then I was determined to learn English to avoid such situations, then I did. Of course with the help of teachers from international studies center, I improved even faster than I expected. And this also made a huge difference in my studies here. I became interested in studying from someone never have taken studying seriously.

### **Participant 23**

My life became different because I moved away from my friends and family in Norway, and met a lot of new people with different backgrounds and cultures. I have learned a lot about different nationalities and cultures.

### **Participant 24**

I suddenly became independent, had to do everything on my own and be a grown person, this was quite hard because I had to challenge the language issues

### **Participant 25**

Because there are no parents beside me, I became to have more freedom and responsibility of my life. There are lots of things that I have to manage by myself than before. Although there are many new friends from my country and other countries here in Hungary (Pecs) and I'm still be with them and sometimes play with them. I feel lonely deep in mind because there is no parents and my old friends near me.

**Participant 26**

Okay, I honestly thought that most (almost all) Hungarian people were unhappy about students studying in Hungary. But then (my first week in Pécs) I was shopping for my apartment and I bought a huge smoothie machine in Lidl, next to the university. Myself, being unaware of where the different stuff in the store are located -> I didn't know where to find a shopping bag -> that was large enough to fit into the smoothie machine I bought, this meant that I had to carry it openly to where I live with my bare-hands, so I called for taxi; and suddenly an old-man came and pointed at my shoulder. He was carrying an exact bag as the one I was looking for! He gave it to me and ran away. I was shocked. This even is someone that I haven't talked to or seen and he was kind enough to do me a nice gesture. There was after all no need for the taxi at this point.

**Participant 27**

There is no parents so I need to do everything clean, cook, paying bills while studying so it is hard to everything because it is not used to do before in my life.

There is not much restaurant for me so I need to cook home. I am not good at cooking so I do not special day or celebrate for myself to eat my favourite food. I need to go Budapest to eat some Korean food.

I expect to meet Hungarian friends bit.

the school or organization doesn't give chance to meet Hungarian and usually they don't speak English so hard to make Hungarian friend.

**Participant 28**

It was / is a great experience to meet and get to know people and students from other countries and different backgrounds. It was also a great experience to live the student life abroad in a new unfamiliar setting which teaches and improves my autonomy and self-relying skills and forces me to move out from my comfort zone.

I shared my experiences and feelings with my new family of friends here: holidays, celebrations, tough study and exam periods...

Overall it was a positive period

**Participant 29**

- I learned more about the different cultures around the world, and about their different values.
- the similarities and differences compared to culture.
- I also learned that the uni here has a much different system, both administrative and academic, to what I am used to/anticipated.
- Also, I quickly learned the importance to know some of the native language in the country I'm moving to regarding my studies. I vividly remember - no one being able to speak English, so I had to constantly use Google Translate, which to be honest, sometimes just left me and the person I was asking something more confused.

**Participant 33**

I met some amazing people who made my transfer, from Norway, easier and more comfortable. Seeing people from all around the world was really nice to see as a person who is multicultural.

#### **Participant 34**

My life became different from the moment I met other international students. Their culture and ways have affected me.

Also it really changed when I had my first exam period, they are a lot different from norwegian exams and it lasts for a long time, as well as I learned about myself, how I tackle 7 weeks of stress and my mental health. I have got to learn my strength and weaknesses.

#### **Participant 35**

Became different because everything was new, culture for example.

#### **Participant 36**

I haven't been here that long, so I don't think my life has changed that much. It was strange in the beginning, adapting to the hungarian culture, but after a while things just got back to normal.

#### **Participant 37**

I dont think it changed much. I have been backpacking alone 5 months and have not been living with my parents the last two years, so i was quite used to being independent. Also there was not a big cultural shock as Norway is very similar to Hungary. Also we were a big group of

Norwegians travelling down here together because we had the first year in Norway, so I already had many friends.

### **Participant 38**

I have been studying in Pécs only for one year and a half, but my life has changed considerably, but gradually.

I didn't realise how or when this happened, but I feel I am different. When I was studying in Spain I couldn't have imagined studying with people from lots of different countries, making so many foreign friends, learning Hungarian, even living far from home and being independent. Some memorable events I can mark as the most representatives of my change are the fact that my best friend here is Korean, I speak mostly in a foreign language, rather than in Spanish or the multicultural environment I see every time I walk in the street.

But the most important variation I felt is the way I changed my way of thinking. In the beginning I felt I was only a foreign student, someone who lived abroad. Now I feel I belong to a community, I'm part of a multicultural society and I can say Pécs is now my second home.

### **Participant 39**

I became more independent than before.

I learn how to live on my own.

I really have good experience here. I met really good people. I met my landlady that she is very nice person and I like her so much. And because of her I didn't change my flat in this years. In august, before the first semester start, my friend and I went to Vienna, and we decided to come back by train, but at that time in Budapest we had to change the train because there was some

problems. In Budapest we get off the train but anybody helped us to find the next train and we missed our train. Nobody tell us how we can find train and where we should go. Nobody cares.

and I think mostly it because they didn't understand English. They behavior was like they don't care about foreign students.

I know it wasn't about Pécs :) but I feel like tell you about my bad experience. :)

Think one of the main problems here it the most people here don't know English. So we cannot communicate with each other to solve problem. My landlady can speak English and we talk to each other if there is any problem we can solve it.

#### **Participant 41**

When I felt the people will be nicer if you speak Hungarian other than English to them. I started to practice more Hungarian to communicate with them, but still can't understand why some people will stared at me like I am doing something wrong when I talked on my phone on the bus even in a small voice... These are the unhappy part, but it's only a small part of this country, because I still meet lots of amazing and nice people here, they are kind and even kinder if I speak Hungarian :)

#### **Participant 42**

When moving away from your family and in to an environment where everyone is studying really hard all the time and not doing much else, there can be times where you feel and are



alone. This is the biggest change for me, and if I would have been home I could have just spent time with family when not studying but now they are too far away. Luckily I have many good friends and we try to be social, but as mentioned I often feel alone.

### **Participant 43**

I should mention Pécs is a calm city to study but with lost of racism. People (specially older people) and they do not know English at all and even people do not want to learn English despite of bunch of foreign students hear. For sure if a person who works in even a supermarket try to be more sociable and communicate better with foreigners have better salary and easier for foreigners to feel that all are some in the world. I hope that I could summarized the most important problem for foreigners. Wish to be better and have more sociable and not racism people here in early future.

Respect.

### **Participant 44**

as foreinger I learned a lot from European culture and meet lot of friends from other countries is the big change in my life

### **Participant 45**

I learn more exepriment.

I habite that I live alone and I doing all the my mork without parents.

**Participant 46**

I learnt how to live alone ( far away from parents)

I learnt to get responsibility.

when I came to the Pécs for the first time I lived in the dormitory with my friends and it make me ready to the leave alone, made me a bit stronger.

**Participant 47**

I was at first hard to be away from my family and to depend only on myself here, plus the language here was difficult for me at first to communicate in shops in the street, it's still not that easy but I am improving

I had a lot of great memories so far...

**Participant 48**

I never had an actual experience of working environment in European hospital. Last summer having practice at the clinics made me have a perspective of how difficult life is at different places in the world. How people's behaviour can vary from place to place. Most of the people here are rather secluded and not very open to foreigners is what I've experienced here.

**Participant 49**

I was pretty young when I came to Pécs. It was my first time abroad, and I learned to be independent here.

Even so, the study is hard. It made me more confident and I learned to up to people and make new friends.

Failing a year was hard but in the end it make me stronger and afterwards the subjects became easier.

### **Participant 50**

Everything changes when I came to Pécs. Life becomes harder. I experienced quite bad period of time with mental problems, language barriers and difference in culture, etc. But at least I have grown up day by day and become stronger.

I think Hungarians are really nice compared to people in developed countries in Europe but Hungarian language is hard for me. Honestly I really want to learn it but I don't have time, I need to focus on my compulsory subjects.

### **Participant 51**

The biggest change I experienced in Pécs is picking the lifestyle I wanted to live that would help me complete my education smoothly while having a balanced social life. I also learnt not to stress about minor details and focus on my goals.

### **Participant 52**

Start to live alone.

language improvement

**Participant 53**

Start alone, improved English, Hungarian skills.

People are very kind.

**Participant 57**

Speaking English all the time is sometimes challenging, and the fact that hardly any Hungarians speak English is quite frustrating. Also it is much cheaper to live here compared to Norway. So eating out more and living in nice flats is very positive.

**Participant 58**

A lot English speaking, fun subjects. Very good food. Nice apartment, low prices, nice people.

City race :heart emoji:

**Participant 59**

Speaking a lot of English. Trying to learn more Hungarian.

It is quite different from Norway, with prices and culture. Which is positive. The negative side is missing family and friends, but the student community in Pécs is good. :)

**Participant 60**

Speaking English a lot, to the point of having difficulty articulating in Norwegian due to forgetting certain words, but remembering them in English.

Became more independent, having to handle a lot of situations without help/counselling from family.

Felt some homesickness, as is natural. Got to know a lot of people of different nationalities.

### **Participant 66**

I had to overcome lots of difficulties as a medical student in the first year. First time of my life, I have to live far from my family, my friends. I am also struggling with the difference in culture. However, after doing activities and participating in some events, it helped me a lot.

### **Participant 67**

My life became better because I'm doing what I want (studying medicine) and because it's cheap here, so my living standard has went up.

Memorable event: when I realized that I wanted (and could) study medicine to become a doctor, about 5 years ago.

### **Participant 68**

International evening party

Last year I could eat many foods from other countries and I made many foreign friends!!

It was very nice memory for me. And I'm very looking forward to go this party this year again!!

**Participant 69**

Before I came to Pécs, I didn't know how safe this city is.

In the first semester, I experienced strange guy followed me. I felt it was so dangerous city and terrified.

But now, I'm kind of used to this environment and became able to take care of myself.

I participate in sport club and I'm finding very nice aspects of Hungarian now.

**Participant 70**

Before coming here I was with my family and I couldn't live alone. I couldn't manage my own works because my family always were supporting me. By coming here I learn how to live alone and do my works myself. I found lots of friends than we can be together all the time like family. Now with my friend we make good and bad memories.

**Participant 71**

Talking English in everyday life is hard bc all of Hungarians can't speak well English.

**Participant 72**

Talking English everyday is very different from what I am used to. Not all hungarians speak english wich can be troublesome sometimes. There is a lot of paperwork in this university compared to Norway.

**Participant 73**

I have been in Pécs for approximately two years, since then I feel that I am more communicative and more extroverted towards other people. I met so many people from different countries and different cultures, and this helped me to learn at least some general information about the rest of the world. It helped me to widen my vision and made me think of living in other countries than my home country.

**Participant 74**

It haven't changed me much as I was already used to living abroad and on my own. But it definitely is something different and special compared to past experiences with being a student in other countries. I learned a lot about the culture and the Hungarians view on life and their customs, which made me more open in my thinking.

**Participant 75**

I've met a lot of foreign student from various countries since I came Hungary and that helps me to improve my interational way of thinking, I believe this experience will be useful in my future as a doctor.

**Participant 76**

As a foreign student I learned to be more patient with major cultural differences and to also be more understanding of these differences. It has been somewhat difficult to adapt to the harsher attitudes reflected in Hungarians towards me as a foreigner.

**Participant 77**

My lifestyle was some since I was living alone for 2 years before coming here. But as a foreigner I with being strange or sometimes friendless and also I became hard as a concrete after my first exam period.

**Participant 78**

I came to Hungary, and I met many people who are from different countries. To me it was impressed and interesting. I am not that active person but I try to make many friends.

**Participant 79**

by staying in Pécs, I was able to experience slightly about European culture which was different from Asian culture for example, welcome drink which was palinka

**Participant 80**

The university of Pécs which its diversity have expanded my horizon, strengthened my social interactions and knowledge regarding foreign cultures and people who come from different backgrounds



**Participant 81**

Studying medicine in Hungary has a lot of possibility not only Medicine but different culture, opportunity to recognize beautiful charactalicity, opportunity to shear culture and language

**Participant 82**

I would say my life became different as I became a medical student. Studying in a foreign country is just a big bonus for me. Although it is not so far from my home countries. (3,5 hours to Norway, 2,5 to France) I don't feel a big cultural difference.

My favourite thing about Pécs is that, I kinda feel forced to learn Hungarian, which is a good thing. In the shops here they can't speak English so you are forced to try and speak Hungarian.

**Participant 83**

I think I have become somehow stronger. Living away from home and family and somehow I learnt something about other nationalities and also cultures.

**Participant 84**

I missed my family a lot.

I had panic attack sometimes because of stressful situation that I think most of is extra for students.

**Participant 86**

I was in study abroad at different countries so I didn't experienced so much difference, but that's the first time that I am living alone that much long so that was the only difference.

**Participant 88**

I learnt how to live alone and take responsibility. And living in a city which include lots of foreign cultures is a good experience.

**Participant 89**

how to communicate with people that don't understand what you are saying -> all the time

strong community between all of the foreign students.

patience for everyday tasks

->getting things fixed at home

-> buying tickets

-> sending letters

**Participant 90**

life in Pécs has toughnes and made me stronger.

learning new languages, and culture is always tough and interesting, but I am beginning to like my stay here

### **Participant 91**

I feel hard to communicate with foreign students, makes me really don't want to have social life

### **Participant 92**

It made my personality more stronger, by talking to many people from different cultures and also learning about other people different cultures. In general, it made me more responsible of myself, and especially during the exam period I learned how to control the big pressure of exams and in the same time how to control myself.

### **Participant 93**

It has been hard to be far away from loved ones, which doing one of the hardest studies imaginable.

Makes you really get to know yourself and is strongly developing. Exam periods are the hardest times, and this proves to you how strong you actually can be when strong is the only thing you can be.

### **Participant 94**

Foreigners are so kind.

### **Participant 95**

Still looking for change

### **Participant 96**

By learning european culture. I feel that I'm haveing a wider view of world, able to understand more deeply about diverse people.

### **Participant 97**

Foreigners are so kind.

### **Participant 98**

We vere many Norwegians moving down together, so the transition from Norway -> Hungary was easier.

When I started here I got surprised by how kind and cool the teachers/professors were. Good experience. Really like Pécs.

### **Participant 99**

It was an adjustment moving to another country without knowing the language or culture that well. Getting to know many different people has been a great experience.

**Participant 100**

I did make friends with lots of friends from different countries all around the world. We've been sharing our own cultures, food and interests together: from Korea, Japan, Norway, Canada, Jordan, etc. Really appreciate what I've been through until now.

**Participant 101**

When I saw the cadaver (body) in the Anatomy class, I felt that I became really a medical student and I decided to hard work.

**Participant 104**

Different culture, and smaller town + new friends and new school system.

**Participant 105**

When I was in Budapest, some boys spat to my friend. I think it was because of racial discrimination. It was so terrible memory for me.

**Participant 106**

Living with a Hungarian roommate, I think I became more independent. Unlike my country, where independency could seem not so good.

**Participant 107**

Living in a country whose language you do not speak is sometimes confusing or confronting. This has taught me to communicate with fewer words and with body language. Moving to Hungary to live alone was very liberating for me, and improved my independence and confidence.

**Participant 109**

My life has not changed much.

**Participant 110**

Life is not that bad. We meet people from different countries and countries we never heard.

**Participant 111**

Nothing special

**Participant 113**

I got new friends from all over the world. I have learned about they're culture and have country.  
E.g. most chinese people doen't have siblings. I've grown as a person during this experience.

**Participant 114**

I think that this whole experience is great. Every day I learn new things and meet new people and that is great! I think we all will grow as a person from this experience.

**Participant 115**

I learned that I had to study really hard to survive the exam period. I think I have become a bit stronger mental. It was also ???? to meet some of the professors that did what they wanted to do.

**Participant 116**

The experience as a whole so far has been memorable, and has changed a bit how I perceive the world. This has been through the encounters with the different cultures and the people. As well as learning a new language has been nice and interesting.

**Participant 117**

I meet a lot of people from different countries, it was really interesting because I could discover a lot beside school.

I discovered a lot about myself, how strong I am and how competent I am.

Handle med school away from family can be really hard, but I can manage it way better than I expected.

And I learn to never give up!!!

**Participant 119**

The people I met here are near and dear to my heart. Its has been academically challenging and fun studying here.

**Participant 120**

Hungarians are very nice when you can understand them. Hungarian has been big barrier.

**Participant 121**

In the international evening, I felt that strongly last year.

**Participant 122**

I had already studied abroad (in the UK) for my previous degree so I was used to the international environment + being away from home.

However, not being able to understand the language has been a little hard.

**Participant 123**



International evening was gaité food.

**Participant 124**

I don't remember anything special but I can say I became more independent and more serious about my life.

**Participant 125**

My biggest goal had changed to pass the final exam. So I had to tolerate repetitive day during every year. As a result I changed to a man who tries to find small happiness within routine life.

**Participant 126**

I learned that cultures + customs are very different from country to country. I learned to embrace it and try to learn from it too to help my understanding grow.

**Participant 127**

I learned that cultures and customs are very different from country to country. I learned to embrace it and try to learn from it too to help my understanding grow.

**Participant 128**

When it started snowing while I was studying for my exams, and I ran out because I missed home.

**Participant 129**

I don't have anything in particular to say.

**Participant 130**

As a foreign student at this university, it was very easy to meet people as the first thing I went to was "freshman camp." This experience was the first step that allowed me to flourish in my new life in Pécs.

**Participant 131**

The difference in life lies at regular day to day activities. In Hungary I have met some of the closest friends I believe I will have for some time.

**Participant 132**

It became different in the way that I got to know myself better as well as learning how other cultures are. I gained more respect for people from other countries than where I grew up.

**Participant 133**

Nothing changed, still the same person and same life.

### **Participant 134**

I learnt how to be more independent: to live alone and force myself to meet new people, to be emotionally stronger (and make it through rejection)

### **Participant 135**

Learning Hungarian in the uni is helpful.

I try to greet people (e.g. workers, cashiers) in Hungarian and they greet me back with a smile.

I think it would be better to be more fluent because not many people can speak fluent English.

And also, it's nice to learn a new language.

### **Participant 136**

Same person, different place.

### **Participant 137**

First of all, I and few other friends are the only Turks here, which makes US quite unique. After a year I have had more international friends which I suppose we have gotten accustomed to each other in time.

### **Participant 138**

it's much more about the profession I choice which I choice which I love it and persones I meet which They now so important for me also it has so many difficulty to face with all problems in your life alone and try to be perfect its impossible but it worth to try.

### **Participant 139**

I couldn't communicate a lady who is in a shop. She said something but I couldn't inderstand what she said because in hungarian, I didn't know.

Still now, just I could understand 'number (cost), way to pay. Cash or card?'

I should improve hungarian speaking, hearing skill.

### **Participant 140**

It is a lot of pressure here and I became more depressed after moving here.

### **Participant 141**

challenges I faced during these years has changed me and they made me more wiser or logical than before and to respect other people's believe and cultures and communicate with sociaty through andles that I haven't known they were existed before studying abroad.

lets make medicine great again.

### **Participant 144**

I definitely learned a lot about different cultures and met a lot of people here.

The studying is hard and very different from Norway.

The strongest experience must be the hard exams and how much we have to study I think.

### **Participant 145**

It has changed both for the good and for the bad. The city of Pécs is not ideal for me but the studies here are good. Passing exams are pretty memorable.

### **Participant 146**

I become more independent person. Learn to cook and study independently.

### **Participant 147**

I do not believe my life became different being a student at Pécs. I have lived in many different parts of the world, which almost makes it seem that this is a usual habit. Rather, I would say that my experience had been different as a foreign student at Pécs. My view about Pécs changed as I started to learn about the culture, habits and norms. For example, the way people greet each other (whether it is a local or a foreigner) is completely different than other parts of the world I had experienced. There is a lot of respect and discipline that comes out in Pécs. Personally, I have adapted this behaviour and allowed me to learn what the “norm” is here in Pécs.

### **Participant 148**

The first of all I can say that it is really hard because for instance I miss my family and this culture is different from my country.

On the other hand I want to say that I'm really happy can have experience to meet the hungarian people and international students.

### **Participant 149**

Being far from home sometimes is difficult and sometimes it's very sweet. You may have a lots of friend or two or one even but finally this is you who should figure out the situations. I tried to be responsible for my every single decision.

from other aspects I had experienced a lot of memorable moment. The new year ceremony which is NOT my eve, hower but spending time and having fun with different religion and culture was one of the best experienced of mine.

### **Participant 151**

First I came here, I have got no friends for a while, it was really hard to communicate with foreigners soocially Hungarian people, as the university started everything changed, suddenly I found them really kind and friendly, now I've got 3 hungarian friends which 2 of them are my neighbours.

I spend my free times with my close friends but the sad thing is really don't have free time. Hope everything goes well for everybody whose study here.

Thanks.

**Participant 152**

I've met a lot of foreigners, at first it was hard to communicate with them, but now I can talk to a lot of foreigners from all around the world and communicate with them.

At first it was hard to live in such a small city but now I'm starting to feel good about it because everywhere you want to go is near you and you can manage to do a lot of things in a day.

**Participant 153**

Before I wasn't a medical student but now I am so it's a great thing for me. It changes my life - I can be a useful person for the world.

**Participant 154**

When I made my decision to choose Hungary as a place that I want to study I didn't have so much information about it, but when I came here I got that how they are racist and I could feel it in society and university. But since I chose here as my second country I tried to accept it and continue my life and enjoy it. Of course I had tons of good experience here and found lots of friends.

**Participant 155**

Before I come to Pécs I was an ordinary high school student with a dream but fortunately after doing my best in pre-med course I was accepted in the major I've always dreamed. That is my biggest milestone in this city.

**Participant 156**

Sometimes when I shop at the mall, it's hard to find a shop assistant who knows how to speak English.

**Participant 157**

After studying in Hungary, I have a different feeling comparing with my own country. I am interested with the scenery and social life.



**APPENDIX B**  
Semi-structured interview guide

**Ice-breaker question:**

**Tell me about your experience as a foreign student in Pécs.**

**Questions and follow ups:**

**Topic 1 (Hungarians and the Hungarian language):**

- **Can you tell me a bit about how you see Hungarians?**
- How did Hungarians surprise you if they did?
- How would you describe your experiences with the Hungarian language?
- For what purpose have you used the Hungarian language? Can you describe the experience?
- 

**Topic 2 (Communication difficulties)**

- **Can you tell me about communicating with Hungarians?**
- Can you describe a typical encounter with a Hungarian?
- Could you describe how do you manage a difficult communicative situation in Hungary?
- What languages do you use most? How do you find communicating with people from your home country or with other internationals in Hungary?

**Topic 3 (Intercultural adjustment)**

- **Can you tell me about your experience with Hungarian customs?**

- **Can you tell me about your experience with the customs of other international students?**
- How did international students surprise you if they did?
- What help did you receive when you arrived in Hungary? How did it help you find your place?

#### **Topic 4 (Social networks)**

- **How did you make friends in Hungary? Who are your closest friends? Who would you ask for help?**
- Apart from people from your own country, who are you in regular contact with?
- Who are the Hungarians you often talk to?

#### **Topic 5 (self-analysis)**

- **What about your life here is most surprising to you or to your friends and family?**
- **How have you changed since you started university here?**
- What made you come to Hungary in the first place?
- How do you see yourself in 5-10 years?

**APPENDIX C****1<sup>ST</sup> INTERVIEW: ALIM**

The first interview took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020 between the interviewer (in the transcript I) and Alim (in the transcript A).

I: So, I think it is working, it should be working. So, Alim, thank you for being here, thank you for sitting down with me.

A: Thank you for having me as well.

I: Yeah. Could you tell me about your experiences as a foreign student here in Pécs.

A: In school life or anything?

I: Whatever you want to talk about.

A: I've accepted by the university in 2016... so... and this is my third year here. And I'm renting flat in Pécs. (I: Yes.) Instead of a dormitory, and... that is it.

I: You've been renting since you started here or...

A: Yes. Yes. At the beginning it was the preparatory school, I stayed in the dormitory for one month, and then I decided to move out with my roommates. I was gonna be cheaper at that time, but now the renting fee is increasing... yeah.

I: Are you still with the same roommate?

A: No, no. One of my roommate left, ... the next year when we were accepted. And the other one moved out, and I am now living with girlfriend.

I: Uhm, yeah, so... why did you decide to move out from the dormitory?

A: At that time the rental fee was way lower, then now, so we decided to rent a flat together, that is gonna be cheaper, and at that time the dormitory was far away from the university.

That time... that way preparatory school... in city library. So, we decided to move out. And later we got accepted, and the university medical school ... so we changed our flat to somewhere near the medical school.

I: Yes. How did you find a place to live? How did you find a flat?

A: Agencies. There are many agencies. Like DunaHouse or.. Student Housing. Yeah.

I: Yeah. Was it easy to find a flat?

A: Yes, exactly, that is easy.

I: Aha... did... were the... was the agency helpful, were the landlords nice?

A: Depends, really. In most cases the agencies were helpful, but there are some, like spamming... for example they ask you to pay the first two months' renting fee in the beginning and later, when you want to move out, they say: 'oh, you damaged the flat, I cannot give back the money.' To be honest that means a lot for students, for international students living here. The renting fee is quite high.

I: Right. And do you feel that they are trying to... when they say that you have damaged the flat, was that a case that happened to you, or did you hear about it?

A: It happened to my girlfriend.

I: Uhm. So, what happened there?

A: That was a funny story. At the beginning she was living with two of her friends. At the beginning like they signed a contract for one year, and later my girlfriend decided to have a pet, a tiny 'cica' pet, and she contacted with the landlords' daughter, cause the landlords' daughter speaks English very well. And she said, the landlords' daughter said, it is okay to have a cat, but not dog please. And so, my girlfriend decided to have a cat. And she have, after three months the landlord went to the flat to check what is the condition. And without the permission of my girlfriend, and her friends and roommates, so the landlord saw the cat, and she... as I remember she took a picture or something, yeah, and later on she contact directly with my girlfriend and her roommates to talk about this issue and like everybody was, everybody was there to talk about this seriously and the landlord said I'll sue you to the court, or something like this crazy. And I know the landlord by name, she.. I think she was one of... she was the staff of the university, medical school.. this thing happened.

I: How did it get resolved? How did it end?

A: She moved out, without paying back the.. you know... deposit.

I: Deposit.. aha, so she lost the deposit.

A: Yeah.

I: All right... you said that the landlords' daughter visited without asking for permission..

A: No, the landlord...

I: The landlord visited. Unannounced, without..

A: Yes, yes.

I: Without asking....

A: Without asking.

I: Does that happen a lot? Did that happen to you as well?

A: No, no.

I: That is unusual.

A: That's unusual.

I: How did it your girlfriend feel.. or how would you feel about that?

A: As I remember the landlord sent a message in Hungarian to my girlfriend, that "I saw you have pet right now, and, yeah, you damaged the flat, the cat scratched the wall everywhere." Something like that.

I: And this message was in Hungarian.

A: Yes.

I: Were your girlfriend able to understand it?

A: No, we translated. Google, google translate.

I: Google translated it. Do you use google translate a lot?

A: Yes.

I: For example?

A: For example, when I contact with my 'mester', coach in training...

I: In Thai box?

A: In Thai boxing training. There are some words, I mean I understand, I mean he can speak English very well, but there are some words he couldn't say in English, so I ask the Hungarian one and translate it.

I: Yes, I see, I see. So, can you tell me more about like communicating with Hungarians? Is it hard? What is it like?

A: At the beginning for me it is very difficult to contact. In most of time I use body language. At that time, I didn't emphasize the language thing, so that was hard, to communicate, but late on...

I: What do you mean by at that time?

A: I mean the beginning. When I was here. 2016. Now, later on, I started to learn some historical backgrounds a bit. And then I started to learn the language with the help of the preparatory school. Later on I start to communicate with Hungarians during the daily life, like 'hello, how are you doing', when I was buying stuff in Spar and TomMarket.

I: And how is that going? Communicating in shops and with people of the city?

A: It is going well. I am now living in Mecsek Áruház. I almost now every worker in the Spar. I talk to them.

I: What do you talk to them about?

A: Like, mizu? How are you doing? Everything is fine? What you been doing recently?

I: What have you been doing recently?

A: Yes.

I: And how do they answer or how long are these conversations?

A: It is a short conversation. It is their working time you know. They will say like 'I'm good.' 'Everything is fine, thank you.' 'And how about you? How is your study?' Something like that.'

I: That is good. You said that at the beginning it was more difficult, but then you started to learn about the historical background.

A: A bit.

I: What do you mean by that?

A: Because, you know. It depends on... How to say it? I am a minority from China. Ethnic minority called Uyghur. So, at the beginning I heard that Hungarian, the original Hungarian is from East side, the Asian part of the world. So, I am curious about it- I was curious about it. So, I looked through some information, some materials. but they are all different. Some may say the Hungarians are Hun, or Mongolian, something like that.

I: But was that information then... helped you understand Hungarians better... or useful? What do you think?

A: Actually, once as I remember, I asked this.. the origin of Hungarian, asked this to a teacher, I forgot the name, also in the language department... Gabriella, the terminology teacher, and she said somehow about this, yes, the Hungarians are from the east side. And I said I am a minority, Uyghur. She mentioned something about Onogur, also from the Asians'



time. So, at that time I got really curious. I thought that I may have some, how to say...  
testvér...

I: Yes, yes. A common ancestry?

A: A common ancestry. Yeah, yeah.

I: So that we might be related?

A: Yeah, yeah...

I: Right. And was that like.... what kind of feeling was that? How would you describe it?

A: It is...

I: Did that feel important to you, for some reason?

A: No. Not important, but how to say... More like, amazing. Yeah, cause the distance is really far. And we may have some similar culture, so, that's...

I: And did you find similarities in culture?

A: In culture, the most similar thing is the dressing. I guess. I saw many performance in city centre. Like traditional Hungarian performance. The dressing, the suit that were wearing by actors are really similar to the original Uyghur ethnics in China. And some words in Hungarian, but I found out that they are also Turkic words as well. Like alma, and .. oh.. we say apa, ana.. that is like anya.

I: Yes, yes.

A: Yeah, many words. Toron..

I: Yes, so there are hundreds, maybe thousands of words. You also mentioned that you use a lot of body language.

A: Yes. I just used it.

I: Yes, just like that. And was... so, how did you figure out what body language to use, was it very similar, or does it just come natural? Is it different?

A: O, no, no. The body language I mean, I couldn't express something I need, for example in Spar, I need to buy some... how to say, marhahús, for example, beef. At that time I do not know how to say marha, so I just go like this: 'múú... kérek', and they show me which one is beef, which one is lamb... that was the body language that I was using.

I: Yeah, yeah, I see. So you were basically miming stuff? OK. So, was there anything... how... sorry, let me rephrase it. Can you tell me about your experience with Hungarian customs? So, how we do things in Hungary. What is your experience with that?

A: Customs?

I: Yeah.

A: I didn't really. How to say it... There is no differences?

I: No differences?

A: For example? I didn't really get it...

I: You don't know what I am asking for. So, you said that it was interesting for you to figure out that Hungarian people might be related to Uyghur people, and you were looking for

commonalities and similarities, and then you only found the traditional dresses to be similar, so that means that you found, that in other respects...

A: Costumes...

I: No, no, not costumes, but custom, meaning, like, a way of life. Or doing things in life.

A: Ah, okay. ... ohm... erm... I found out... it is a huge difference, is that we don't drink that much, but Hungarians drink a lot, I mean alcohol.

I: How did you find it out?

A: Because, you know, in a public area, in most countries, it is bended, it is forbidden to have an alcoholic drink, and you drink, for example in the bus, or.. yeah, in public area. But in Hungary I found out there are guys drinking beers in the bus, in the park, everywhere.

I: And how do you feel about it?

A: Well, it should be controlled by the government a little bit, by publishing some laws. Cause you know after being drunk people may do something crazy. That is a public area. I've witnessed many issues.

I: Does it make you feel unsafe? Is that what you mean?

A: Not really. They fight with each other, to be honest. They shout out loud, that is the main problem.

I: You live near Mecsek Áruház, that is a high traffic area?

A: Uhm.

I: Do you like it there? It is a nice place to live?

A: Yes, yes. It is a nice place. Basically, they have everything there. Bank, supermarket, fitness, post office. Some restaurants, but I don't like them. Some bakeries, and a TomMarket.

I: Do you manage everything alone?

A: No, with my girlfriend.

I: Yeah, together with your girlfriend. How is that? Is it difficult, easy?

A: Easy, for me.

I: Yeah, and for your girlfriend?

A: Also easy, cause she has me. But for many other international students, I heard, it is hard to communicate the locals.

I: Why do you think that is?

A: First, maybe a cultural difference. Second is, they are lacking Hungarian language knowledge. So they don't know the language. So it is hard to communicate with the locals, cause most... not most, some locals, they don't speak Hungarian. They don't speak English, sorry.

I: So, I imagine... I might be wrong, but I imagine that, maybe at the beginning you had difficult situations as well.

A: Yes.

I: How did you manage?

A: I studied; I went to school.

I: And at the time?

A: At the time... like the preparatory school offers this kind of class, called Hungarian for foreigners. Yes, we have books for that, it is like formal class. I studied Hungarian language. That's the point!

I: That's the point. So you just immediately decided that is what you need, and you put effort and time into it, and?

A: Not really. Cause I am living in Hungary. That means that I can learn Hungarian language from everybody. Daily life... even though I don't... how to say.. make effort on it, I can study. Exactly.

I: So, for example, have you ever noticed that you have just learned something?

A: Yes, for example, the first word that I learned is 'Szia!', and later on... at that time I was living in ... how to say that part... the city library, there was a restaurant. I went to the restaurant for food, that was called MuMi, and I finished my kebab, I went out, I said Szia! .. but, like the one after me, who also came out said Sziasztok! And I noticed that here is a difference between these two words, and I checked, and Sziasztok for plural, Szia for singular. That time, I learned it. I distinguished like what is what.

I: So, what is your strategy, for when you have trouble communicating with someone?

A: What is my strategy? First is using my mobile phone. Because I can translate my language into Hungarian, even though it is not that correctly translated. Second is the body language, and the third is contact someone that I know in Hungary. A local.

I: And who do you contact? (23 mins)

A: The coach that I am training with. One time I lost my wallet, and my bank card got... I think, yeah... I did not lost my wallet, my bank card got stolen from my wallet. That was last summer, and I noticed that there was a large amount of money subtracted from my bank account, that was 60 000 Hungarian forint. And I contact the bank immediately, and I noticed that was not one time using, it is by pay pass, so each payment was under 5000 forint; that was hundreds of payments. And I noticed, that oh, it is a huge problem, and I reported to the police office in the... next to the rector's office, that is the main police station there. None of those police officers speaks English, that time it was afternoon. And I directly called my coach, and he helped me with the language and translation.

I: Why did you call him?

A: Because I have his number at that time.

I: Was he the only Hungarian whose number you had?

A: No, I have my agent's number as well, but...

I: The real estate agent?

A: Yeah, yeah, real estate agent. But I prefer coach, I have much better relations with him.

I: Would you call him a friend?

A: Him? Yes.

I: How did you become friends?

A: At the beginning I registered for the kickboxing physical education class in University, I started to know what kind of sport this is, and later on I tried to come to this gym for training. Personal training, so it is not physical education class anymore. So, day by day we communicate, we get to know each other.

I: What did you learn about him?

A: Learn about him? I know that he was a K1 boxer 20 years ago, and he is a tough guy, and he is responsible for anything that he have done, ... how to say... so he could took the responsibility, if something happened, so how to say... responsible guy.

I: He is a responsible guy.

A: Yeah, and... humane. So, for example here are... there were some events. He took me to Orfű, for swimming. Not sure how to say, there was like, a beach, during the summertime, it is a park. He took me there. And we went to Budapest. He took me to the Budapest for watching matches, so ... yeah.

I: What matches were you watching in Budapest?

A: Boxing matches?

I: Thai boxing matches?

A: Thai boxing matches.

I: Yeah right, OK, good. And on an average day, like today, after this, what do you think you will talk about? What do you talk about on an average day?

A: I'm sorry I did not get it. In average day?

I: Yes, on an average day, like just when you meet, like what are the typical topics you talk about?

A: Talk about? With him? Too many topics... for example history of Pécs, he is a local here, he know everything and he would tell me some stories from 20 years ago, or 10 years ago, and introduce me to some like good area to go, good places, states... megye.. is it a state?

I: County.

A: Yeah, county. And... and other stuff, about sport.

I: About Thai boxing?

A: Yes, Thai boxing.

I: How does this communication look like? What languages do you use, how fluent is this?

A: Most of the time we use English, but you know it is not only me, who is training there, but also local Hungarians. When he was talking to local Hungarians, I would listen, and I understand somehow, and then he would translate it into English to say it to me again, and then I would know if I got the information or not?

I: Does he speak very good English?

A: Yes. I hear his father was living in Britain, he went there several years ago, stayed there for a long a time, so he speaks really good English.

I: You said that he will tell you stories about Pécs, like things that happened here. Can you tell me such a story, something you remember well, that you liked?



A: Yes. He was, you know, a security guard. Cause he was a Thai boxer. So he has been doing this security guard stuff a long time, it's been 20 years, about 20 years, and he said at that time, I mean 20 years ago, or 10 years ago, this city was relatively rich because of the factories, uranium...

I: There was a uranium mine nearby.

A: Yes, and some other industrial factories. This city was rich and there were many places to go, for example bowling, but nowadays many places are shut down, there few bars, only because, the factory, the industrial factory shut down. The main source, right now, is the university. That is the truth, I guess.

I: Yeah. I don't know the exact statistics, but that sounds plausible, that sounds about right. Do you also tell him stories?

A: Yes. I do. About China. He is curious about China, so I tell him where I am from. And which part of China. I tell him about the differences between my ethnics and the majority, and... you know the eastern part of the China there are many modern cities, like Shanghai, and I tell him what is happening there. Like that the economy is growing fastly. Yeah, something like that.

I: So there is your 'mester', and then you have the short conversations with the staff at Mecsek Áruház every day... in Spar, you mentioned. Besides these encounters, any other Hungarians you are in regular contact with?

A: Yes, but they are all from this training centre. This is the source.

I: This Thai box training? The other students there?

A: Yeah, the other student there.

I: Can you tell me about them?

A: Wow, there are many people. The first is studying in a high school in Pécs.

‘Szakgimnázium.’ it is not the typical high school, I think.

I: It is a vocational high school.

A: A vocational school. he is about to graduate, and we went to Budapest for matches, and we went to Orfű for fun. For swimming.

I: Just the student, or with mester?

A: With mester of course. Is like an event.

I: Do you ever meet the other students on your own?

A: Yes. I have met the other student I mentioned, the high school, 18-year-old. His major is, how to say, plumber, fixing the water issue... I had the... like the...

I: Did he help you with some issue?

A: Cső problem. There was damage on the pipe in my bathroom, I called him. I spoke with him in Hungarian somehow, but it was not that clear cause I don't know some specific terms for it, like ‘cső’. Texted him again in English and he translated it by himself. He knew English well. Not really well, but somehow. He came to my flat to fix the pipe, and had a cup of tea, a bit of conversation.

I: That is nice. Plumbers are nice friends to have.

A: Yes, exactly. And electricians as well.

I: Is there an electrician in the training as well?

A: No, unfortunately.

I: No. You should invite an electrician. So, that is the main area that you have Hungarian friends. How about the university?

A: I can say zero. Cause we have different schedule, there is no Hungarian student that I contact with.

I: How about international student then?

A: Of course, there are many students in my class from different countries, from Norway, from Korea, and I have a good relationship with them.

I: Can you tell me about your experience with them?

A: Internationals...My experience with them?... We have class together, we have fun together during the weekends, but didn't really go travel somewhere together, only in Pécs. Yeah, we contact with each other, and that is it.

I: When you say you have fun together in the weekends, what does that mean?

A: For example, you know, there are many parties held by the university as well, and in the city centre, and sometimes, for being relief, because it is too stressful to concentrate on subjects always, so yeah, just go drink somehow. Drinks, yeah.

I: Drinking again... okay. Did they surprise you in any way?

A: Surprise me?

I: Did anything about this experience in Pécs surprise you?

A: The thing that surprised me, is I thought there might be huge cultural differences, and I might not get in good relationship with them, but in fact, I cannot feel so called like ‘cultural diversity’. We have no bias on issues. That thing surprised me. I’ve been knowing them for 2 years, more than 2 years. We are good.

I: That’s nice, that is a good surprise. That is nice surprise to have. How about Hungary, how about Hungarians, did they surprise you in any way?

A: Hungarians? Let’s say the individuals, but not the Hungarians. Some Hungarians made me disappointed, some Hungarian surprised me.

I: How? How did they disappoint or surprise you?

A: Disappoint... small issues, but it really, how to say, hit me inside. For example, one time, I came back from Budapest. I had like a 2–3-day holiday there. I came back, I get off the train, I went to the taxi stop, I get into a taxi. At that time, I had a really large backpack. Once I sat in, the driver, the chauffeur asked me to put my backpack... like, how to say. I sat like this, so the backpack is on my back, and he asked me to put it on my knee and legs. I put it on my legs, and he said, ‘no, it is not good, you better put it to the backside...’

I: To the trunk.

A: To the trunk, yeah. I went there. The door was automatic. I did not know that. I tried to pull, but I couldn’t open it. He shouted at me. I said, ‘what’s the problem.’ He said that was automatic, and he said some swearing words, that I know. The things is I know that word. So,

I got angry. I did not say anything, but that time I was kinda emotional, so I did not pay any attention to the door. I was trying to close the backdoor again. I forgot that it was.... So, he shouted at me again. So, yeah, we got into an argument, I just left. And I called the Volán Taxi, their server... asked for apologise.

I: You wanted them to apologise to you. And did they?

A: No. At that time, they said sorry, but not the driver. It cost them a service... so, not happy with that. Really, really bad.... and also, I told you my bank card got stolen.

I: That was another disappointment. Was that solved after your mester called the police?

A: As you know, the police officers are ... busy... so I just got a letter, that: oh, unfortunately they could not find the guy. Even I could find the guy via CCTV...

I: You were able to locate them, point him out, that that is him?

A: No, I cannot, because I don't have permission.

I: But I mean, if they wanted...

A: If police officers wanted to go the shop to check the CCTV, but I guess they did not.

I: But you were able to call the bank and block your card.

A: Block the account.

I: You got a new one?

A: Yes.

I: And you also said that some individuals surprised you in a more positive manner, maybe, or at least did not disappoint.

A: Yes, some. For example, I told you, my coach. And the trainer together with me, he fixed water, that is incredible. He is high school students, I thought he might not do that stuff, but he fixed it really well... and... my landlord, one of my landlord. At the beginning, I rent a flat together with my friends. Like I told you, 2016, at that time I was living in Búza tér. That landlord was super nice. I couldn't find any better landlord than her. That was our bad at that time that we had a little party at our flat, and we didn't clean it up after that. So the second day that was hangover. And we forget, that day we should pay the renting fee, and the landlord came, she saw every...

I: Yeah, the mess you made.

A: The mess. That was embarrassing. But she asked whether we had a party. Yes, we said, we had. She said, did anything broken? No, nothing. And... what time was the party? We said it is evening time, and she said, it was not midnight, right? We said, no, it was not midnight. She said, OK, and she started to help us clean up. So, that is amazing! Compare this landlord with the other that I told you about. Huge difference! This surprised me. At time I was really touched. Cause we did such mess, really. She did not get angry at all. And later, when we moved out, when we were moving out, she gave back the deposit. She was super nice. That surprised me.

I: Speaking of surprises, is there anything that would surprise your friends or family about your life now? Do you think?

A: Sorry, surprise my family?

I: About your life now, here. Or maybe you were not expecting to be like this.

A: I didn't really get it. My life here surprise my family?

I: Like... I am not suggesting... The wording might be wrong. So, something you weren't expecting to be like this.

A: Hmm... .

I: I need to rephrase this question, I think. Is life here just the way you thought it is going to be? Or is it different?

A: Well, it has been over three years that I came. And... how to say... at the beginning the agency... ohhh... it is 11 already...

I: Do we need to finish?

A: Yeah, I think so. Let me finish this... or I can come back later... like one and a half hour later...

I: Well, maybe not today, but if you don't mind to sit down again, we can continue at some other day.

A: Do we have... how many topics are left?

I: It is not like we have to... these are just helping me, but we don't have to cover all of this. I would be happy to sit down again, and talk more, if you don't mind.

A: Yes, but I need to go, I can come later. I will contact you.

I: OK, thank you very much, let's keep in contact.

**2<sup>ND</sup> INTERVIEW: NORA**

The second interview took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020 between the interviewer (in the transcript I) and Nora (in the transcript N).

I: Let me ask... let me start by asking you to tell me about your experience as a foreign student here in Pécs.

N: So now I've been here... this is my fourth year. And I'm one year behind in my study. I should be in my 4th year, but I'm in 3rd... so, that is one thing. But my first experience when I got to Pécs, I think I had lower expectations, because it was nicer than I thought. At least the city... And the school is, of course, harder than I thought. But the teachers are very educated. So, I'm really happy with the teaching. And Hungary as a country is a bit behind compared to Norway.

I: What do you mean by that? How do you mean it is behind?

N: I think in a lot of different things. For example, you pay rent in cash, and also every time you have to do something for school, for example when you have to get a student card, or whenever we have to do something in university, it is a lot of steps. It is a process, instead of one click.

I: So, you are used to doing everything online with one click?

N: Usually, yes.

I: And how often do you use cash in Norway?



N: How often? That's... almost never. Only when you get some cash from your grandparents.

I: I see. Now, these things... you mean behind in time? You think that we are moving towards that here in Hungary as well, or behind in thinking, or how do you mean behind?

N: No, not behind in thinking, or I don't know about that. I only know what the university... and I feel that that's more educated than many schools in Norway, as far as I know. So not on that aspect. But, for example with paying bills you have to go to the office, but also if you take a taxi usually you have to pay by cash if you don't ask to pay with card before. I think it is going towards the same thing as Norway of course.

I: So, this sounds like you had, and correct me if I'm wrong, some difficulty adjusting to these things in Hungary.

N: Maybe, only the things regarding the school. You know when I started here the first semester you had like classes all day, and you had electives, and at the same time you had to learn how to do different things, like you went to the office to do something and they said before you can get here, you have to do this, this and this. And you had to go home again and try to do this and get back. So, things took time. Yeah, a lot of things were time consuming. So, I think that was a problem for me, because were stressed about school.

I: That was a problem, but it is not a problem anymore?

N: You get used to it.

I: You get used to it... so how did you get used to it, how... do you have a strategy in mind, or is it just being familiar with it, not being surprised by it anymore?

N: Yeah. Not be surprised, not be annoyed. If it takes two hours, it takes two hours.

I: But you were annoyed at first?

N: Yes, just because you know, I was stressed all the time because you felt like you always had something to do before the next day at school. That is why.

I: And the people in the office... how was your experience with them?

N: Different. Sometimes very helpful, and other times I feel like not so welcome... but I think it might be because of the language, they feel helpless maybe.

I: Tell me about one of these times maybe.

N: If you gonna get a student card, you have to go to the office behind the...

I: Is it here in the university or someplace else?

N: Not in the university. What is it called?

I: It might be called the Kormányablak in Hungarian. It is one of those places where you can... so Government Window is the rough translation. It is an office where you can take care of administrative things.

N: Yes, because I think we misunderstood some steps we had to do before we could get there and then, like instead of maybe telling us, first you have come back after you have done this and this, and this, they just said like, they can't help you.

I: And then what did you do?

N: Tried to ask and didn't get any help, so I took it back to school, and asked in the registration office, because they are very helpful. Always.

I: Always helpful. Were you alone when you had this problem with the student card?

N: No, with some of my classmates.

I: Was it helpful, that they were there as well?

N: Yes, sure, because then you can try to figure it out together, instead of, yeah...

I: So, this was at what time? It was at the beginning of your studies, I'm sure.

N: Yes, the first semester.

I: The first semester. And you already had friends?

N: Yes. Because I started here, I had to go 3 weeks for a summer course before school started.

So, there were fewer people, so it was easier to get friends early.

I: And the people you met there, are they still your friends?

N: Yes.

I: Can you tell me about them?

N: One of the girls is from Mongolia. So that was new for me, and a lot of Norwegians of course, and some Germans, but it is two of them that I am still close friends with. Like, every day. And one of them is my classmate still, and they are also one year behind. And so, when someone can move on and you are one year behind, yeah...

I: You said, that one of them was Mongolian, and that was new for you. How was that new for you?

N: Yeah. I think I never talked to a girl from Mongolia, ever. So, I was wondering why does she choose a school in Hungary?

I: And what did she say?

N: I don't remember. They have a scholarship, I guess. But I don't know the reason she went exactly here, and not a place closer.

I: And why did you come here?

N: We have a program in Norway. You can go one year in Norway, and you can go here or to Martin, in Slovakia. But I think all of my friends moved to Oslo, right after high school, and I was thinking if I stay one year and move here it was gonna be harder to move, so I was thinking I will just start right there.

I: Are you happy about that decision?

N: Yes, I am.

I: So, you could choose between Pécs and a place in Slovakia. And you choose Pécs because?

N: I didn't know much about any of the places to be honest. But my... the first answer I got was from Pécs, and I think it was also... I have a friend, like her family went to Budapest a lot, like for many years, in summer vacation, and it is not that far from home. Slovakia isn't either, but I thought it was easier to fly here. I think that was... but to be honest, it was kinda fifty-fifty.

I: But you said that initially you had low expectations.

N: Yeah. Or I didn't know anything. I never went to Hungary before I started this school.

I: And what were your expectations?

N: That it was going to be hard, and I don't know, I was thinking my life will be only about school. I didn't know if I will like it here, or you know get to know as much people as I did. I didn't know anything about the country to be honest. Only about Budapest.

I: What did you know about Budapest?

N: That it was a nice city. I didn't know much. I just heard about it. How it looks, how people act.

I: From this friend, who visited Budapest several times?

N: Yeah, and her family.

I: And what did they say, how do people act? What does it look like?

N: I think they thought it was very nice to go here to get... you still got a summer vacation, but it was very cheap, cheaper than other places. And you had both like... you had lake-tó, not water, but... and a big city. I think they like that there was everything in one town.

I: And when you said that you had lower expectations than what you got, it sounded like you were surprised a little bit.

N: Yeah, a bit.

I: What were you surprised by?

N: Very nice people, most of the time of course. The city itself. The school. Not how it looks, but...

I: Because? What about the looks?

N: It is old. And also, I was thinking, when I saw the cafeteria, I was thinking here we are in the medical school and it is only unhealthy food, that was funny. But at the same time I didn't know... you know sometimes in Norway, they talk about, if you don't have the highest grade to get into Norway, and you go abroad, Poland, Hungary for example, they think that most of the people can get through, and like it is not.. I think they talk about it as the education here is lower than in Norway. But I think it is totally the opposite now.

I: Alright. Can you... speaking of surprises, can you maybe recall any specific event, when you noticed that, wow, this is not what I was expecting.

N: I think that was the first day when I got here. Like, day in school, of course. People were so, like welcome, and I think I had to get out of my comfort zone, to be honest. But when I did it was very easy to get friends. And I was glad that I didn't go to the program in Norway, because they travel as class, so they have each other, then you are not that interested to get to know other people. So, I thought that it was very nice to get to know other nationalities, because I never do in Norway. So maybe surprised that they are the same as us, and the city I thought it was much nicer, that I... yeah.

I: So speaking of other nationalities, can you tell me a little more about your experience with other international students. You said that they were similar?

N: Not everyone. Of course, the Germans, or Hungary. The Hungarians also, I feel like they act the same way. But some from Asia, they... I don't know, they more stick together. You are friends at school, but not after school, for example. And that is totally fine, but that was different from the others. And, I don't know, some nationalities are very respectful... but I thought it was very weird to get into a classroom, like you have so much respect for the

teacher, for example in the Anatomy Department, because you are so scared, and we have some from Iran, that just speaks whenever they want, come to the class when they want, go out from the class when they want. That was very weird to see, to be honest. I didn't expect that.

I: Did you notice any differences in Hungarian customs to what you were expecting, or to what you were used to?

N: Like what?

I: Like, how Iranians they speak in the middle of the class, or just leave, so this is a difference in customs, right? Did you notice anything similar about Hungarians?

N: I thought they were respectful.

I: In other places, in the city, or...

N: Outgoing maybe...

I: What do you mean by that?

N: I don't know, you often see families in the restaurant, in the Árkád. I feel they are a lot out and do things.

I: And that is not usual in Norway?

N: No, because it is too expensive. Once in a while, yeah. Also, for like a normal family. I didn't notice much difference, to be honest.

I: You don't have to, that is fine. OK. So, can you tell me about communicating with Hungarians?

N: That is hard.

I: Why?

N: Because, of course outside school. Yeah, the older people, they don't know much English, some does not anything, and also, I think it is very hard to communicate in Hungarian. I feel like I know less Hungarian now than I did first year. Because you need to do it every week to remember something, it's such a new language. So, I feel like both parts have to be patient and have to use everything. Most of the people are very helpful, but I can also like see that, because the people, who don't know any English, they instead of trying to help they get insecure themselves, so they I don't know, they look more angry, or don't wanna... they try not to meet your face, if you know what I mean.

I: Is this something you experienced yourself?

N: Yes. For example, in the post office, or in the stores.

I: So, what happened?

N: You feel like nobody wants to help you, but of course that is because they don't know the language, so they probably don't know what to do.

I: And what do you do then?

N: Try to ask again. And, eventually someone is trying to help, because sometimes they have just to point or... but it takes some time. Not always, of course. In some situations. For example, I went to the post office yesterday, and usually I have to use the "less than 100 000 Ft" or something on spot for Telekom, and I don't think was there before, or I didn't have to use it. So, it was like my turn, and I went to the lady, and she was like: no Telekom? And I



was like, OK, what does that mean? So, tried to asked several times, but she just did like this (gesticulates), and I also get a little bit angry, inside my head, and then finally there was a lady on the next one, who walked with me to the machine, and she pointed at the telecom, and then I understood OK, there is a new thing and you have to push this to get...

I: Yeah, you need a different number, and then you have to wait for a different window. I see. And you said, you feel your Hungarian is worse than it was. You have to practice it every week, so let me ask you...

N: If I do that?

I: Yeah.

N: No, I don't. I wish I did of course, but it is more than enough with the school itself, you know.

I: What do you mean by that?

N: We have a lot... we have to study all the time, so it is hard to use your time on Hungarian, because you know that you are not gonna use it later, like after university.

I: And, when I asked you about communicating with Hungarians, I mean, like, outside school. What about inside school, or at the school, sorry.

N: I think most of the teachers knows English good. At least good enough so it is not a problem. Some of them have problems outside their subjects, but that usually not a problem. No, I think that is a problem here. Maybe, it is a different school system here, than in Norway.

I: How is it different?

N: For me, it is like rougher, maybe. It is not like your teacher is your... it is YOUR teacher. She is just there to teach you, and outside of class she is...

I: Right. And in Norway it is more like a mentor-kind-of thing?

N: I feel like it is. Of course we don't.. for example, if you go to the university in Norway, you don't have these small classes, these seminars, as we have here. You usually don't. But still, your teacher is there to kind of... it is a follow up, all the time. It is not like, if you have a problem, it is your problem. It is also the teacher's problem, kind of. And here, I feel like...

I: You feel like you have more help over there?

N: In Norway? Yes.

I: And who is your help here?

N: First of all, myself. My classmates. I feel like most of the people are helpful. We help each other in everything. My mom and dad, my roommate, she is my cousin. Of course, registration office. And of course, you asked the teachers, and the answer is... more like if you have a problem, it is on you.

I: So... yes. So, you help each other within the group. Most of time?

N: Yes.

I: Those are the first people you turn to?

N: Yes, or my friends upside. My class of course.

I: And this is true for academic issues, and outside the university as well?

N: Yes, both.

I: How did this circle of people you can rely on, how did that...

N: Happen? That is a good question. So of course, it started with the summer course, and then my first class, the first semester I was the only Norwegian, so at first it was scary, but then I got friends outside Norway and that was nice, and then I knew some other people, and I knew some other people which got together. I think we went out to eat a lot. And I invited all of them.

I: Do you remember maybe the first time you asked, or someone asked you to help with something? Administratively, or to do something here?

N: I think that was probably the first week of school. Because it seemed like it was new for everyone. Everyone had problems with this and this, and this.

I: And who asked whom? Were you asked to help someone else, or did you ask someone?

N: I think both, yes.

I: And with what? What was the problem?

N: Maybe the registration for courses. Because that was totally new. Small things, like where to find your class. That was a problem. And what was compulsory, and that was not.

I: So, when you couldn't find your classrooms you asked people who also don't know the place?

N: If someone else asked. I don't know. What is it called... at the main door, you can ask..

I: The receptionist?

N: Yes, but it took some time...

I: Yeah, I mean, I did the same, all the time. But if you really think about it, it is little bit funny, isn't it?

N: Yes. Someone, who does not know...

I: So why do we rely on... or why do you rely on your classmates mostly?

N: Because we are doing the same thing. They understand the problem.

I: Have you ever asked a Hungarian student?

N: Yes, but after I knew the girl.

I: What was the problem you asked for help about?

N: Probably to find a class outside the school, for example here.

I: And who was this student?

N: She is called Viki.

I: What about her?

N: She is in the same year as me. In the Hungarian...

I: Would you call her a friend?

N: Yes, but more like a friend of a friend.

I: Do you have any Hungarian friends?

N: Not many.

I: But you have some.

N: Yes, but more like a friend of a friend.

I: A friend of a friend. And how did you become friends of friend's with them?

N: Also, classmates, actually. The girl from Mongolia, and another girl from Italy knew all of them.

I: And do you... how often do you speak to these Hungarians?

N: Only when I see them somewhere. Now it was a long time ago. Before exam period.

I: And what kind of conversations do you have?

N: How are you doing? What are you up to? It is often about school. Like, if I met them now, I would ask about how the exam period went.

I: OK, so can you describe to me how you can manage a difficult situation in Hungary? So, when you are in a situation where you usually need help, how do you manage that?

N: Whenever it is about school, like it is often a problem with the registration of the courses, like it happened also now, so then you get stressed, because you like: 'is it a subject I don't have, that I need to register for this course?' then I always email the registration office. And if not, I asked someone that is a year above me, that I know in fourth year. And it is more like problems outside school, I often call my parents, maybe they don't know, but just to say it out loud I think, and then I usually figure it out, myself. I guess, that is it.

I: So, you said, like it happened now as well; you had problems with the registration, as well?

N: Yes.

I: And did you write an email to the office.

N: Yes.

I: And they replied.

N: Yes.

I: And it is solved now.

N: Yes. So, I am happy.

I: Good, good. So, it helps if you can just talk to your parents, and then you figure it out yourself?

N: Not always, but with small problems.

I: Can you recall any such situations?

N: I don't know if I can remember like a specific situation, but mostly in the first year, when there were a lot of new things, and a lot of things to do. I often get frustrated because it was so much at one time. And maybe I made small things a huge problem. That ain't helped. Or just find places here.

I: How did this make you feel. Because it sounds like, that is for me at least, two options, like, you might have felt alone, and a little bit lost...

N: Maybe a little bit lost, yeah. I don't think I felt alone, because I always... when I moved here, I moved in with two Norwegian girls that I did not know, but they were super nice, and I

was so happy with everything, and also my first day at school was much better than expected. Or not expected, but I did not know... I feel I did not know anything. It was good.

I: How was it good? What was good about it?

N: Because everyone was in the same situation as you. So it wasn't that hard. But you feel kind of lost with the language, like you are not speaking in Norwegian anymore, you have to speak English, and then some people think you speak Hungarian as well. And new systems... all of this made me feel a little bit lost, because sometimes you didn't have any idea.

I: Do you still feel lost?

N: Not in the same way. I don't I get so frustrated or stressed out, if something doesn't work out at first. Only with the registration.

I: And when did this change? How did this change happen?

N: I think it took a couple of years.

I: What was the difference?

N: I felt more like home here. And more safe, and of course I learned a lot, and maybe that, if I have a problem I can just ask someone, and usually it works out.

I: So, you said you felt more safe?

N: Yeah, or... it feels more like a home now. Now I say I am going home, like back to Pécs. But that took me two years.

I: And at first you didn't feel safe?

N: Of course, I felt safe, but I felt... now I can relax.

I: Right. And you said you live with your cousin? Did you start living with your cousin when you got here?

N: No, I started here only myself, and later with two other Norwegian girls, that I got to know here, and then she started the first year in Norway, we didn't plan anything together, and then she ended up going here, and then one of the girls I lived with, she changed to Budapest, so then she moved in with me and the other girl, and now the third one, she is in sixth year, so she is not here anymore, and then we moved together.

I: Right, yes. And do you live in a flat? Do you rent?

N: Yeah, I rent, yes.

I: Have you started with a rental? In the same place, for the four years, or did you move around?

N: At first, I rented in Mátyás, and now I live in Anna utca.

I: Why did you change?

N: Because, the apartment was very old, and that is OK, but it was really hard to keep it clean. And it was three floors, looked like this (gesticulates a tall, slender building) which was unnecessary, to be honest. And now we have one flat, which is smaller, but easier, to have it clean. And it is nicer, and I think we pay almost the same. So...

I: Just because this is a nicer flat?



N: Yes, and we had to pay a lot to keep the apartment warm. I had my room in the third floor, and it was almost the same degree as outside. That was a problem to be honest.

I: I see. ... So, you feel like you are coming home. You found your place here?

N: Yeah.

I: How exactly did that happen? How did you find your place here?

N: Over time. Maybe when I didn't have to go home in a semester. It was okay to wait until Christmas, without thinking about it. Maybe I understood that most of my friends moved to Oslo, and they are also busy with their things. And we are still friends when I go home. And I guess I figured out that I was lucky. that I am here. I talked a lot to my brother. He studied in Krakow, in Poland. Before. Then I was younger, so I did not understand his problems, but now I understood. He also called home and cried sometimes. And that is also okay.

I: Yes, I did that as well, when I was abroad, yes. And do you do anything here, or did you change in any way, that made you more comfortable? Or did you discover anything here, that made you more comfortable?

N: Maybe to go out more... not out-out, but just out for dinner. To do nice things outside of school, because you have time to do that as well, if you plan your day. I don't know, just to get a new apartment, that felt more like a home. It helped. I had visit from Norway.

I: Who visited you?

N: My parents, a friend, and my boyfriend. Yes. What else?

I: How often do they visit?

N: My parents has been here I think once in a year, or at least my mom. So not more often.

Because I also been home. A friend visited me once, because she moved to America. And my boyfriend has been here several times.

I: I see? Anything else?

N: Yeah. Probably a lot. I think I just also accept that I live here, and that there is nothing wrong with that. It is nice to be... I am glad I am not studying in Oslo, now I am.

I: Why?

N: I would never have this experience.

I: What exactly do you mean by that?

N: Both the good and the bad. I don't think there would be any problem compared to going to a medical school in Norway. When you are... for example in my first practice it wasn't that scary. Because they treated you much nicer than the teacher for example in the Anatomy department here. So, it was nothing, compared. And I guess you have to believe in yourself in another way. Take the consequences and also, how to say it, you become more independent, because you have no other choice.

I: So, you think you are more independent, because you are here, than if you were in Oslo, for example?

N: Yes. Because I have all my friends that I knew, like since I was a child, so I could just rely on them. That would be easy, I will be a short way home. I think everything would be very safe, and just like, I'm used to have it, compared to this.

I: I'm thinking about how exactly you said it, but you said, something about how you now have more confidence. You didn't use this word, but that is what I understood...I might be wrong about that.

N: It is not totally wrong. Of course, I don't think that has been a problem. Maybe just, if you fail an exam... if that was in Norway, like, you would be, like, out of yourself. But here you go: OK, I failed, I will try again. Like, the first time I failed, I thought I will have to quit, you know.

I: Is that related somehow to being more independent, do you think?

N: Maybe... you understand that you have to fail sometimes to pass. Like, it is not the end of the world. You can go home and study more. And the same with the... this is a hard a question. It feels like there is a lot to say.

I: We have time, you can say, whatever you want, and I'd be happy to listen.

N: Not more confident, but more independent, because you are on your own. I feel like you have to, like, accept, that you have friends, you have teachers, and you have school, but still, it is your responsibility, always. For example, I heard about people, who couldn't register for something, and then they missed a year. That could never happen in Norway because it is already done. So, you have to remember all the deadlines, you have to.

I: What I have trouble understanding is: that sounds awful. Like, when you say it like that, someone had trouble with registering, and because of that, they missed a year.

N: Yeah, that's awful.

I: That's awful. That's a tragedy. And yet, when you say you grew to be more independent, that sounds positive.

N: No, I'm just saying...

I: So, what is the relationship there?

N: You can't always rely on others, like the problem does not fix itself. Like, if you have a date you have to registrate, you have to registrate. It is not like, it will work out, if you registrate three days after, like in Norway. So, I mean you always have to... yeah. I don't know how to say it. You just have to rely on yourself, because things doesn't work out well, if you don't follow up.

I: Yes. And so this is an important change, that happened, for you?

N: Yeah, that is how it is gonna be when you start working.

I: So, how else have you changed since you started university here? You have become more independent, any other changes?

N: Yeah, I like I said, if I work at home now, I usually work in the Pulmonary Department, and I remember like... when I work with similar things before, I got here, everything was a little bit scary. Like, I don't know should I do this, should I do that, should I ask? But now, it is easier to just follow your instincts and do it, and you don't ask, if... like, if you think you know what to do, you just do it, instead of asking. Not only with work, of course. With everything. Everything is not that scary anymore. I think.

I: So, when you started here, if you think back at that time, would these changes surprise you, or were you expecting these changes?

N: Now, I would say no. Or, yes, I would have expected it. But at that time, I don't think I was thinking that far. So, no. But I knew that I will have to be on my own. But, I think, it sounds like this is awful and Norway is perfect. But, think when you go to... not always, but some of the people in Norway, would always think that things always work out. You can just relax, and things will work out. And then you come to adulthood... where you are actually already, but when you start work, and then you are on your own. You have to solve the problems yourself. And I feel like, here we already have to do that, and that is a good experience... Yeah. Just tell me, if I am not answering your questions.

I: No, I'm sure, you are answering all the questions. Honestly, I just want to understand what you mean, because you know, everyone has a different thought process. Yeah, so... Honestly, I don't know what else to ask. Thank you very much.

**3<sup>RD</sup> INTERVIEW: EMMA**

The third interview took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020 between the interviewer (in the transcript I) and Emma (in the transcript E).

I: Hello, and once more thank you for being here, and as a started let me ask you to tell me about your experience here, as a foreign student in Pécs.

E: Like, everything?

I: Anything you want to talk about. How do you feel here? Or, what happened to you here, that you would like to talk about? Or anything, basically.

E: I really enjoy staying here. I think it is really nice, especially Pécs, I haven't been anywhere else, where I studied, but I think it is a nice city. You know the student environment is very good, but then again, I am usually only involved in... with the students. So, I usually keep... usually stay in between the university and the city centre. So, further than that I don't really have that much experience. What... OK, what should I?

I: Why are you only involved with students? Is it by choice or accident? How did that happen?

E: I think it is just... it just happened. Because it is easier to meet students. Because you meet them maybe at school, or in the parties, or like in events that are planned by the university. But it is not like I don't want to hang out with someone that is not a student, you know. It just happened that way, that most of the people that I interact with are students, and often medical students. But I also do have some friends that are in pharmacy or dentistry as well. Yeah, oh

yeah, I actually did meet some other people outside of medical university through physical education, yeah. But then again, it is the university that you know arranged it, so that is how I met other people.

I: So, can you tell me about that? What kind of physical education was that who did you meet there?

E: It was dancing. I did two different dancing physical education courses. And I am pretty, you know, talkative, so I just ended up talking to other people in the class, because it was mostly Hungarians. I did not know Hungarian, so I would just kinda go up to someone, and maybe ask them to translate a bit, and yeah, so that is the drill.

I: When was this?

E: It was ... the first one maybe two years ago, one and a half year ago. And the last one was last semester.

I: What kind of dancing?

E: The first one was musical jazz, and this time it was advanced modern dance.

I: Are you a dancer? Did you dance at home?

E: Yeah, yeah, I am. So that is why probably it is easier to talk to someone, because you share the passion of dancing.

I: The instruction was in Hungarian for these classes?

E: The second time it was in English actually, that was really helpful. The first time it was in Hungarian. So, luckily, I knew a lot of dance moves already, so it was fine for me to follow just by looking, but if you are not a dancer, it would probably have been a little bit difficult.

I: And when you couldn't follow, then you asked someone to translate for you?

E: Yeah, but usually students are really nice, Hungarian students, even if you don't ask, they will try to translate, or they will try to make sure that you understand what is going on. Also, at the beginning of the class the teacher made us aware that she did not speak much English, and asked if there were someone else, that could be like my translator as well. So, it wasn't really a problem.

I: And this was two years ago?

E: Or, one and a half year ago.

I: One and a half year ago.

E: I'm not entirely sure. I could calculate. It was ... maybe two years ago.

I: Maybe two years. And the Hungarian people you met there, like, were these university students?

E: Yes, university students, yes.

I: Do you still keep in touch?

E: We do, we have each other in Facebook, and stuff like that. You know, naturally, it does fade away, a little.

I: So, what did you do together recently, or when did you meet them recently?



E: Let's see... no, no, actually a pretty long time, since I last met them, I think it was last dancing class. Or, it was last semester, it wasn't that long ago.

I: You were with the same group in the... what was the second? So, the first was jazz, and ...

E: Jazz, and the second ... no, no, it was completely different people. So, we didn't really hang out, I think with the advanced modern dance. It was mostly for the jazz that I met someone that I could talk to a little bit. You know, check up on each other, like: how is it going? But she... I think she moved universities. So, she is not in Pécs anymore.

I: And why do you think it didn't happen last time?

E: What do you mean?

I: Like, you haven't met Hungarians, or people in the last dance group that you hanged out with?

E: I guess it is due to time, I guess, because you don't really have a lot of time as a medical student. You know, so then you have to like to hang out with the friends you already have, and then make plans with the new friends, and catch up with the old friends, and I guess it is just like... yeah, it is time, definitely.

I: You already have all the friends you have time for?

E: Yeah, yeah, pretty much.

I: I see. So, who do you consider your friends?

E: Like closest friends?

I: Yeah, here in Pécs. Or generally, not just in Pécs, I'm sorry.

E: Like, are you looking for nationality?

I: Who they are, how did you meet, what do you do together, anything you want to talk about.

E: I met a lot of them in Oslo, because I'm Bjorkness, so I came here via group in Oslo, so have some friends there, that I still talk to and hang out with. I then I met some people here. Both Norwegians, and Persians also, and Jordanian. The thing is, like, I don't hang out in one group of ethnicity. I have like, maybe one Jordanian friend, one Iranian friend, you know. But the main group are I guess Norwegians.

I: And how did you become friend with these other students.

E: That is a very good question... I don't remember. Probably had classes together, or met, you know, at pre-parties, or through a friend. Yeah, that is usually how. So, you know, you get to know someone out, and you start talking, and then you make plans to maybe meet up later, and then you meet other people through that person.

I: It just snowballs from there? You just wanted to have one friend, and now you have thirty!

E: No, I really appreciate my friends.

I: And what do you do together?

E: I'm not gonna lie, there is a lot of drinking. But also, we have maybe like girl's night, or just having dinner together, playing board games together, like going skating together, you know like trying out different things that are possible to do in Pécs, as well, and not just the partying. A lot of different stuff.

I: Dancing and skating, anything else that is possible in Pécs.

E: Yeah, we also went climbing in the Mecseextrém park. Yeah, I've done that a couple of times. And wine tasting, I've tried, going to Villány. Let's see, what else is there. In the summer grilling and stuff like that as well. Or just going to Polláck to chill. Or some university events as well.

I: And you do all these with the same group of friends?

E: Oh no, no.

I: So, you have your climbing friends and dancing friends, and you chilling friends...

E: Yeah, or the thing is sometimes I do something with one group of friends and then you know I want to keep up with the other group of friends and then we do something with them a week after. For example, this semester I am going to travel to Vienna with one group of friends, and then I am going to Budapest with another group of friends.

I: Can you tell me about these groups?

E: I guess it is just... one of them are the people I knew from Bjorkness, and then the other one is one that I... it was kind of they were already a group, as I got to know them here. And it not like they don't like each other, or anything. It is nothing like that, it is just that it just happened. You know, like you fit in with different kind of people.

I: Is there anything different about these groups? In terms of activities, or the way you act, or they act when you are together?

E: Not really. Or they, no... I honestly don't think so. Like they have different personalities, but like all of them have different personalities, it is not like all of them do that...

I: And is that your general experience as well, when you consider the different people in the student's groups?

E: Erm... one more time?

I: Is it your general experience that every person is different, but there are no different groups within the student body?

E: No, no. There are different... definitely groups. You know, because some people enjoy something more than other stuff. Like for me, I enjoy a lot. Like, I don't have one thing that I enjoy. Like I don't have, like, oh, I am typical, I like makeup and fashion and all of this, but I also like gaming, and you know this kind of stuff. So, I just, I don't know, I... But there are definitely people that enjoy some hobbies more, and maybe therefore hang out with other people that enjoy the same things. But I don't know everyone is just... usually people like the same thing.

I: Yes.

E: Yeah.

I: Was there anything that surprised you when you got to know new people?

E: Surprise, how? Like Hungarians, like do you mean culture shock?

I: Yes, culture shock, but not just Hungarians, because there are many other nationalities here as well.

E: Yeah, like, before I did not really realize there was such cultural differences before I came to Pécs. And it is often not things that are on the outside, like you have to get to know someone before you kind of realize these sort of little things, that are integritat... integrated?

I: Integral?

E: Yeah. But you would not notice from just having a superficial friendship with someone. Things like that. But then again, it also differs from people within the same ethnicity. You know. They can have different values and stuff like this. So, it is a bit hard to say, because I feel like, it is very individual, but there is definitely a cultural aspect to it as well.

I: So, for example what did surprise you?

E: For example, I guess, maybe, ethical views, if I can say that. What people will see as wrong and right, these kind of things.

I: For example?

E: In the hospital, some things that I might view as not ethically OK, someone else might not think is ethically wrong. You know, and for example, you know, I don't know, if what is actually correct or not, I guess it is just like, differences, you know.

I: So, did something happen, like, for example was ... do you feel that someone was mistreated in the hospital? Or something like that?

E: Not mistreated, but more like the respect for the patients, I guess. You know, like, respecting them as people...

I: You feel that there is too much respect for the patients here?

E: Too little...

I: I was suspecting that... So, what happened?

E: For example, you know, when a lot of medical students try to do stuff with the patient for example, a lot of them, they just do it maybe a bit rough. Or maybe a bit inconsiderate. In my opinion. You know, there is a language barrier, so it is hard to communicate what you are doing, but at the same time, there are sometimes I am thinking: this needs to stop, you know? Like, for example, if someone is trying to put the PBC into a patient, and they just keep trying and trying, and it is like: OK, it is enough, like you have tried enough. Like, lets get someone who can actually do it, like these kind of things, like, yeah.

I: So, I guess, you are trying to be more respectful, or treat the patients differently then?

E: Yeah. I try.

I: How?

E: How? Well, first of all, just like trying to make them understand that I feel what they feel. You know, like, I am here for you, I am trying to make you feel as good as possible, and like, even if you do something that hurts the patient, like, I don't know, like apologise, or be a bit more... I don't know how to explain it, like make them understand, like you are there for their comfort, and like, for their best. And also, kind of, think about what do I actually have to do. If there is patient in pain, and everyone is like, OK, you should find its pulse, or something like that; I am thinking: OK, but I can do it on another patient, I don't have to try it on this patient, that is lying there in pain. Or for example, if someone; like you have to take the blood pressure of a patient, and patient is in pain, you don't need like seven students looking at the patient in pain, while one person does something. Then I am like, OK, I just wait outside, and one person can go. Like, things like that. And it does not mean I am right, it is just like, I think this thing, like this ethical point of view, like what one person think is right and what

someone else might think is not right; it does differ. It does differ, yeah. But again, it differs within the same ethnicity as well, so it is not just, like, different.

I: I understand. So, when you are trying to show the patient that you are there for their comfort, how do you do that?

E: Since I cannot really speak that much Hungarian, I guess mostly eye-contact and smiling. Like, trying to be like, I am... I am a kind person, like trying to make them understand, that I am, uhm... yeah. And, like being gentle, I guess. Maybe helping them as well, you know, after doing the examinations and stuff, not just drop everything and leave them there without their clothes and stuff, but like, try to help with it afterwards. Stuff like that, yeah.

I: And are they receptive? Do they get what you are trying to do?

E: That I am not sure of, not sure of, but in my experience the patients are very sweet. Very helpful, very, like... I don't know they are just very cute, and very sweet, yeah.

I: Seems like you like working with the patients.

E: Oh, yeah. Definitely, definitely.

I: So, was there any patients who you clearly sensed that they ... you are on the same page, that they understand you, or maybe the opposite, someone, you just couldn't get to communicate with? Couldn't understand what you were trying to do, was not helpful at all? Any of, like that?

E: I think usually they are very understanding. They understand that we don't speak the language, and that we just want to learn, and there is a lot of people, that want to... they want

to help us learn, you know, even if it is a bit uncomfortable for them. They are very willing to participate.

I: And how do they do that?

E: They are just very smiley, and they try to understand, like even if the Hungarian is pretty bad, you know, they still try to make you understand; like the pain, and... the, yeah, what they are trying to say basically.

I: So, when you trying to, really, like... obtain some information from them, taking some medical history, or when you are trying to give advice... and you said that your Hungarian is not perfect... what is your strategy, how do you solve that situation?

E: I guess we have memorized some phrases... so usually just say it, you know. Like, you just do what you have been taught. You introduce yourself, say what you are going to do, and why you are there. But a lot of the time, also, there is a Hungarian speaking person with us. Or, at least, I noticed that a lot, with the clinical subjects that we have now, so even if there is something that you don't know how to say, they can translate it for you. So, I guess I just have to ask the questions, I'll ask a lot of yes-no questions, to make it easier.

I: Is that the same strategy you use in other situations?

E: What do you mean?

I: When you are not in the hospital. When there is not an instructor nearby, do you still like try to memorize phrases, and use yes-no questions when you need to go to the post office, or when you are at a restaurant?



E: That is a bit more difficult, because my Hungarian is limited to the hospital. So, in restaurants... in restaurants I guess it is fine, because you just point at what you want and then you say thank you, or please, and it is fine. In the post office it is hard. It is very hard, and it is often Google translate, and I avoid the post office as much as I can, because people don't speak English there generally. And there is often also none that speaks English. You know, usually when you go somewhere, there is at least one person, and they can get that person, but it is just... no.

I: This sounds like something that is based on experience. Something that happened to you personally. What happened exactly?

E: I had this package, that I was gonna send back, or return to a place, and it was just impossible to communicate. But I gave the package, and I think got sent, because I got... I paid something, and I got a receipt, but on the page, on the website that I ordered from there is no return. Like, I said I was returning it, but they didn't write that they got it. But I am kind of just... I am not doing that again. You know, I don't really feel like trying to explore what happened, because it is very stressful when you don't know the language.

I: So, you don't even know if it was a successful foray...

E: I have no idea.

I: Might have worked out, but who knows? I see. So, it was so stressful, that you just tried to avoid it.

E: Oh yeah. Like every official... like official institutions here, I just avoid as much as I can. Like, i don't go there unless I really-really have to.

I: How can you avoid them?

E: I order a lot of my packages to the school, and sometimes I do have to pay extra for them, and then they go to the post office by the metro. But it is pretty straightforward, because you just give them the note, and then you give them your passport, and then they give your package, you don't have to say a lot of stuff. The problem is for example when you... the package is stuck in Budapest, then you have to like fill out a lot of papers and write a note, and like get a student-certificate activation status, a lot of these kind of things. But luckily English Students' Service helps me with that, but for example the hospital as well. I was there two days ago...

I: As a patient?

E: Yes. I was getting a blood test taken, blood test and urine sample. And you know people, the secretaries, they don't know any English, at all. Like, I was at the wrong place first, and there was no communication. Luckily there was a Hungarian lady, and she knew English, so she translated it for me, it was another patient. So, that is really nice. So I got to the right place, but then again, I didn't understand what the next person was saying... So, but yeah, but luckily, she had a note with like, some English text written on it, so she gave it to me, and I kind of just had to guess what I was gonna do, because I had no idea. I just got like a number written the paper and I was... I guess that was the amount that I was gonna pay. And I just went and paid it, there was literally no communication there. And after I got like a note with a number, but I did not know where I was gonna going, I didn't know if I was gonna sit there, or over there... and I ended up in the wrong place, and someone had to come get me, and tell me: no, you are going over there. So, it was like, a little stressful.

I: I imagine, I imagine. That is exactly what I wanted to ask. Like, how did you feel when all this happened? So, stressful and?

E: Mostly stressful, but then at the same time I think it is my fault, because I am living in Hungary, and I don't know Hungarian. So, it is restraining and stressful, but it is my fault... like, when it comes to it. I should have studied more. I should have learned more Hungarian. Spent more of my free time learning Hungarian. So, I can't really blame them either. Like, when someone doesn't speak Hungarian... no, I mean, when someone doesn't speak English, only speaks Hungarian, like that is fine for me. When they get rude for example, or like, they don't want to help you, like they don't want to try to understand, they are just like: "nem tudom, nem tudom, nem tudom", or like "nem értem", you know? It is... that is the hardest part. Like, even if I write it into Google translate, you know, try to make myself understood, they just refuse to understand. But a lot of the time, especially the younger ones are really nice. And they also know a lot of English, or someone will translate for me. That happened a lot of time actually, that Hungarians that are there as customers also just come and translate for me. That is nice.

I: How does that happen? You mentioned several times, situations like these, when someone translated for you. Who asks who? How do they end up helping you?

E: Usually... I never ask. They just offer help. Like, they might hear that I am struggling with the Hungarian, or they might hear that the other person doesn't understand and they just like... they just come over, and they just help. Yeah.

I: And when you were in the post office, and none help you, did ask around?

E: No, I didn't. I didn't. Because... maybe it is a Norwegian thing, but like, you don't want to bother anyone, you know. It is like... okay, I know it is a Norwegian thing, actually. So that is, like, my cultural issue, you don't want to bother anyone. You don't want to ask anyone for

help. You don't want... you just want to respect their private space. Which is why it maybe comes as a little difficult to ask for help. That is my personal issue.

I: And you also said, when you feel that people just don't want to help, they refuse to understand, that is the hardest part. Hardest how?

E: Because you don't get anywhere. It is like, you are just left on your own, and you just have to figure it out yourself. Like, the post office is one thing, because they can't exactly do more, but for example in Spar, or like in stores, when I am looking for something and I write it in Google translate, just like the name of a spice for example, and like they just look at it, and they are just like "nem tudom", and just leave.

I: All you wanted them is just to point at an aisle, and that would have been enough.

E: Yeah.

I: I see. And what do you then?

E: I just figure it out, on my own.

I: You said that you feel that... sorry, let me rephrase that. Why do you think that you don't speak more Hungarian?

E: I guess it is probably a times issue, mostly. Because, you know when you have school from 8 until 4 pm, and you have to learn all these subjects, then going home and studying Hungarian as a language in addition to this is a lot. So, I think that is the main problem that a lot of students have, because it is just... there is just no time to learn an entire language in addition to learning everything in the university. When we had it as a subject it was easier,

because there was like time for the subject, you know time to learn this. But, yeah, now it is not that much time, that is the main problem.

I: Okay. So, when did you have more time, before this, before what?

E: Before... or not before. I mean when we had it in class, like when we had classes in first and second year. Like, you had time, because it was a subject that you had to pass. Like, you had to study it to pass, so I think when you don't have that anymore it might take away the motivation. As well, you know, when you are tired and you come home, the motivation for then opening a grammar book and studying a language, when you are leaving in two years and you are never gonna use it again, I think, that is the main problem for a lot of people, yeah.

I: But you had the motivation back then, in the first two years?

E: Yeah, definitely, yeah. But ... now it is gone.

I: It wasn't enough...

E: Yeah, no, because a language has to be repeated all the time. You cannot just learn it for two years, and then you just remember it. You have to keep reading it, and talking it, and using it, and I also had this app, the Duolingo app, I did a lot of that for Hungarian, but you forget it so fast. Yeah, you just have to like keep doing it. Almost like every day, or every other day, if you want to actually get good at the language. And a lot of the time, also, it is hard when you don't really use it. Because it is just once in a while, I go to the post office, or like, once in a while I have to use it to explain something. Mostly if I try to talk Hungarian to someone, and my Hungarian is really not good, like the grammar isn't right, they just talk English back at me. And then it feels weird, trying to talk Hungarian to this person at the store when they are

just talking English back to me, so that is... then you just switch around. So, it is just, you know, sometimes someone knows absolutely no Norwegian... no English, but it is not that often.

I: Speaking of Norwegian: how often do you use Norwegian nowadays?

E: Every day. I talk Norwegian to my Norwegian friends. But, like, yeah... if I stay at home the entire day, I don't actually speak it. You know?

I: Which one do you use more often, Norwegian or English? Probably not Hungarian...

E: Yeah, not. I agree. I think it... maybe 50-50. Because I have a lot of friends who are non-Norwegians. So, I speak English to them, and you know, if I hang out with them a day, I am just gonna speak English almost all day, every day. So, and you know I study in English, I talk English to myself when I try to revise what I read. So, maybe actually English a little bit more, but I think it is more 50-50.

I: Is like the amount of friends from different nationalities, is that also like 50-50?

E: I think right now it does change... right now, I think is mostly Norwegians.

I: And what is the trend? You get more and more Norwegian friends and, or the other way around?

E: You know some people move, they change schools, they change countries. These kind of things, so there are a lot of people that I hanged out before that are not at Pécs anymore. Yeah, so that way you lose some and you get some.

I: Any Hungarians you often talk to? So, you mentioned these people you danced together with, but you are not in contact anymore.

E: No. The Hungarian I was last in contact with, I guess, is someone I met in my summer practice, because I did my summer practice here and we were teamed up with an English speaking ...

I: You were here in Pécs?

E: Yeah, in Pécs, at the hospital.

I: Which department?

E: Haematology.

I: You were teamed up with a Hungarian?

E: Yeah.

I: And you stayed in contact?

E: Yeah. We met up last semester, but she had my red book, so we haven't met and done anything after that, but I am planning to. I am planning to. But the problem is that I am very bad at taking initiative. But that that is like, my personal personality trait, it doesn't have anything with anyone else to do. So, like, for me when I have free time, I think: oh, that is so nice, now I can just sit down and watch Netflix all day, you know?

I: Were you always like this, back in Norway as well?

E: Yeah. Pretty much, yeah.

I: Did you change in any way since you are here?

E: My perspective maybe. When you have a lot of different friends, with different nationalities, and all that. And you are forced, or not forced, but, like, suddenly you live alone in a country where you have no family. So, you kinda have to, like your only family are your friends, and ... but also, you know, when you move out of home, because I went straight to university, so I don't know if it was due to Pécs, or just because I moved out from home, that I changed. You know you mature a little bit; you get a little more ... what is it called ... able to make it on your own.

I: And that was already the case in Bjorkness?

E: Yeah.

I: That is in Oslo, right?

E: Yeah. It probably started there, but then it developed more here, because I stayed the longer here. And I was still very young when I lived in Oslo.

I: Where was it easier, to take care of yourself?

E: Here.

I: It is easier here?

E: It is very expensive for a student in Norway.

I: So, you enjoy the perks?

E: Yeah. Definitely. But the school money is not the best.

I: You mean the money you get...



E: The tuition fee, yeah.

I: Right. And you said that your perspective changed here?

E: Yeah, but I am not sure if I used the right word.

I: What do you mean by that?

E: I mean just perspective on life in general. On like how people behave, why they behave that way. ... Or, like... Yeah, I don't know how to explain it. Does it make sense?

I: You gained a better understanding about people?

E: Yeah, yeah. Definitely.

I: For example?

E: For example, why people act a certain way. For example, when someone does something, instead of just reacting on that action, I started thinking, like, why? Why? Did something happen before? Is something else that triggered... like, these kind of things.

I: Can you explain to me, like, one situation, where maybe at first it didn't make sense, why people do something, or say something, and then you realised that: oh, that must be the reason?

E: ... I feel like it is just all, all the time. Honestly.

I: It is just generally the way you think?

E: Yeah.

I: Always consider other people's perspectives.

E: Yeah. Because we have different backgrounds, we have different, you know, like, someone says something and someone else might view it... English just disappeared...

I: It is okay.

E: I don't know how to say it. Do you understand what I mean? Like the perception of someone differs from the other one, depending on what background they has.

I: I think... I don't want to give words into your mouth. It sounds like you are trying to explain that you are more accepting of differences.

E: Yeah. But that is just personality traits, like not... this doesn't have anything to do with the ethnicity. It is just like personality, and trying to understand where people is coming from, when they do something. But maybe that comes with maturity as well, and not just because I moved here.

I: Right, right. So, did these other Hungarians and other international students surprise you in any way? ... So, when you arrived here, I am sure you had some expectations of what it is going to be around here, what it is going to be like here. What the other students are going to be like...

E: I guess it was more positive than negative, because it is scary going to a new country. It is like, how are people there? Are they very different, you know? These kind of things. But when I got here it was like... people are pretty similar.

I: And that is positive?

E: Yeah... or not like... people have their differences, but it is not like they are completely different, and you cannot, like, understand anything.

I: So, it was positive, that you realised that you can understand... as a group you can understand each other, and you can share stuff with other people, that was the positive part. ... So, okay, yeah, yeah. So... did you have any experiences with Hungarian customs? Like, our own cultural customs?

E: I don't know if it is a cultural thing, but maybe the like, customs service... no, no...

I: Not in that sense, like Hungarian culture, have you had any experience with Hungarian culture?

E: You mean like culture shock, or something like that?

I: Anything.

E: It is not that much of a culture shock, I think. But then again, I am from Europe, so probably more for someone outside of Europe. Maybe one thing that I noticed, is the helpfulness, or like the customer service. In like restaurants, or like, anywhere in general. I don't know it is cultural thing, probably not.

I: Okay, but what do you mean by that?

E: The lack thereof... yeah. Pretty much anywhere. But the thing is I actually talk to some Hungarian friends about this, and they agreed.

I: Yes.

E: So, it is probably not a cultural thing, maybe it is just the places I've been in Pécs.

I: Yeah, yeah. I recall a joke... what do you think about general politeness? I think it would be a good idea, we should try it onetime.

E: Yeah. But like, people in general are very polite. When you meet them in the street, and stuff. It is just that when you go to the restaurant, they don't look that happy to see you there. Sometimes I am eating out, and I feel like I am bothering the person that is supposed to, like, come with the food and stuff. That happens a lot.

I: And... did that influence you in any way?

E: No, just the tip. Me as a person, it is fine.

I: How about other cultures... was there anything, that surprised you about other cultures here?

E: Hmm... maybe, expectancies of a gender. You know, like some thought that one gender is supposed to do... like they have gender roles. These kind of things. I feel like gender roles are a bit more accepted here, than for example where I grew up.

I: You are still talking about Hungary and Hungarians, right?

E: Yeah, in Hungary as well, I noticed. Like, I talk to Hungarians, and they are like, yes, of course, the woman is supposed to be home with the kid. You know? These kind of things. And I guess... is that a cultural thing?

I: Yes, it is. Everything is cultural. Culture is everything.

E: It is scary to say it, because I don't want to offend.

I: You are not going to offend me.

E: Like, these kind of things. I guess that is what I noticed the mostly, because it really bothered me.

I: Did it... Like, did you encounter this, with regards to you specifically?

E: Not that someone has told me, that I should stay home as a woman, but for example if I was on a date, with Hungarian guys, for example, they would be a bit more like... old fashioned, if I can say that. In a way like, doing everything for you, and it is perceived to be nice... and they just wanted to be nice, like, I am sure of it, like having to pay on the first date, these kind of things. But for me, it is kind of like, it is too much. It seems like they have to take care of me in a way. That I haven't noticed when I went on a date with someone else for example, that was not Hungarian. They weren't like, as having to do everything for you in that kind of way. Which is, guess, romanticism, but maybe I am just like... maybe I am the problem.

I: I wouldn't say that... So, did you then change relationship strategies? So, did you then just say: Okay, no dating Hungarians anymore.

E: Is it gonna sound racist, if I say yes?

I: It is not racist, why would it be racist?

E: The thing is, I am not like, no Hungarians, but I am a bit more, on the lookout for those kind of things. You know, like, if I do meet a Hungarian, I am a bit more attentive to those little signs. If they are like, they have to do something for me, because they are the man, so they should do it, like this kind of stuff. I just... I pay a little more attention.

I: So, maybe a little bit?

E: A little bit, definitely. But that is just for me as a person. I guess, I talk to other Norwegian friends about it, and they were like, super stoked, like that is so nice of him, you know, to take out your chair and put it back, and take your coat, and everything, and it is like...

I: For each of its own.

E: Yes, it is individual as well, I guess.

I: Okay, yes. Yeah. Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

E: It is a bit hard, when you are sitting on the spot, thinking of things. I don't think... anything... what was like, the... what is the research?

I: The research? Well, it is a very broad thing. I really just want to listen to you, and then figure out, based on your experiences, what is important for you here, and how do you live your lives here, and how that affects your language learning. How all this affects your language learning.

E: Language learning, yeah, you mean Hungarian, yeah.

I: But I just wanted to get a general picture first.

E: Yeah, I get that.

I: Not just focus on your classroom all the time.

E: There is one more thing, I think, with the language barrier and everything. The... not just be mean, but being taken advantage of, because you don't know the language. Especially in the law kind of area, you know. Because you don't know the language, you don't know the laws, you can't properly communicate. I know a lot of people that, they are taken advantage of for example their landlords. Especially their landlords. And you know, in the contract as well, it is in Hungarian, and then in English, but it says if there is any difference the Hungarian one is the one, that counts. So, I guess, that is also like a hard aspect of it, when it comes to the language, or not knowing the language.

I: Right. Is that something that happened to you, or someone you know?

E: I have a very nice landlord, luckily. But someone I do know, experienced that there were people for example, like she was told by her landlord, that they were gonna work on a building next to her, over her... I am not sure, and the builders were like, in her garden and like, using her water from outside, you know, that she paid rent for. And the landlord, kind of, made it seem, like, it was fine, it was normal, like... yeah, but then she found an English translation of the Hungarian law, like the actual tenant law, and it turned out that the landlord was breaking that law, by allowing these kind of things. And the second she actually sent this law to the landlord, like, this is not okay, like, she stopped immediately. But the thing is, a lot of people might not know this, or might not actually look into the laws, and therefore it is easy to be taken advantage of, when you are a student, and you don't really know...

I: Are these kind of stories, like, circulating among students, do you talk to each other about these kind of things? Do you give advice to each other?

E: I guess mostly to your closer friends. Like, you don't just go around telling everyone. But I've seen one group on Facebook, as well, that is like, people write about the really bad experiences. That you should be aware, that this landlord might be, for example, hard to work with. Then again, it goes the other way around, because I heard, I know about students, that have for example thrashed apartments, and they moved and refused to pay the landlord what they were supposed to pay for the damages. You know, so, yeah.

I: If something like that would happen, who could you turn to for help?

E: For me, I would probably use the Student Housing. Yeah, because they have English speaking personnel, and I got my apartment through student housing, so most likely go there for help. Ask how... is this okay, and the rules, and stuff like that. Maybe also use the google

for laws. You know, if it was a very big thing. But yeah, I am not sure if these friends got their apartment through Student Housing, or someone else. I am not sure of that. So, yeah. Like personally I would go there.

I: Yeah, thank you very much. I think I have run out of questions for now. But let me ask you, if in the future, I have some more questions to ask, would it be okay if I contacted you?

E: Sure, sure.



**4<sup>TH</sup> INTERVIEW: JACOB**

The fourth interview took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020 between the interviewer (in the transcript I) and Jacob (in the transcript J).

I: First of all, let me ask you to tell me about your experiences as a foreign student here in Pécs, anything you would like to talk about really.

J: Well, it was a cultural shock to begin with. Because in... back home in Norway, when... what can you say... when you go to the store there is more of a fake smile, like oh, hi, how are you doing? Here it is more like, okay, I see you, be done. It is more... it is not rude, but it is more direct. You are there for a reason, get it finished, basically. I am not sure if I like it or not. I mean ... you have less to think about when you are at the store. No need to say hello to everybody, but also there is more, in general, like... that is maybe the one thing with the store. Like, they are very... you always say szia, or jó napot, or whatever, and you say bye when you leave. Like, back home there is more, like, small talk. There is no small talk here. But if you enter a wardrobe for example, like gym... here you... everybody says hi to everybody in the room, and bye. Even if they don't know. We never do that at home. We don't even sit beside each other on the bus. Very socially awkward people. Hungarians don't seem that way, and ... other experiences? I mean, the student loan. That covers more here, than it would back home. And, and as long as you manage your money, you are able to live comfortably, without too many issues, until you have to start paying it back, of course. I still have five years to do that. The studies themselves. There is more the... how do you say it... the environment at school, there is more groupings. Very... grouping after nationalities. And to me it seems like, the groupings are more amongst the girls maybe, because I have lot of different nationalities

as friends, and they are mostly boys, because, well... we meet through physical education, we meet at some different parties, classes. Whatever. And we form a bond from that, but most of my female friends only have female friends from those nationalities, that are closer to them. So, Norwegians maybe they have a few German friends, not a lot, and for guys it seems to be more general.

I: Can you explain to me, in detail, if you think back of a few of your friends from other nationalities, can you tell me the stories of how you became friends?

J: One of them I actually had... because we had to do medical communication skills, because we exchanged, and during the year back in Norway we did not do that one, so we had to go with the first-year students, so those first-year students, through the medical communication skills, I met them during class. We talked to them, because of course, medical communication... and I met him later at the gym, and he seemed to have some, how do you say, similar hobbies. And the fact that, while he was training, he was doing boxing, and I like doing that as well, so I asked him, if he were doing it for a lot, and he said no, he been doing it for some time, but not too much. And he needed really coaching, basically. And another friend of mine, a Norwegian guy, also met at F3, through the same type of thing. Like, similar hobbies. He invited me to this group session basically, we have with a Hungarian coach. And I asked him to come, and he joined and some friends of him I met at school, and through parties and such, through him then. And then I became friends with them.

I: And this is something that is missing, you think, in girl's experiences?

J: Not really, but there seems to be... I am not talking about all girls, but especially Norwegians. Norwegian guys as well, but most of the girls are very socially awkward people. We do not like conversation, we do not like small talk. If we don't know you, we look straight

ahead, down at the ground. And at the bus back home... if you sit, there is two seats in each row. If you sit at one, all the other seats will fill up, if there is one space among each person, only one, and the other one is taken, people will literally stand. They won't go sit down.

Unless they are very tired of course, but mostly no. But it seems to be more... more diversity in friend groups when it comes to guys. And the other is more just like a classmate relationship, it is more: I know you, but we are not really friends, that we hang out and such.

I: So, in this case, that you mentioned, you met this friend in a classroom and then when you realised that you have similar hobbies, that is when it turned into a friendship. Does it always work like that, or can you think of any other ways?

J: Well, I mean, it is maybe, if you have class with someone all the time you might start out with doing... or you are put into groups and then you are in groups with them and you start talking. And after class you might talk to them, you say see you later, and you see him the next day. You start talking more, less and less about school and more and more about other things. So, it develops. And more like, oh, are you going out? And if there is something happening, like, International Event, or the semester opening party, or such... you may, if there is a pre-party for example, and you meet them, they are talking about going, you might just invite them. Mostly, maybe, like, you meet them, and then you meet them later, and you start talking about things than school, it develops into a friendship. Otherwise, it is more like a classmate relationship.

I: Did you make any friends here, that did not start in a classroom?

J: Yes, but that was through others that I met in classrooms, and then they had friends from other places, and we connected through them. So, indirectly yes, but directly no.

I: How many people would you say are involved in your circle of friends?

J: Depends on the circle. I mean, those I am mostly with are maybe 5-6 guys. But another, more larger circle maybe with... we are friends, but not all the time, like, hang out... 30 maybe?

I: And what is the makeup of these two circles?

J: What is the makeup? You mean?

I: Who are these people? Who are in your inner circle?

J: My inner circle is mostly people of ... I went to school within Norway. That exchanged together with me. SO that is how I knew them, because we all moved to a bigger city, like the capital, Oslo, and we had no friends, because, well, we were new. So, we started being friends, and then we moved down here... and the other one, is more or less. It is a lot of different nationalities, there is a couple Germans, one guy is half-Hungarian and half-German, Márk, you might know him.

I: Yeah, maybe.

J: Turkish guys, some Iranians, I said Germans, Norwegians, of course. Persians, there might be a few. There is one guy, who is Norwegian, who is Norwegian-Serbian, so... on both sides. What else? Jordanian, some Asian, Korean, maybe, mostly. We met here through Hungarian.

I: Hungarian class?

J: And through Anatomy class as well. But mostly, we mostly talked after Hungarian class, because we had to go after this class back to school. During the trip.

I: So, the long distance was really helpful.

J: Yeah, it was helpful...

I: You were happy about that, I am sure.

J: Eh, very...

I: So, how did the transfer from Oslo to Pécs affect your friendship with guys in your inner circle?

J: Well, it strengthened it. Because we only had each other down here, to begin with. And we were quite new, we did not really know the culture properly. We barely know the language; we are trying our best. But maybe the most needed part of it, like, small talk.

I: That is the one you are trying the hardest on? Is that what you are saying?

J: Well, the inner circle, those are the ones we are the most... those are the people that I am mostly with, that had the similar experiences when we came through exchanging. Because we all had the same struggles, with the exchange of course, and, like, the language barrier is the same for all of us. English is not always spoken here, to a certain degree, and the culture is a little different. Maybe more for some of them, because from an older generation - that happens back home, as well - but from an older generation down here, it seems that my friends, who are more Iranian, Pakistani, such, they might feel more... more forms, smaller forms of racism, maybe. Prejudice.

I: And you did not experience that?

J: No. I'm white, I mean... I am white Norwegian. I look German, so.... it seems to be... seems like Germans are widely accepted as a people here. As well as Norwegians.

I: Okay. Was there anyone who fell out of favour here? So, who came together with you, but don't consider them in your inner circle anymore?

J: Well, I mean...

I: You don't have to name names.

J: Is there some people who fell out? I mean there are some people who literally fell out, they failed and had to go home, so they are not here anymore. And you have ex-girlfriends from me and other friends, who suddenly started talking shit. And is now very little liked, or not very liked at all by a lot of people. Other than that, not really. Even though we are at different classes and different stages, because someone has passed something and someone has not, we still manage to find time to, well, be together, and it might just be as simple as you are going to the library, the Tudásközpont, for example just sitting there and taking brakes together. It does not have to be any more than that.

I: Right, right. What else? Sometimes it is just that, that is all that you have time for, or energy for, but when you have time and energy what do you do together?

J: When we have time and energy, we mostly... we might go to parties. Not too much now, due to harder ... harder, what is it called, subjects. Harder, more... What we do is, go to movies, we... like a friend of mine, he had a birthday, now last week, so this... tomorrow we are going to some restaurant in the city centre to celebrate his birthday. So, we do that: when there is a guy who has a birthday we go out, and celebrate his birthday simply by getting together, eating dinner and going home afterwards, maybe watching a movie. So yeah, I mean it is a simple way of, well, connecting. And that is good.

I: And how about the wider circle, the multinational group? What do you do with them?

J: That is more... it is not obligatory. Like the coaching thing, I was talking about, with the boxing. It is not obligatory, it is in your free time, in your spare time. That's where I meet them mostly, and through physical education, we might meet at parties, pre-parties, whatever, and... we might... we have a group chat, where we might talk about going out to play football, not now maybe, because it is a bit cold, or not anymore, but it was. And it was busy during the exam period. But when we have time, like spare time. Normal, from week one to maybe week 10, before stress really kicks in, we might go play football. There is different, there is this place, just by here, really just up the street, where there is a football field. Or not like a football field, but there are two goals, and there is a wall around it basically, and basketball hoops...

I: Is that behind the Faculty of Humanities? Is that the one?

J: No, I think it is just up the street here. Before you go to.. you know where the Sliven Plaza, you can go up the stairs...

I: Yeah, yeah, I know.

J: It is just by that. It is also...

I: It is a concrete thing, right?

J: Yeah. We can meet there, or we can meet this other place, of course, but that is mostly where goes.

I: Are you very centred around this place?

J: Yeah, yes. I would say so. Because most of my friends live in this area. So... there is someone living in the city centre, of course, so we travel there, and we might meet there. But

mostly it is, maybe in this area, around here, and city centre maybe, little more, maybe school.

So just that.

I: So, you have a group chat, you said.

J: Yeah, a group chat, messenger.

I: And, like, how many people are on it?

J: 20-25 I think.

I: From all nationalities?

J: Yeah, from different nationalities, and we might... if there is someone, who would like to join, someone who has another friend... it is... they know, they can just add them, if they would like to join.

I: It is always more and more people...

J: Yeah, yeah.

I: And what kind of communication goes on in this group chat? First of all, I assume it is English.

J: Yes, English. It is English. What type of communication? It is different. It might be serious communication, someone might ask you about school, others might just be talking shit maybe, so it is little bit different. The type of communication is not always serious.

I: So, it is just a normal...

J: Chat.



I: Unregulated group chat.

J: Yeah, unregulated group chat.

I: No focus to the...

J: Very unregulated.

I: Yeah, right. So, about this circle of friends, are there any Hungarians?

J: Except for the guy who is half-Hungarian, no.

I: How did you meet him?

J: I met him through Medical Communication Skills.

I: Is he in the English program?

J: Yeah, I think he is swapping between English and German program. But yeah, he is in the English program, so like there is not a lot of Hungarian friends. Really.

I: Why do you think is that?

J: I think it is... I have not met too many Hungarian students down here. At school. That I talked to through like, physical education. Because, well, they are not in the English program, they are not in the German program, they are in the Hungarian program, they might not speak English too well. So, I haven't met them through physical education, I haven't met them through medical communication skills, I haven't met them through others, because they have the same issue, where they haven't met them either, so... it seems to be more centralised. More secluded.

I: In the physical education, don't you take that together with Hungarian students?

J: I think that is together with Hungarian students, yes, but I haven't met them. In no physical education I've been to...

I: Hungarians don't like boxing?

J: To me it doesn't seem that way. I don't know. There is actually, in the group we had, there is three Hungarians, actually, so we are friends with them, but it is not through class, it is... they go to other universities, other places. There are... we do know some Hungarians, but there is like three of them.

I: That counts.

J: Yeah, it counts.

I: So, you are friends with them, you said. What does it mean, that you are friends with them?

J: Well, if I see them, I talk to them, I ask how they are doing. We might do something together in the spare time...if we have time, of course, and the schedule allows it.

I: What do you talk about?

J: Well... whatever. How they are doing. What they did last weekend, for example, whatever.

I: In what language?

J: English.

I: Always? Exclusively?

J: Well, if I speak Hungarian to them, I don't know what they are saying back, so...

I: You have tried?

J: Yeah, I have tried, but maybe it is not too ... what is it called ... maybe it is not too, not necessary to ask how they bowel movement is, maybe. So not really too much Hungarian, because we do not know the small talk. Stuff we know, like, oh, my name is, who are you, how are you... Yeah, and they speak very fast. So, it might be hard to keep up.

I: Do you use Hungarian at all?

J: I use Hungarian when I am at the supermarket, I use Hungarian. I try to use Hungarian exclusively. Use of taxis, whenever I have to talk to people in regard to everyday things. So, for shorter conversations, yes, maybe, I try to do so. But if I am fall off, I simply say, sorry can you repeat that in English. Do you speak English? If they don't, I will just try to understand the best I can. I try to use some Hungarian, but that is because I want to try to learn it. Some of my friends don't use Hungarian at all. Almost. So, they simply do the obligatory subjects in Hungarian, they finish that, and they almost never use any.

I: And that is because they just don't want to?

J: Yeah, they are uninterested.

I: And why do you think is the difference? Why are you interested, or why they are...

J: I've always been more interested in languages. Yes, in general. So we learned Spanish in school, I try to learn more Spanish, to speak more fluently. I am still working on it, but at a smaller pace now, that the subjects are getting heavier. And some of my other friends, they have never really had taken an interested, to the same extent, in languages.

I: So, you speak Hungarian in supermarkets, and taxis, whenever you are out in the city, mostly?

J: Yeah.

I: How does it usually go?

J: It goes well, up to a certain point. Sometimes it actually goes well, like maybe I don't understand the whole sentence, but I might, from body language, and from certain words in the sentence, I can deduct what they are trying to say. So, I can then simply say igen, or nem, or whatever would fit the conversation of course. So sometimes it goes well, and maybe sometimes if the conversation seems to be going a little bit further, I had to do it in English. So, yes, I am not that good yet. Yeah.

I: So, when it goes further and it gets more difficult to communicate, what is your estimation: how often can you just switch to English and continue uninterrupted?

J: Seems to be maybe 40-60, or 50-50. So, they might a little bit of English, but sometimes almost nothing.

I: And you said, that when they can't speak English, you just try harder?

J: I try harder with them in Hungarian.

I: And how does that look like?

J: It looks weird.

I: Extreme concentration?

J: Well, I mean, I simply ask them to repeat, and they try to go from there. Like, if I can catch some words in the sentence, if... sometimes... they seem to be a little patient. They speak slower, they try to help me understand, and if I can't understand... if they refer to an object or something, they might just show me it. So, yeah.

I: Do you ever receive any help?

J: How do you mean?

I: Like, other people step up, and try to translate for you?

J: No, that does not happen.

I: Never?

J: No.

I: Do you ever look for help? Ask anyone to help?

J: No, I don't.

I: Right. So, you also said at the beginning, that you enjoy, or maybe you didn't say enjoy, maybe it is just how I understood, that money goes longer here?

J: Yeah, we were able to live more comfortable here than back in Norway. When we were in Norway it is... you get... you get the same amount of money as the Norwegian students get, or you get more, but you have to pay more, because we have to pay the tuition fee and such, but it seems to... well, it is cheaper here. Like food is cheaper. Rent is cheaper. Back in Oslo I lived in a collective, like, we were 8 people living in the same apartment, everybody had their singular room. They had like, different... they make places for people to live, my room was 10

square meters, so that was my space. And we had a kitchen that was for everybody. We had two toilets and two showers, and I think I paid more than I do now, for an apartment basically with a friend. So now we are two living in one apartment, which is the same size of the whole apartment in Oslo, and we pay less.

I: Have you always lived in a rental here?

J: Yeah.

I: With the same person?

J: Yeah.

I: I guess it is someone you came together from Oslo.

J: Yeah, Steffen.

I: Steffen, yeah. And anything else, that you know that you can do here, but wouldn't necessarily be able back home?

J: Well, there are more activities. You can afford to do more activities. Like go to paitball, you can do that more often. You can go out to parties more often, because it is not only food, alcohol as well is cheap. When you go out to bars, a beer might cost you maybe 800 forints, maybe, I am not too sure, but back home in Norway, the prise of that would be 2500 forints for one beer, so it adds up very quickly. So yeah, we are able to live more comfortably. It is... we don't have to survive the last seven days on, well, toast and butter.

I: Was this something you were expecting coming here, or...

J: Well, we were told. Cause we had a Hungarian teacher in Oslo, which was hired by the school, and she worked for that school, and she takes people down here for trips before they exchange, so you can get know the city, and you can meet the people down here. And further and further. It was expected to a certain degree.

I: Was it also to some degree a reason for coming here?

J: No, not really. The reason for coming here is mostly because I did not... back home there is... the doctor's union, or... yeah, the doctor's union, they try to keep the studies, medical studies in Norway, they try to keep it as exclusive as possible. So, we have a point system from one to six in grades, and six is the best. To get in, in Norway, to the medical studies, you have to have 6.2 in average. Which means that you have to have the best grade, and if you do certain subjects, like biology, chemistry, and physics, and math. The harder type of subjects, because they make them... they do different difficulties, and you get extra points from that, but you still have to have an average, which is insane. So, I had two choices, either redo some exams, and use maybe a year or one and a half year on that. Or to come down here. And I thought, well, why not? Because if I was back home, I would still... I wanted to try something new, and I thought why not? And looking at the city, the Pécs, from afar, from Google, it seemed like a good city, so, yeah.

I: Only from afar?

J: Nah, it is still. I like it. It takes some getting used to in the beginning. It is not... does not look... when you go from Oslo, which is a big city where there are a lot of different buildings, and a lot of different people as well, and you come here, it is more centralized. If you get what I am saying. Like, the city centre is very beautiful, and some buildings are maybe a little less

beautiful, but you find that everywhere. And the city itself, with like, the cultural aspects, the Pécsians, so the general public, it takes some getting used to.

I: What specifically does it take?

J: Like, if you trying to cross the road, on this... what is it called, the white stripes?

I: The crosswalk?

J: Yeah, the crosswalk, I think....

I: I know what you mean.

J: If you try to cross them it... some cars don't stop, they don't care. So, you might have to well... what is it called... you basically have to initiate it. So, you have to start stepping off, and then see if they maybe slow down. If they, do you can go. If they don't stay back.

I: It is a game a chicken.

J: Yeah, it is.

I: You have to show that you want it badly.

J: Yeah, it is.

I: Anything else? You mentioned buses, how people don't respect personal spaces much...

J: No, it is not that they don't respect personal space, it is just that we might... back home we might respect it too much. Way too much. I mean, if there is two seats, meant for two people, not for one person and one free seat.

I: Or you know, one person and the bag.



J: Yeah. For example, that is... people down here might get pissed if you do that. Back home they don't. They'll stand and they'll shut up.

I: Yeah, they understand that your bag needs its space as well.

J: Yeah, yeah. It is more... people are more patient back home, if you are being, when it comes to, for lack of a better word, a dickhead. If you are caring too much just about yourself.

I: Have you ever experienced this impatience on yourself? Have you been the target of it?

J: No, not really. I try to keep to myself. If I have my bag with me, I put it beside my leg, or sit like this.

I: Did it happen to someone you know?

J: Yeah, a friend of mine, a girl. She has a bag, like an expensive bag, and she is like.... I mean she looks... she is very small, and she might look very angry, when she is relaxed. So, yeah, she experienced it a couple of times, because she had a bag, and someone came, like angry like, "move your bag, I wanna sit." She was gonna move her bag, or that is what she told me, but yeah, she was clearly told to do so.

I: Do you know what happened after that?

J: No, it was just that, basically. She is very... she does not like conflicts, so she is like...oh shit, my bad.

I: And you luckily never experienced anything similar, not even in other situations?

J: In other situations maybe. Crossing the road. If you take too much time... I tend to walk faster, but if you use too much time, maybe the guy driving the car got a little angry... maybe just beat the horn, a couple of times.

I: I see. So...

J: And cycling. I don't really... Cycling to and from school. I am not really too comfortable with that, seems like people don't like cyclists.

I: Are you afraid on the road?

J: Yeah, kind of. Kind of. And I heard about this one girl. She was in fifth year or something, she was hit by a car, because the guy driving the car didn't like cyclists. She fell on the head, and now she... she ended up in a coma. And the... she is not... due to that thing... due to the situation she ended up with a slight mental retardation. Yeah, because of it, and she was fifth year, so... it sucks.

I: That sounds scary.

J: And people also get mad, if you go into the sidewalk. People walking there are like what are you doing there, go to the road. And people on the road are like get on the sidewalk. So, it is confusing.

I: You know, there is small, thin line between the two.

J: Yeah, yeah, of course. Sometimes you might see it, sometimes. If there is no leaves, or whatever.

I: So, yeah. I asked you if this difference in prices was something that surprised you, so let me get back to that question. What did surprise you?

J: Is this for me?

I: Yes, that is for you.

J: Thank you.

I: Was there anything about the life here, that was surprising to you?

J: Ahh, I mean, the fact that you are able to get an apartment, and it looks nice, it is... it might be... well, depending on what apartment you choose, and the price range and such... it is modern, it is... students back home, normal students, they may live like that, but they pay a lot more, and they might get help from parents and such. I am living currently only on the student loan, and on what I made during the summer. As well as trying to save up money, of course. Other than that, not really. Like, of course, the cultural aspects, the patience and all that, but other than that there is not really too much. I mean we were aware, that the prices are different from back home and here. So, you might... I mean, you might still go broke, because if you are not careful you use way too much money. You cannot go to the store every day just buy something, whatever you like. Just go on with your life... because you don't have enough money for that. But you do have enough money to, well, live comfortably, eat enough food, so if you are good at spending money, if you are good at budgeting, you live more comfortable throughout the whole year, instead of maybe three months very comfortable and then two months very uncomfortably.

I: So, generally speaking then, would you say then, that you are living the way you thought you will be living here?

J: I think so. Other than the apartments. That was a little surprising, because when we went to the ... there is this Facebook group with apartments for rent, where they put out. And the

apartments were very nice. I did not think they would be, to that degree. I think I did believe it would be more like the situation in Oslo. Eight people living together. It looks worse, than the one we are living in now. I mean, the quality was better.

I: Have you been living in the same apartment?

J: Yeah.

I: Can you tell me maybe, about the landlord?

J: The landlord. This man and his wife. Both Hungarian. The wife does not speak English. The man speaks a little English, and he does his best. And it is good. They are very nice, very helpful. There seems to be no issue, they are very patient.

I: How often do you speak to them?

J: Maybe twice a month. So, they are not really... they are not invading our privacy. They are like... when we... we agreed to a certain date, when we are supposed to pay rent. So, we do that every time they owe us (SIC) or one time, and then we schedule for the next time. And then next time schedule for the time after that. And while they are there, we speak about anything. For example, handball. They are both very interested in handball, and Norway played Hungary not too long ago, and we won, so... we just had to...

I: We let you win, because we are very polite and generous people.

J: We just had to make sure, that they knew that we won.

I: Yeah, okay. That is important. And how about the neighbours? Do you ever speak with them?

J: Sometimes. Some of them don't speak English, so we don't really speak too much to them. We don't see them too much, and they seem very uninterested. They simply want to say hello and go. But the other ones, they are very kind. We don't make much trouble, we had through one and a half year now, we had one party and we don't make too much noise. We clean... I mean, there is nothing to be angry about and they seem very nice.

I: So that would be the typical encounter, when you just say hello, and move on.

J: Yeah, it is typical. It might be hello, good day, and how are you.

I: Have you ever had to discuss anything in detail with them?

J: Yeah, because there is one main switch for the apartment, which we don't know where is, and the landlord was on vacation. Had an exam the day after, I needed internet, and the power was off, in just my apartment. And so, I went down, I talked to the neighbour, and he said yes, he knew where the main switch was, and he could help us with that one. So, he helped me with that, and had to discuss more in detail, but that was in English. because I don't know the name of the power generator or such in Hungarian, so yeah.

I: And did you ask them the Hungarian?

J: No, I was more interested only in getting my internet to work, because I wanted to, yeah...

I: Just one more question, and then I think our time is up. So, the life here is like you were expecting, have you changed in any way?

J: Well, I am more mature. Something about living alone, or living away from parents and such, and also the people, they are more focused, or more solution oriented. Is that a word? They simply want you to get on with your day and go on. Back home there is more small talk,

chit chat and such, but yeah... I mean I have been more mature, but that is also due to age. And having to budget and such... the grown-up stuff. Pay rent, pay bills.

I: So, by mature you mean being able to do stuff on your own?

J: Yeah, and also more extroverted. Being more comfortable, because you have to. They won't contact you, you have to help yourself, they won't help you. If you don't wanna help yourselves. So yeah, you simply have to get out of your own comfort zone and just ask for help, whenever you are.

I: So, let me just ask you one more thing. I hope didn't mind this interview. In the future would you mind sitting down again?

J: Yeah, I can do that.

I: Okay, well, thank you very much, and have a nice week.

J: You too.

**5<sup>TH</sup> INTERVIEW: AIZA**

The fifth interview took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020 between the interviewer (in the transcript I) and Aiza (in the transcript A). A German student, Aiza's guest (in the transcript G) was also present.

I: So, let me start by asking you just to tell me about your experiences as a foreign students.

What is it like?

A: Yeah, well basically, now I am a fifth-year student, so I've spent quite a lot of time here in Hungary already. I would say actually it is a very good experience to be first of all, being away from my family. That is like, I think my biggest concern, that I started to live alone on my own. Because I was always with my family before. And then secondly, I found... I found Hungary pretty much like, a beautiful country, like about the weather here, it is very very very different than where I come from.

I: Which is?

A: Sweden. I live in Sweden. And then about the people, I like Hungarian people, they are good. Sometimes we do face some not... some not very likeable things, but I think that everyone is different. And then come to the language... Hungarian is the hardest language I have ever... I have ever had experience with any other language so far. I speak, like, five languages, so by then it should be easier for me to learn and also, we do share some of the grammars with my mother tongue. Some tiny bits here and there. But despite all this, I still find Hungarian difficult. I think the reason I ... well, I think that the school could have done

much better job in teaching students and taking it more seriously. Yeah, and also myself, I could have done more.

I: Right, when you say the school should have done a better job in the teaching do you mean in general, or do you have language teaching in special in mind?

A: No, like generally. Like, they should include Hungarian in the obligatory programs, from the beginning of the school, when we start from the beginning, till the fourth-fifth year. Because I think it is quite a long journey to start here as a medical student, and like, continue 5, 6, 7 years. I don't know for how long people stay here. And not to be able to speak language, I think that... yeah it is fifty-fifty, 50% everybody is responsible for their own... like, I could have done a better job at this, but I think that if it was obligatory for me, personally, in my views, I would definitely taken it more serious than I was doing... like I've done it now. If it was obligatory, I would like go to the classes, I would have more chances to learn more, to practice more. Maybe if there was like, better books, I don't know, like assignments to do. Because, at the end of the day, that we students are. We never study on our own. We always rely on the exams, tests. Which would be like to push us to study, and to make people's life easy, because here people hardly speak English. Most of the time, when you go to the store, you know, daily life, other than the school, it is very hard. Because we always have to, I always have to use google translate, or someone who speaks tiny bits of Hungarian, or someone I have to carry with me, yeah.

I: So, you use google, and what else did you mention?

A: Maybe a Hungarian friend, if I have to... call or take with me to places.

I: Right, you just take Hungarian friends in your pocket.



A: I wish I could do that.

I: But do you have Hungarian friends you can rely on?

A: Yeah, I do, some. Some. Not a lot.

I: Not a lot. What is that? What is some, but not a lot? When it comes to people, you regularly talk to and you know that if you have a problem, you can rely on them, how many people do you have like here?

A: None.

I: None?

A: None.

I: OK.

A: Well, I think that is also partly because of school. I would blame school on that. Because they have separated Hungarian and English program so much, that we don't have any contact between each other, actually, by school itself. If it was... if it is not about going to the parties, or you know anything else, when you meet people or other students, because in my... myself I don't go to parties, so I never get to meet Hungarian students, other than parties anywhere else. Not in school, we ... everything is so totally separate that we don't meet. Students, Hungarian.

I: So if I lower the bar a little bit... and if I say how many people do you know who you talk to regularly?

A: I wouldn't consider it regularly, but there was a point of time, when I did talk to them sometimes. When it was, when we had the clinical practices in the clinic, and there we had... we met some Hungarian students, they were also in the same year, we did the same practice, and I know them by ... I know them, some of them. Maybe like ... by now I only have like one person, that I have her contact.

I: Yes, but you don't meet her regularly?

A: No, we don't meet regularly.

I: You don't socialize?

A: No.

I: Who do you socialize with?

A: My classmates. Usually. Mostly my classmates.

I: Right... right, right, right, right. And I'm sorry G., you are visiting here?

G: Yeah.

I: But you are also an international student, in Germany?

G: Not international, I live there.

I: So, you are a German national?

G: Yeah.

I: Ok, sorry. I misunderstood then. OK, yeah, yeah, yeah. Thank you. So, have you ever considered studying abroad, have you had any experience abroad?

G: ??

A: Abroad, like, have you travelled anywhere else to study?

G: For study? No.

I: OK, thank you very much. Sorry to make you sit down here then.

S: No, it is OK. It is very interesting.

I: OK, yeah, sure. And if you have any input, or if you have questions, it is fine to jump in.

Right, so, can you tell me about these friends you have, your classmates? How did you become friends, who are your best friends, what do you do together? Anything you are comfortable talking about.

A: My friends, well, I have a couple of friends, that we started together, medical school, and then we were just... well, we met in the class, and then we started socializing... for one or other reason. I unfortunately, I also had my very best friends, two of my best friends that they left back. They did not continue their journey with me. So, two of them left, and then the others that I have here, like, I have maybe two more good friends, and one of them is best friend, that I always hang out with.

I: So, these are all classmates?

A: Yeah, he is a classmate as well.

I: You have met in school, in class?

A: In class. Yeah.

I: Are you friends with anyone you have not met in class?

A: In Hungary? No.

I: And, like, you said that your very best friends in the first few years, they went back.

A: They left, yes.

I: Back where?

A: Back home.

I: Were they Swedish students as well?

A: No, no, no. One of my friends was Jordanian, she left due to some personal problems. In the second year. And one of my friends was a Norwegian friend, and she left because she got admitted to Oslo University, so she left here.

I: At least that was a happy reason for her.

A: Yeah, that was a happy ending.

I: Now, the friends you've made over the years, and you have now, what would you say... how international is this group, where are they from?

A: It is a pretty much international group. My best friend is R. from... he is Burmese, originally from Burma, but he lives in Norway, spent couple of years in India... So we do speak a language, we share... since I told you I speak 5 languages. So, one of the language I speak with him.

I: What languages do you speak?

A: Urdu. Yeah, of the language is Urdu. We speak Urdu together, and that is how we became also best friends. And then the other friends are like, I have is Norwegian, but originally from Nepal, sorry, Filipino. Philippine, yeah, and the ... maybe 2 or 3 from Jordan.

I: Do you have your own languages with them as well?

A: No. No, I don't have any Swedish friend.

I: So, apart from them, with the rest of your friends, you speak?

A: English.

I: English?

A: Yeah, only English. The only language that I here speak with friends is English.

I: Except for...

A: Except R., there we speak Urdu.

I: And do you think that is the reason why he is your best friend now?

A: Yeah, I think one of the reasons. Because he spent time in India, and I spent time in Pakistan, I was born in Pakistan, so these ... the school experience and the culture is pretty much similar.

I: Right, right, right. So, what kind of things do you do with your friends?

A: We met at their places. We always make food together, play cards, play games.

Sometimes, I don't play with them although, but yeah, I get to watch them. And we watch movies, all the time. ... Yeah.

I: Do you always stay indoors?

A: Actually, yes. We have had sometimes, when we always used to say, OK we should go biking, or hiking, or, I don't know, horse-riding. Go to Orfű. But it is usually always that plans never work.

I: Why not?

A: I think lack of time, I should say. Lack of time, and also that everyone has maybe other plans at the time we planned, so, it ruins the plan. Also, going... a lot of other outdoor things, for example, a couple of times we wanted to go horse-riding, but there is nowhere we can contact easily, or someone who speaks English, so it is hard, because nobody speaks English.

I: Have you tried?

A: Yeah, I've tried.

I: How did you? What was the process?

A: There is one place that I know, I had physical education, this horse-riding, last year. And even there, luckily with me was a Hungarian student, who spoke English and throughout the semester each class he helped me... explaining what the coach... or the horse-rider wanted to tell. Because the person did not speak a word of English, so ... yeah. And then getting to like, it is very hard to contact that person, because he does not speak a word of English, so it is very difficult.

I: So, does this often pose a challenge, that you don't know how to find the place where you can do something, or how to communicate with them at the place?

A: Yeah, communication is a problem in the first place. Also, time, right now I am looking for a person or a place where we do shooting, learn shooting. And this person I contacted, I found on the internet, his number, I called, and the only language he speaks is Hungarian and Russian. And, I mean, I don't know. Even my friend who speak German, and I thought maybe he can help us with German, and he says no, like, unfortunately he does not speak German or English. Now, I don't know what to do.

I: Right, so, how does it feel, when you have an idea like this, when wanna go shooting, or horse-riding and you can't find the right place, or you just can't communicate with the people when you do contact them, how do you feel then?

A: I think that, like, personally for me it is very frustrating, partly on myself, on being, you know, lazy to learn Hungarian. Because I did have the opportunity to do so, if I wanted to, and because I don't blame... the communication part is really hard, difficult here. And I don't blame people not being able to speak English, because it is not... if it is not official, then what we can do, it is not. Although I do find it a little disappointing why young people, young Hungarians, even the medical students don't speak English, because I think you should be able to as doctors in future, but yeah... I found it disappointing, because every time I want to something outdoor it is kind of hard to reach. So it makes me... it ruins my plan again, so let us stay inside again... Ok, let's do something else.

I: Right, let's play cards again.

A: Let's play boring cards. ... It is not boring, but that is what we have been doing.

I: Right, I understand. So how did you find out, that not many people here, not even the medical students speak English?

A: Yeah, again at the practice place, where I did my summer practice, and the ... there was a couple of students, and only one girl, who I later on became friends with, she spoke good English. And the reason why she spoke English was, that she was kind of like... she moved... I think she lived abroad for a while, and that her boyfriend was not a Hungarian. Yeah, she spoke English, and with her there was a couple of students, and only her, she could speak English in the whole group, and she had to translate to the others...

I: To the other Hungarians.

A: Yeah, she was like a translator for between us.

I: And so this was during the clinical practice?

A: Clinical practice, yes.

I: When you had to work together, and talk to patients and ...

A: Yeah, this is the experience, since you asked me about experience in Pécs, that I found difficult the clinical practices, and that is again because of the lack of the communication between the doctor and patient and student and patient.

I: So how exactly did this clinical practice go for you?

A: Bad.

I: can you tell me?

A: Yeah. I think generally, if I compare between Hungarian students and English and German students, English students, or international students lack a big chunk of this experience, practical things. We are very good with theory, but because that is what this school does to us,



making us ... you know, giving us good knowledge, but again with the practice... we don't really practice much, even when we are in the class. Maybe because there is too many of us, so we don't get to do the practices. But in summer practices, usually that is obligatory to do, but when we do, we just waste our time here. We just stay the entire day in the practice place, and then there is nothing to do, usually it is summer, there is not enough patients, not enough doctors, there is like maybe another doctor in the department, there is like one or two doctors, and... yeah. We don't really get helped, rarely I've heard a practice place where they were strict with the student doing something or staying on time. Other than that, it is usually just on paper. So, I think documenting that you have to fill up on Neptun, the time, your days. But other than that, it is just wasting your time, and we don't learn anything at all. And the time we stay is also, like maybe, if the practice says four weeks, we only get to stay maybe... maximum two weeks, and then we get our signature and leave.

I: And you wish you had more things to learn during the summer, because the two semesters and the exam periods are not enough...

A: No, not enough...

I: And is this experience different for the Hungarian students? You said something like this at the beginning, right? You think that international students are missing out.

A: Yeah, missing out, yes. This is different because of course Hungarians are ... there it is their own language, so when they go to the patient and they ask the, you know... the things they ask, talk to the patient, ... so the patient is... they can communicate, that is why they are good with the practical things, they are not afraid of, you know, talking to the patient, or doing something... so, first of all, we as ... we are afraid to be... you know... to do something because of the lack of the.. or to not be able to do it, because we are a new learner,

in first place. And in second place, because we don't speak the language, we don't even dare to ask... so it is like hard. Both communication and lack of experience makes it hard to dare.

I: I see. So this was last summer, you were at the summer practice?

A: Summer practice, my first year and second year, I had it in Hungary, and then I noticed it is not helping me at all, so my third and fourth year I tried to do it back home in Sweden.

Which was much better, totally different experience.

I: Why? How was it different?

A: Different in the sense that they were more strict, they took us seriously. When I said I am a fourth year student they were like, oh, OK, so we consider you as a near-future doctor, and the very fact that they were always... when we entered a room to a patient, and they would talk to a patient, and before we were going there should talk to the ... ask the patient their consent, and they would always say "I have a colleague of mine, she is here with us today helping you" and all these things. And that makes me comfortable, makes me feel like, you know, the four-five years of study here is for something now. So, yeah, in that sense, and then also the very fact that they actually let us do something with the patient, and not ask for the medical history. On the computer, their system they introduce us and ... ahmmm... yeah.

I: So, the first two summers here, did you speak to any patients?

A: Patients?

I: Yes, Hungarian patients.

A: At first practice, no. The second practice, maybe ... not really.

I: And since, have you talked to Hungarian patients since?

A: Yeah, we have done during the semester, when had classes in the clinical practice, third, fourth, fifth year. We do get to talk to patients, but one in a group, in a small group one person can like ask, and then those who can speak some Hungarian, or they try. We all try. We do it in a group, so it is not like one person doing it, so it is more comfortable than doing it alone.

I: And you said that you think that international students are a little bit afraid to talk to patients, are you afraid as well?

A: Yes, I am afraid, because I feel I am not very welcomed.

I: By the patient?

A: By the patients as well.

I: And? Who else?

A: Who? What did...?

I: Yes, because “the patient as well”, so that would mean that someone else was not welcoming as well. Did the teachers, the doctors...?

A: No, no. The patient itself.

I: Just the patient. It' OK. I mean, how do you know, how can you tell that the patient is not welcoming?

A: It is not always. Most of the time they are not like that, but again just the part, where I cannot, for example if I want to examine the patient, and I cannot instruct well, and that is also, like they don't... if I say, OK can you take off your shirt, because I cannot say it, so if I just show it, you know, then they ... they don't really, no leave it.. don't bother me.

I: Right, you feel like, they don't really make the effort, to try to understand what you want?

A: Yes, that is also... exactly. That is the thing. That sometimes when we say "kicsit beszélek magyarul" ... so, I think that they have to understand that I don't speak Hungarian so they should be willing to help us in one sense, with the language, but they just don't, and they just want you to say ... or they just want you to somehow understand them.

I: And, so, but you are in a situation where it is your responsibility to make it work, right? So, what is your strategy, how do you approach this problem?

A: I think ... tiny bits of Hungarian and the sign language, that is what I usually use. I always ... most of the time use Google Translate.

I: There, in the hospital?

A: With the patient, yes.

I: Phone in hand?

A: Yes. Which is again not... a very bad strategy, but I am forced to unfortunately.

I: Why do you think that is bad strategy?

A: Because it is not professional, kind of. Having your phone, your Google Translate with you, when you talk to your patient. It is very ...

I: So, Google Glass would be better.

A: Yeah, I wish I had one.

I: Or maybe a smartwatch. “I am just checking the time, for the fifteenth time in a minute...”

Right. Is it important for you to be professional, when you are standing next of the bed of the patient?

A: Yes. Me paying this amount of money, now paying a huge amount of money, living a very, kind of difficult life, being already very independent, to, you know, always cook for yourself, spending all this time, and obviously, studies here is very difficult. You know, to be able to pass all your exams and not fail anything, all this efforts I made all these years, I do want to look and sound professional. And to be taken seriously.

I: So, if you imagine yourself as like the accomplished doctor of the future... can you tell me about that person, can you tell me what you see for yourself in the future?

A: If I am accomplished?

I: Yes, like you really are a professional, it is not a future colleague anymore, you are a full doctor, how do you see yourself?

A: Well, I would be helping my patients from the depth of my heart, as if that... as I remember one of my teacher... I can never forget that it was the first day of the semester, he was my gastroenterologist teacher, and the entire class ... it was an introduction. It was the first day, so the entire class the one thing that he focused on, and he told me, and it grabbed my heart, it was, he said “if you get a patient, in future, when you get a patient, every single time consider him, or think that he is family. And if you know that now I have a family member, right now as patient, what can you do to help?” Obviously, we would do our best. So, I think that is what I am going to do to everyone in future, and ...

I: Ok, that is the main point.

A: That is the main point.

I: That is the main point for you.

A: To work honestly.

I: You also mentioned several time, at the beginning already, and since then, you mentioned independence, being on your own here. Were you always someone who tried to be independent, make things work on your own?

A: Not until I started to live alone here. Because when you live with your family it is totally different. You don't have to... you don't have to fix things if they are broken, maybe someone at home will do it. You don't have to really cook, because someone is there to feed you. So, it is always like that when people live together they share things, when you live alone you have to able to...

I: Were you expecting this to be the case here? So, when you arrived here, were you already expecting to... that you have to make it on your own?

A: Yeah, well, yes. But of course, things are more than that. Like, for the first time ever in my life to rent a place to live, to have a landlord, and to again... the parts, the difficulties with communication... to reach your landlord. And obviously, at home, going there alone first time. Yeah, I never lived alone before, so it was very different experience.

I: Different? Was it difficult as well?

A: At the beginning it was hard, it was kind of hard to adapt. But I should say this is one thing that Hungary taught me in this living-alone-experience, kind of. That now I am always, so I've been alone all these years, and now when I go back home, every time, I find my...

members of my family like... I feel like I am in a party every single time. Or I am in a kindergarten, because I have lots of nephews and nieces. So, every time they... like that is the part now I cannot cope with. And I... maybe soon I will move out after graduation from here, because I... it is kind of hard for me to live with lot of people now all of a sudden. Living alone for years, and now I go back, and every time like ... I don't... the fact that here I feel so independent, here... going back there that would change... this fact, I don't like it.

I: I see. Unfortunately, I don't want you to get in trouble, maybe we have a few minutes more, not too much.

A: It is OK.

I: Did you change in any other way? So that's one. This experience changed you, made you more independent. Did it change you in any other way, what do you think?

A: Yes, a lot of changes. I think that meeting people from different countries, getting to know them personally, and their cultures and ... culturalize, religious, ... what else, language and all these things, of course. So, getting to know different people. ... The experience of exams, staying one and a half months at home, constantly studying for the exams. It is a... exam period is always usually a depressing period. A happy period at the end when I finish my all, all my exams, and get ... you know, finish one semester. But at the same time, it is depressing period always, always because of the maybe sad times. Failing exams. Or usually staying indoor for months. For like one and a half month, that is a lot.

I: So, this regular experience of like, having these... you it is coming, right? This one and a half month of being stressed and maybe even sad, and whatever. How did change you? That you know you will do it again. You already did it like, what? 9 times?

A: Yeah.

I: And you survived, right? So, did it change you in any way? Do you think it made you different?

A: Well it is a ... at the beginning it was a new experience, later on, now I am kind of used to it. Not very much used to it still, but... yeah, I think that I am kind of happy in one sense that it is gonna be over soon, the exam period thingy.

I: Thingy.

A: Because 6th year there's gonna be no exam period.

I: Right, yeah. OK. Well...

A: And changing as a person. Last thing.

I: Yes?

A: I think usually we students suffer from depression for a while, I think it is not just me. But yeah, most of the time students suffer from depression.

I: That is... that is not a nice note to finish on. Do you think that your, like, outlook on life... did it change? Do you think you are less happy, more happy? Optimistic, pessimistic?

A: I am a positive person, because yes of course, again exams changed me a lot. Because I think reaching at the end of this peak of all these now, I feel like I learned one thing and that is: there is nothing impossible on Earth, and if I can do medical school in Hungary I can do anything else. That is what I learned.



I: That sounds like a nicer note to finish on. But honestly, we have not covered everything. There is still a lot I would like to talk about. Can I ask you if you would be OK to maybe sit down again in the future?

A: Sure.

I: Thank you.