



Title of Project:

Assessing Interactional Affordances and Gains in the Study Abroad Homestay and the Language Classroom: A Conversation-Analytic Approach

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Project Summary:

The proposed dissertation research aims to better specify how two common language learning contexts—the study abroad homestay and the second language classroom—uniquely contribute to the development of the ability to interact competently in a second language. In a shift away from a focus on abstract, decontextualized skills such as grammatical accuracy or fluency, this study attempts to foreground the influence of the social context on oral language development by adopting an analytic framework—conversation analysis—that focuses on the verbal and nonverbal techniques—or interactional practices—that enable speakers to meaningfully coparticipate in social interaction. Drawing on collections of video and audio recordings of second language interactions in the homestay and classroom throughout a semester-length study abroad program, this study will generate rich, grounded data for a refined construct of interactional competence that better reflects the dynamic, interactionally-oriented nature of second language learning during the study abroad homestay. The proposed analyses will identify similarities and differences across the types of interactions that occur in each context (i.e., affordances) and apply a novel conversation-analytic approach for assessing the development of interactional competence in each context over time (i.e., gains). Understanding precisely what interactional opportunities are made available to students through conversation with their host families and instructors—and how students make real-time use of such opportunities to learn—will become increasingly important as the international education community strives to provide high quality intercultural learning experiences for an ever-increasing number of students around the globe.