Assessing Development of Meta-Pragmatic Awareness in Study Abroad

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Focus

A hallmark of advanced language competence is the ability to understand the meaning of linguistic variation in a range of different socio-pragmatic contexts. In a summary of the state-of-the-art in research on language learning during study abroad, Freed (1995) highlighted the significance of these learners' "highly-developed meta-cognitive awareness of sociolinguistic differences and potentially conflicting pragmatic demands"(p. 27). Thus it would appear that the study abroad context may complement classroom foreign language learning as students are socialized into language use, linking linguistic and pragmatic features of the languages they are learning. The range of social meanings of particular features of the language are potentially clarified and linked to sociocognitive scripts as the learners participate in a range of speech events and develop communicative repertoires.

Many researchers have examined study abroad participants' performance in relation to variable features of second languages, studying the use of speech acts (Barron, 2002; Hoffman-Hicks, 2001; Lafford, 1995; Matsumura, 2001), the manipulation of stylistic variants (Dewaele & Regan, 2002; Regan, 1995), or the appearance of colloquial lexis in learners' speech (Dewaele & Regan, 2001). The general findings of this research suggest that while the study abroad context offers potential for the development of pragmatic competence, second language learners do not perform according to native speaker norms. Many learners tend to avoid using forms perceived as non-standard or informal, even when these forms are known to the learners. The status of "learner" or of "non-native" language user tends to convey with it an attitude of caution when it comes to employing the full range of available second language resources. Other learners do employ a variety of forms but match them to contexts in

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ways that are interpreted as marked or even inappropriate by more expert language users. In either case, performance data alone are not sufficient to assess learners' knowledge in this domain, nor do they offer insights into the developmental processes leading to awareness of variable sociolinguistic features of second language learners.

The research reported herein is part of a larger project, sponsored by the Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research (CALPER), a National Foreign Language Resource Center at the Pennsylvania State University.[1] This project aims to examine the achievement of foreign language learners in relation to the access to social and interactional affordances these learners negotiated in the host community during a study abroad sojourn in France in Spring, 2003.

The present paper explores a methodology for assessing learners' meta-pragmatic awareness of variation in French language use. "Meta-pragmatic awareness" is defined as knowledge of the social meaning of variable second language forms and awareness of the ways in which these forms mark different aspects of social contexts, and is therefore "a crucial force behind the meaning-generating capacity of language in use" (Verschueren, 2000: 439). For this paper, we take as a test case for the study of this phenomenon the learners' awareness and use of address forms, or the "T/V system" in French (Brown & Gilman, 1960). The "T/V system" (*tu* versus *vous* in French) is a key component of sociolinguistic competence in European languages, presenting a complex, dynamic, and inherently ambiguous matter of social indexicality, a case where knowledge of language form necessarily intersects with broader awareness of sociocultural norms and personal identities (Morford, 1997; Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990). The differential use of these pronouns offers a significant communicative resource conveying a range of meanings about the relationship between interlocutors, the context of the interaction, and the standing of the interactants in the wider social order.

It is assumed that study abroad participants will have access to social contexts and networks that will lead to changes in both their awareness and their use of the T/V system in French, but that this access and accompanying socialization processes will be differentiated, leading to variable outcomes (Norton, 2000). Some of the learners who participated in the study developed friendships and other social ties across many different contexts, whereas others limited their use of French to the classroom and to service encounters.

To contextualize the study, we first offer a summary of contemporary sociolinguistic description of address forms in French, followed by a review of studies examining the role of socialization in the development of address form competence. We then present a description of the research methodology employed in this study with a summary of the results and a discussion of their implications.

The Sociopragmatics of Address Forms in French

In a 1976 article reviewing the problems inherent in learning to distinguish between *tu* and *vous*, Calvet's reference to Livy's *History of Rome* underscores the social perils of incorrect address form use. Like the column of steadfast but famously ill-fated soldiers marching straight into ambush, learners have no choice but to pass through the Caudine Forks on their way to communicative competence. In another, much more recent article on the same topic, Dewaele (2004) describes the user of French as an acrobat crossing a "sociolinguistic tightrope" stretched between the poles of *tu* and *vous*. While Dewaele's portrayal certainly upgrades users' presumed skill just as it unseals their fate, the fact remains that address form choice by users of European languages is a tricky and confusing but quite consequential matter, and the professional literature offers the metaphors to prove it. Indeed, the complexities of address form use are such that they have inspired author Raymond Jean to compose an entire collection of short stories devoted to the variety and subtle semantic underpinnings of *tu* over *vous* as a linguistic choice (*Tutoiements*, 2000).

For Muhlhauser and Harré (1990), an initial barrier to adequate understanding of pronouns is their traditional description within linguistics, where the scope is limited to issues of morphology and syntax. To explain the workings of personal pronouns, it is necessary to examine not only their structure and grammatical function, but also their use in society. "Grammatical rules for person indicating include reference to specific social relations knowledge of which is required for the words to be used correctly" (Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990. p. 5). Thus, the study of personal address is "a sociolinguistic subject par excellence" (Philipsen & Huspek, 1985, p. 94), and the enduring complexity of the phenomenon has inspired many investigations.

A first approach to the use of address forms in French is to be found in Ager's (1990) primer on the sociolinguistics of the contemporary language. Here, Ager asserts that the *tu/vous* distinction between second person pronouns functions as a marker of social distance, with *vous* operating as the normal, unmarked and polite form, and also as the plural. According to Ager, the use of reciprocal *tu* is characteristic of address within the same extended family, with the use of *vous* to individuals marking the boundary of the family. The *tu/vous* distinction however extends outside the family, with reciprocal *tu* given within intimate relationships in professional settings, or in close-knit organizations such as military or student groups. The use of non-reciprocal *tu*, as in the case of adults talking to children, or police talking to suspects, can index social superiority. Reciprocal *vous* thereby remains the unmarked pronoun, while non-reciprocal *vous* indicates social distance or respect. This apparently simple opposition is, however, "open to subtle play and variation" (p. 209), a fact that Ager illustrates with examples from the magazine *L'Express* (20.10.79, 85-6):

— In a Paris-based advertising agency everybody uses *tu* except to the owner and the cleaning woman.

— There is nothing friendly or intimate in the *tu* used by a policeman who is checking the papers of a young person or an immigrant worker.

— Upper class leaders of society still use *vous* widely to intimates: Raymond Barre in talking to his wife, Giscard d'Estaing to everybody in his household, including his wife, children, and dogs. (Ager, 1990, p. 210)

As documented by Brown and Gilman (1960), European use of pronouns of address has evolved away from non-reciprocal toward more reciprocal uses. In France, the wider use of reciprocal *tu* is generally perceived to be traceable to the *événements* surrounding the student and worker uprising of 1968. In their textbook on French culture, Wylie and Brière echo the widely-held perception among the French that the use of *tu* has become more frequent and generalized than has been the case prior to the social upheavals of the 1960s. These developments suggest that, in contrast to Ager's assertion, there may be cases where individuals are operating under the assumption that *tu*, rather than *vous*, is the unmarked form of address, with *vous* perceived as marking or adding salience to social distance.

Research on the uses of *tu* and *vous* reveals that despite these changes, the system retains much of its social and situational complexity. To explore this complexity, Morford (1997) proposes an account of pronoun use based on the concept of "orders of indexicality" borrowed from Silverstein (1992, 1996). The complexity of the pronoun system stems from the fact that it involves two distinct but related orders of indexicality. As first order indexicals, pronouns "index," or point to, the immediate context: the relative formality of settings or events, and the nature of social relationships, including degrees of solidarity, deference, intimacy or hierarchy. As second order indexicals, they reference certain aspects of a speaker's identity in the wider social order, such as social class or political orientation. To understand the two orders of indexicality and how they shape meaning in interaction requires a combination of observation of the linguistic forms used by particular speakers in particular contexts, and accounts of linguistic ideology, or the beliefs speakers express about language use. The meaning of T/V use is dependent upon its emergent interpretation across interactional events, according to conventional metapragmatic frameworks:

As first order indexicals deployed with the intention of marking or modifying the circumstances of the relationship between speaker and addressee, *tu* and *vous* derive their meaning from the patterns of exchange that occur over several turns. Speakers' intentions notwithstanding, no one instance of pronominal address

usage is unambiguously meaningful in and of itself. Likewise, as second order indexicals, *tu* and *vous* can be effective means of achieving certain ends only to the extent that their characteristic degree of use is interpreted through particular *metapragmatic frameworks*, or beliefs about who typically uses the tu / vous system in what characteristic ways. (Morford, 1997: 26-27, italics added)

Morford's (1997) field work on the uses of the pronouns of address among middle-class Parisians was in part directed toward clarifying the situation surrounding the widely hailed "triumph of *tu*" through study of actual usage and associated language ideology. In summarizing this study, Morford emphasizes that the ambivalence toward certain uses expressed by many speakers is due to their awareness of first and second order indexicality. Despite popular claims to the effect that the use of reciprocal *tu* has triumphed in many professional settings, speakers remain keenly aware of the strategic use of first-order pragmatic effects, such as maintaining distance or fostering intimacy. They are attached to the *tu/vous* distinction and suspicious of "inauthentic and otherwise interested uses that others make of it" (p. 31), as for example, when reciprocal *tu* in the workplace masks real hierarchical differences or coercive acts. Speakers also remain aware of the second order pragmatic effects of their use of the T/V system. Their occasionally contradictory expressed desires are related to the broader metapragmatic frameworks conventionally guiding the interpretation of these forms. The use of reciprocal *vous*, for example, can map onto images of political conservatism, professional competence and high social status, while the use of reciprocal *tu* can index liberalism, egalitarianism, lower class origins or a desire to appear young (or at least, "young at heart").

A study by Gardner-Chloros (1991) attempted to uncover sociolinguistic correlates to the rules of pronoun use in the Alsace region, with a particular focus on age, through interviews and questionnaires. In summarizing her findings, Gardner-Chloros lists cases where several factors converge to determine a particular pronoun choice. In general, *tu* is always used with close family members—though the case of grandparents and in-laws can introduce variation—and with intimate friends, whatever their age. It is also used in less intimate relationships whenever the interlocutors are 30 years of age or less, a fact that Gardner-Chloros attributes to a psychological generation gap that automatically constructs youth solidarity. Among older speakers, the use of *vous* becomes inevitable when speaking with a stranger, who is not a child, and whom one is meeting for the first time. *Vous* is also characteristic of address to persons at least 10 years older than oneself, and to persons 30 years of age or older who are not intimate friends, particularly when these persons are colleagues at a different hierarchical rank than one's own. She notes, however, that in her data these

cases are "very extreme" (p. 152). The number of additional relevant factors is "enormous" (p. 152), and includes such aspects as the context (mutual *tu* is used at rock concerts, while *vous* is used while listening to classical music), hierarchical relations at work, and the appearance of the interlocutor.

Thus, French mirrors the other European languages in that the use of reciprocal address, especially in the use of *tu*, has increased noticeably in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly among the young and in clear cases of group solidarity, such as among students (Gardner-Cloros, 1991; Wylie and Brière, 1995). Yet speakers of French remain attached to and highly aware of the gradient levels of appropriateness and the subtle messages about social context and their participants that are indexed by these pronouns.

Developing Awareness of Address Forms in Second Languages

The above review makes clear that address form use presents a considerable challenge both to expert and to novice speakers of European languages. Because the meaning of second person pronouns may only be interpreted in social context and is doubly indexical, hence inherently ambiguous, it is obvious that address form competence (Braun, 1988) cannot be acquired as a set of straightforward rules. In a series of earlier publications documenting the microgenetic development of address form use in the telecollaborative classroom, Kinginger and Belz (Kinginger, 2000; Belz & Kinginger, 2002; Belz & Kinginger, 2003) have advanced the argument that address form competence is as much a matter of language *socialization* as it is of *acquisition* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). The classroom learners who participated in these studies developed greater awareness of the significance of address forms in general, along with ability to choose appropriate address forms, following engagement in networked collaboration with peers in France and Germany. In these settings, the learners' interactional face was more at risk than it would be in a standard classroom arrangement. Furthermore, the learners' performance in using address forms was directly assisted via observation and critique on the part of keypals in Europe. In a manner mirroring the socialization of politeness in L1 (e.g., Snow, Perlmann, Gleason & Hooshyar, 1990; Ochs, 2000), the socio-pragmatic requirements of language use in this setting were highlighted with a view to enhancing the qualities of the interaction, and this process led to development toward the expert users' norm.

Studies of address form learning in the classroom point to the close connections between contexts of development and contexts of use (Lyster, 1994; Lyster & Rebuffot, 2003). Lyster and Rebuffot (2003) for example, demonstrate that the sociolinguistic parameters of communication in immersion classrooms do not include settings where the formality, deference, or mutual respect of the singular second-person *vous* are

expressed. As a result, these learners use only one pronoun (*tu*) to encode the functions of both *tu* and *vous*.

In a large-scale, corpus-based study of learners' real and self-reported uses of *tu* and *vous*, Dewaele (2004) concludes with support for a hypothesis advanced in an earlier paper (Dewaele, 2002): pronoun use is determined by grammatical competence in the first instance, and in the second instance by the amount of sociolinguistic knowledge developed through extensive interaction with native speakers. For Dewaele, this knowledge is first explicit in nature and based in declarative memory, but may later be linked to conceptual representations stored in implicit memory. Dewaele adds that learners may need to be prodded toward the use of *tu* but that successful use of this form in interactions may bolster confidence in the learners' own legitimacy as an L2 speaker. He further argues that developmental pathways toward address form competence in L2 are idiosyncratic due to their basis in personal histories of participation in sociocultural settings (for a similar argument, see Belz & Kinginger, 2003).

Based on the findings of these studies, we argue that development of socio-pragmatic awareness and appropriately self-expressive language use in general may be in large part dependent on the qualities of the learners' access to and engagement in sociocultural settings. The study abroad context may therefore offer a relatively rich environment for disambiguation of the T/V system and socialization into its use in particular communicative settings. In particular, the study abroad setting may offer opportunities for learners to participate in authentic social interaction with people of varying ages, including peers, and within a range of interactive settings at variable levels of formality.

We further argue, based on the second order of indexicality described in Morford's study, that if pronoun use is a matter of ideological stance and personal expressive choice, then the meaning of these pronouns, for learners or for expert language users, cannot be fully understood based on performance data. We propose therefore to investigate the personal interpretations that learners bring to these forms, and how such interpretations change over time and with engagement in differentiated social experiences during study abroad. We also suggest that any analysis of learners' self-reported use and understanding of address forms must retain the notion that within this sociolinguistic system learners, like expert language users, make choices related to their own preferences for performance of identity.

R e s e a r c h   D e s i g n

For the present study, data for eight case studies have been selected from the database of a larger-scale investigation of "The Social Context of Language Development in Study Abroad." This database includes both quantitative and qualitative data

Table 1: Participant profiles

Participant	Age/Gender	French prior to college (years)	French in college (semesters)	Living arrangement
Jada	21/F	5	5	dormitory
Beatrice	20/F	6	5	homestay
Benjamin	20/M	5	4	homestay
Bill	22/M	10	2	homestay
Delaney	19/F	3	3	apartment
Valerie	20/F	11	1	dormitory
Deirdre	20/F	5	4	apartment shared with other Americans
Brianna	20/F	5	5	apartment shared with other Americans

collected in the academic year 2002-2003 from a cohort of 23 undergraduate students from the same university studying in France during the Spring semester. The data include, but are not limited to,: 1) pre- and post-scores on a standardized test of grammatical competence, listening, and reading; 2) pre- and post-performance data on the Language Awareness Interview, an instrument designed for the study; 3) biweekly narrative journals and logbooks detailing language use for 18 of the 23 participants; and 4) interviews and observer field notes.

Participants

Participants in this study were enrolled in a variety of study abroad programs in three different urban areas of France during the spring semester of 2003. Although all the students met the pre-departure requirements for their programs in terms of prior language study, each presented a unique profile of formal and informal preparation, motivation and achievement. For this paper we will examine results for eight of the study participants representing a range of different experiences during the study abroad sojourn. Basic demographic data for the eight participants are displayed in Table 1. Pre-test, post-test, and change scores on the *Test de Français International* are displayed in Table 2.

Assessment and Analysis Procedures

Assessment for this study began with pre-testing in the fall semester of 2002 and was completed in the early fall of 2003. In the present paper, we will examine

Table 2: Participants's Test de Français International scores

Participant	TFI Reading		TFI Listening		TFI Total		Total score Increase
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
Jada	285	305	290	325	575	630	55
Beatrice	385	360	330	390	715	750	35
Benjamin	345	370	385	430	730	800	70
Bill	165	270	150	235	315	505	190
Delaney	270	260	275	325	545	585	40
Valerie	240	235	130	225	370	460	90
Deirdre	290	270	255	315	545	585	40
Brianna	265	210	150	265	415	475	60

learners' meta-pragmatic awareness of the T/V system as assessed through the Language Awareness Interview. As part of this formal discussion, based on the sociolinguistic interview (Labov, 1989), learners are asked to respond to a range of interpersonal situations, selecting an appropriate address form for different interlocutors and reflecting aloud on the justification for this choice. Specifically, participants were presented with a series of six social situations illustrating different parameters influencing choice of address form, as revealed in the sociolinguistics literature (e.g., setting, age, and familiarity of interlocutor). The participants were asked to choose an address form for each of these situations and to explain the rationale underlying this choice. The first phase of our analysis consisted of tabulating the choices of each participant for each situation along with an abstract of the rationale described for each choice. We then examined changes over time in both pronoun choice and rationale.

R e s u l t s

The section of the Language Awareness Interview devoted to the T/V system consisted of six hypothetical encounters illustrating a range of sociolinguistic parameters influencing address form choice, emphasizing in particular the role of relative age. (See Appendix A for a description of the situations). Situations #1 and #6 involved age-peers in informal settings: in #1 the peer in question was not yet an acquaintance, whereas in #6 the participant was to assume a basis of familiarity for the interaction. These situations were designed to assess whether the participants would

Table 3: Responses to the Language Awareness Interview on T/V use

Participant	Situation 1 classmate		Situation 2 babysitting, mother		Situation 3 babysitting, child		Situation 4 bakery, mother		Situation 5 bakery, daughter		Situation 6 party, peer	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Jada	T	var	V	V	T	T	V	V	T	var	T	T
Beatrice	V	V	V	V	V	T	V	V	var	var	T	var
Benjamin	V	T	V	V	T	T	V	V	V	V	T	T
Bill	V	T*	V	V	T	T*	V	V	V	V	T	T
Delaney	V	var.	V	V	T	T	V	V	T	var.	T	T
Valerie	T	T	V	V	T	T	V	V	T	var.	V	T
Deidre	T	T	V	V	T	T	V	V	T	V	T	T
Brianna	V	T	V	V	V	T	V	V	V	T	V	T

*Key: T = tu; V= vous; var. = variable; * = emphatic response, no hesitation*

change their assumptions about the role of *tu* as a marker of youth solidarity and/or familiarity. Situations #2 and #3 described the formal setting of a job interview with an older adult and a child. Situations #4 and #5 were set in a service encounter with an older interlocutor and an age-peer interlocutor.

As outlined in Table 3, the results of this inquiry suggest that the "babysitting" situations were the least ambiguous for these participants both in the pre-test and in the post-test. With two exceptions (where Beatrice and Brianna, in the pre-test, propose to call the 6-year-old *vous* because they don't know him) all the participants seem to have begun and ended the study with clear and consistent ideas about the appropriateness of *vous* for a formal setting involving an adult, and *tu* for addressing a child. By the end of the semester, even Beatrice and Brianna have altered their assessment toward the group norm, citing age as a factor in her choice of *tu* for speaking to "a little boy."

In the service encounter scenario, participants also present relatively unified opinions on the desirability of addressing an older interlocutor as *vous* citing such factors as respect, politeness, age and, in the case of Benjamin, the business context. The portion of this situation describing an age-peer in a service encounter was included deliberately to introduce ambiguity, and this ambiguity is reflected in the participants' responses. In the pre-test, opinions are divided as to the appropriate choice of address form: three of the participants elect to use *tu* based on age or "friendliness," whereas two declare their certain intention to use *vous* because of the business setting or lack of familiarity. By the end of their sojourn in France, some participants' views on address form use in service encounters have either changed or

become considerably more complex. In particular, the participants who had earlier elected the familiar form now propose an initial choice of *vous*. An increase in the level of nuance in the participants' characterization of the "bakery daughter" situation suggests that participation in actual service encounters has increased their awareness of address form use.

The two age-peer/ informal setting situations were included in order to examine whether or not the participants' interactions with their contemporaries would orient them toward the age-based metapragmatic frameworks documented in the sociolinguistics literature. For some of the participants, the sojourn in France would present first opportunities to interact with peers who are expert users of French. In designing the situations, we anticipated that actual or "legitimate peripheral" participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in peer-group talk would offer opportunities to observe the sociolinguistic system in which *tu* is the unmarked form. Some of the participants do demonstrate awareness of this sociolinguistic system in the pre-test, but overall the responses for this part of the interview are highly variable, suggesting that this domain was in fact a primary locus of development in language awareness.

We now point out the particular features of interest in the data from four participants for whom there was evidence of development in awareness of the T/V system in French, in all cases related primarily to situations involving age-peers. While space limitations preclude an extensive treatment of each experience, as documented in the qualitative data collected for the project, we will add relevant details to complement the treatment of each case.

B r i a n n a

Brianna spent her semester abroad in Montpellier, sharing an apartment with other American women in the program and enrolling in both courses for American students and 'integrated' courses. In her journal, she chronicles her daily actions and reactions to her experiences of everyday life in Montpellier, portraying her experience as a series of discrete events including numerous social outings with other American students, shopping, dining, movies, trips to the gym, and frequent travel to other European cities, again in the company of other Americans. It would appear that Brianna framed her study abroad experience as a modern day equivalent of the "Grand Tour" in which her primary duty was to take advantage of general access to European culture: artifacts, built environments, and products. Negotiating access to language learning, and indeed language learning in general, took a backseat to this goal. Brianna participated in a large network of other students, some of whom were friendly with French students, and this may have afforded opportunities for indirect access, through observation and "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to interac-

tions with French peers. However, there is no mention in the journal of any direct involvement in social interaction with speakers of French outside of service encounters and classes. Problems of language learning are referenced rarely and succinctly, as in the excerpt below from Brianna's journal entry of 12 March, 2003 (Appendix B provides an explanation of transcription conventions used here):

> I am getting a little discouraged that my French isn't improving as quickly as I had hoped. When I walk through crowds, it just sounds like gibberish. I guess it will just take time.

Briana's attitude toward interaction with the French may also have been influenced by the broader socio-political realities of the time, particularly French opposition to the war in Iraq and the steps taken by the program to shelter American students by increasing their time together in program-sponsored activities and excursions. In her journal, the sequence of daily event reports is interrupted once for comment on this issue, in the following passage:

> I haven't written much about it, but its difficult living here during the war. I got an email saying to be careful but no plans to send any programs home yet. Scary. There are lots of protests and French people are brainwashed into being anti-war. It's none of their business. The newspapers sympathize with Irak. They portray Americans as hicks or freaks. Today I got a flyer for a theme party called HitUS with a picture meant to look like twin towers. It's just unreal. Hopefully in time the conditions and the attitudes around here will improve. (Brianna's journal, March 26, 2003)

However, despite these conditions, Brianna's results present one of the clearest cases of change and complexification in perception of metapragmatic frameworks related to the T/V system. Briana's performance on the *Test de Francais International* (TFI) shows a modest gain of 60 points, mostly due to a dramatic increase in the listening score counterbalanced by a significant loss in the reading score, for a total of 475 (Intermediate). In the pre-test phase of the Language Awareness Interview, Brianna appeared to have very little confidence in the appropriateness of using *tu*. In fact, she opted for the use of *vous* in each situation, citing her experiences of classroom learning:

> probably just throughout the years its just always been kinds like teachers were always addressed as vous and they'd be kind of like trying to make it a point to make sure that you don't do something highly offensive and call someone tu that you shouldn't so I feel like I should be safer? and use vous (Brianna, Pre-Test)

At the time of the post-test, however, Brianna, has changed her mind, and cites the qualities of her experiences to support her understanding of *tu* as an "age thing:"

> I don't know if it's like different if you are older or if kids just don't care but they say that if I'm the same age as someone I might as well just use "tu"…I feel like since being here I've learnt that it's more of an age thing than a familiarity thing like they concentrate on in the US. (Brianna, Post-Test)

Thus we find, in Brianna's case, a modest gain on a test of general proficiency coupled with a noticeable change in her awareness of the social meaning of address forms. These findings are consonant with the general description she makes of her experience and with her role as a peripheral participant in social interactions with speakers of French.

B i l l

In terms of emphasis on language learning, Bill's case contrasts significantly with Brianna's. Of the language learners participating in our study, Bill was one of the most successful in making achievements on all measures. Although he did not comply with the requirements of the study in keeping a timely journal (no doubt because he was too busy cultivating opportunities to use French), he was interviewed at length three times during the semester, prior to departure, at mid-term, and at the end of the program. The interview data focus extensively on Bill's determination to learn the language. At the time of the pre-departure interview, he demonstrated awareness of the difficulties he would face in this task, extrapolating from the case of a non-English speaking fraternity brother whom he had tutored. Moreover, he displayed what can only be characterized as unbridled enthusiasm for the challenge before him and a highly positive evaluation of French values related to "community" and "friendship":

> I don't know <u>why</u> I have these impressions but like I just have em um I mean at the same time it'll allow me to connect—be able to connect better with people too because I – I guess another impression of of the French is that they have jus a better sense of community? and relationships? [inaudible] and I feel like we just live on this sh—shallow level a majority of our lives and um I mean just even putting family and people ahead of most things or at least <u>higher</u> up than—than an American would-the average American would um an so that's another—I guess I didn't mention that before [inaudible] that-tha-that's another that I'm <u>really</u> excited for is like wow people actually <u>do</u> begin to matter <u>more</u> or at least like where it's not like you have—you don't <u>dig</u> to find like °I'm not

making any sense° um yeah ya go to France ya gotta—I feel like I could find a better °community° like=

K: =ok=

B: =where people actually care about each other um and it's always [inaudible] like that's another thing I have like in as far as another image is like ya know whether it's a small town or not like—like I could just like these these <u>tremendous</u> French friends hanging out like for life (Interview November 2002)

In the mid-term interview, Bill spoke at length of the social networks he was beginning to join through his host family, his classmates, and campus associations, such as "Melting Potes" ("pote" being a term for "friend" in an informal register). He commented on his decision to distance himself from the American group and avoid the use of English. In the final interview, Bill expresses *gratitude* for the opportunity to be in France during the war so that he could experience a view of a major socio-political event that was diametrically opposed to the views he might have encountered at home. He also provides specific details about the interactive practices of individuals and small groups who set out to help him develop self-expression in French through patient listening and assisted performance:

I had a group that was the class was in French so the work was in French. and like the first obviously the first full month—first month four weeks I I mean I had no clue, I mean I couldn't <u>hear</u> words and in French and sentences at all. um … and like they would they would sit there I mean I'm sure meetings took longer because they'd sit there and they'd encourage me to well what do you think Bill? and so I was always like uh with each word then I'd look in my dictionary, and then they'd have to <u>explain</u> it to me in French a thousand times, well this is why you're wrong this is well this is a really good point what do you mean. they they they took the time to allow me to try to be French, or to be a part of their group um … and I mean I see that on numerous occasions. and I think that's incredible. (Interview, May 2003)

Although he scored in the lower range of "Elementary" on the pre-test TFI, Bill participated in university courses given in French, developed an extensive social network, integrated well with his host family, and successfully avoided English-speaking contexts. His impressive gain score on the TFI (190 points) is complemented by changes in his understanding of the social meaning address forms. Whereas in the pre-test he cites the same classroom-based dictum as does Brianna ("when in doubt use *vous*"), in the post-test it is clear that he has developed an appreciation for the age-based system in which *tu* is the unmarked form:

oh yeah like anyone <u>my</u> age remotely between this—between any—any if you're like under twenty seven or twenty six it's tu. in my mind. in my mind. I dunno. I think I'm a little too happy. I don't vous as much as I probably should. I don't guard the vous. (Bill, Post-Test)

In Bill's comments, however, we also find evidence that he appreciates the second order indexicality of address forms, particularly when he suggests that overuse of *tu* may be a marker of his personality, signaling as it does that he is "a little too happy."

Jada

Jada enjoyed a positive experience in her study abroad program in Montpellier, where she, like Brianna, enrolled in both integrated courses and language courses. She developed a network of friends in the dormitory where she lived, recounting in her journals a differentiated experience of language use. At the mid-point of her sojourn, Jada expressed the view that the program in Montpellier included too many Americans such that it was difficult to distance oneself from the crowd:

it's <u>too</u> easy to hang out with <u>all</u> Americans <u>all</u> the time, especially since they're so nice, and you don't want to be the dorky kids that like speak French to each other, ya know? (Interview, March 2003)

Jada then portrays her strategies for developing social connections with French students in the dormitory, flaunting the local conventions by keeping her door open and inviting impromptu visits. By the end of the semester, Jada had several French-speaking friends and had begun to frame herself as competent and self-regulated in French, in narratives such as the excerpt below:

when I was at the Internet café the other day some guy heard Liz and I um she was speaking to me in English and I was just typing along and the guy started to talking to U.S. and was like oh you speak English I would like to speak English with you. and we were like—I was like I'm sorry we're actually in the middle of making our plans to go somewhere so maybe afterwards and I was just trying to be very like polite and then like he came up behind U.S. and like he put his arms—like his hands on our back and I <u>don't</u> like being touched by anyone I don't know. like I'm a very affectionate person like I'll hug my friends I don't care. but when I <u>don't</u> know you do not touch me. and I was like ok you're disgusting and he was like well if you need help with your French and I was like no I speak French <u>very</u> well thank you. and like I told him in French like I speak ver—and like I don't think I speak ver—speak <u>very</u> well but like I just felt the need to tell him that I didn't I was like no je parle français très très bien merci. (Interview, May 2003)

Jada began the study with a score in the upper intermediate range on the TFI and a fairly developed understanding of how address form choice might map onto different situations. Jada's perfomance on the interview is less interesting for the actual choices she makes than for the rationale she provides. In the pre-test phase, when asked to explain her choice of *tu* with an age-peer, Jada attributes this choice to her American nationality, outgoing personality, and expectations of mutual friendliness, citing the American metaphor of the "level playing field" rather than referring to anything whatsoever that could be construed as French or of Francophone origin:

> Jada: I- I think—I don't know if that has to do with my Americanness that I'm like outwardly—I-I'm very open with people so that whole idea of self disclosure so that they'll be friendly with me too so I'd think that if they're about my age that I wouldn't need to give them much respect even though I don't know them because they—we're on the same level=
>
> KF: =ok=
>
> Jada: =same playing field kind of=
>
> <div align="right">(Jada, Pre-Test)</div>

Though her gain score on the TFI was modest (only 55 points) she changed the way she assessed T/V choice situations on the post-test. In the first age-peer situation, rather than referring to a second-order indexicality based in American ideology, Jada emphasized the *strategies* involved in making an acceptable social choice and the possibility of negotiating a mutually acceptable address form choice.

> yeah if they were greeting me I'd probably be like or I'd follow their role I'd—I'd—that's probably *my thing is that I would hear what they would say. and then after if they said tu then I'd say tu* and then if they said vous I'd be like tutoier ya know and kind of let them know that I don't care. (Jada, Post-Test, emphasis added)

Thus, Jada's case illustrates the importance of looking beyond the mere choice of address form and into the changes in rationale that the participants cite in making their choice.

Benjamin

Benjamin participated in a business-related program of study abroad in Paris, where he lived in the well-heeled western suburb of Boulogne in the home of a baron and baroness. He was welcomed to dinner with his host family every night, and accompanied them on a weekend visit to the family castle in the country. It would appear, based on journals and interview data, that the family dinner hour proved the

most reliable context for Benjamin's language development in Paris. Not only does he note a gradual but definite increase in his ability to follow dinner table conversations over the course of the semester, but also by the end of his stay Benjamin had begun to appreciate the complex character of these interactions:

> I think my host family especially is very well educated very um ya know yeah. so um like dinner conversations, tend to be things that I don't think I could keep up with in English, ya know, like philosophical conversations and all that kind of stuff. I'm like hold on slow down ya know? but I think that's part of it. so … very willing to engage me in debates discussions I think. (Interview, April 2003)

Outside of the family dinner hour, however, Benjamin reports limited opportunities to speak French, largely because he elected to spend most of his free time in the company of the other American students from his home institution, and because he was repeatedly addressed in English during service or casual encounters in Paris. He reports few opportunities to make contact with French-speaking peers, and no development of a social network of French-speaking people.

Benjamin began the study with a history of high achievement in classroom French, an experience of a high school summer immersion program in the United States, one of the top pre-test scores on the TFI (750), and a very good appreciation of the social indexicality of address forms. For Benjamin, the only change in the post-test is in the first age-peer situation, where his earlier and categorical choice of *vous* has now been replaced by a complex explanation based on the social usage he has observed and the contrast between this usage and his personal preferences:

> K: you're eating lunch in the university cafeteria when one of your classmates sits down across the table from you and greets you the classmate is about your age but you are not yet personally acquainted with them.
>
> B: is this personal or based on custom?
>
> K: what is social==
>
> B: what I say?
>
> K: no what is culturally appropriate?
>
> B: I would say tu that's just the impression I get
>
> K: ok
>
> B: with most young people here.

K: ok so from young person to young person even if you don't really know them you say tu.

B: that's the impression I get.

K: ok.

B: I would say vous but that's just me.

K: ok and why would you say vous.

B: just to be polite. anybody I don't know basically unless they're like a little kid or something. (Benjamin, Post-Test)

In this passage of the interview, Benjamin demonstrates his awareness of first and second order indexicality of address forms; that is, he has observed that young people tend to choose *tu* among themselves, but he reserves the right to maintain a polite stance in his own use of these forms. His choice is related to the broader goal of wishing to appear polite in interactions in French. It is unclear whether his stance has emerged from his experience as a participant in family dinner conversations among members of the high bourgeoisie where, according to Ager (1990), families often signal their class-based identity through mutual use of *vous*, or if this stance might have changed if he had participated in more social encounters with peers taking place in French. In any case, Benajmin's awareness of these dimensions of language use and of his right to choose among variable sociolinguistic features of the language may well signal a particularly high level of achievement and, in fact, represent a little-explored aspect of advanced foreign language competence.

Overall the results of this investigation show that while most participants did begin the study with a good understanding of the metapragmatic frameworks guiding address form choice, an important domain of change is in situations involving age-peers. In cases where the learners' awareness of these forms did not initially converge with the basic metapragmatic frameworks of first and second order indexicality, changes are observed in the post-test phase both in pronoun choice and in rationale.

All of the cases explored above involve changes in the perception and use of address forms with peers. Although not explored in detail, it is worth noting that Valerie also adjusted her choice from *vous* to *tu* in the "party acquaintance" situation.

These changes suggest the possibility that learners may have experienced "prodding toward the use of *tu*" as noted by Dewaele (2004, ms. p. 17) and documented in the microgenetic analyses of address form development of Belz & Kinginger (2002;2003).

Additionally, in the post-test four of the participants refined their assessment of the "bakery daughter" service encounter situation, using *vous* instead of the *tu* initially

chosen. Based on journal and logbook data, we know that service encounters were commonplace during our participants' sojourns in France. We suspect, but of course cannot prove, that the changes observed in this domain may have emerged from repeated observation and participation in such encounters, where the formality of the interaction (that is, first order indexicality) may have tended to imply the use of *vous* regardless of age.

D i s c u s s i o n

To recall, the focus of this paper is the development of learners' metapragmatic awareness of the T/V system in French during the study abroad experience. We have argued in the first instance that this system is a key aspect of communicative competence in languages that encode second person-naming in their grammars: knowing how to index another person in an interaction is, after all, fairly indispensable to basic social talk. We have also argued that the T/V system in French is not governed by rules, but is a complex meaning-generating resource operating under considerations of first- and second-order indexicality such that any particular use of an address form is inherently ambiguous. The choice may be driven by immediate features of the setting, including age, appearance, activity in progress, level of formality, etc., and/or it may be driven by second-order, or ideological stances on the part of speakers. In addition to the importance and complexity of this social variability itself, we have pointed to the many studies documenting learners' reluctance to frame themselves as legitimate users of informal variants of second languages. We have also referred to the literature on language socialization and on the role of implicit and declarative memory suggesting that awareness of the social concepts underlying linguistic choice is a key phase in the development of pragmatic competence. These arguments taken together suggest that a study designed to tap learners' awareness of the T/V system at different developmental points might offer insights into language learning that cannot be obtained through performance data alone.

The limitations of the study are many and obvious. We have worked with a small number of participants and have limited the situations tested to six, chosen in advance of the study with sociolinguistic factors rather than ecological validity in mind. In future studies we hope to expand the number of participants and to choose questions for the interview based more closely upon the actual experiences of the participants. Perhaps more importantly, asking participants to reflect aloud on their choice of address forms in a variety of situations produces these choices and reflections, but: 1) it does not reveal what participants would actually do, 2) we can never know precisely how this knowledge developed, and 3) in the end, we simply cannot be certain that we have in fact explored the full extent of learners' language awareness using this methodology.

Nonetheless, we believe that our methodology compares favorably to studies examining the metapragmatic awareness of "native speakers" in the sense that we were

able to elicit, in most cases, in-depth commentary on each situation. We also believe that our data do in fact show changes in the learners' awareness of the T/V system, particularly in the domain of authentic age-peer relationships not normally experienced in classroom foreign language learning. In nearly every case examined, the participants' direct or indirect access to participation in social encounters involving age-peers seems to have impressed upon them the genuine significance of the T/V system while simultaneously offering insights into the socio-cultural concepts underlying the indexicality of address form choice.

In the cases we have examined here, all at the Intermediate level and above on the TFI, development of awareness in this domain does not seem to relate significantly to levels of grammatical competence as measured by scores on a standardized test. In fact, the participant of highest academic distinction, Benjamin, is also the person apparently least willing to accommodate to native-like uses of *tu*. We believe that this is so because the process of socialization into the varieties of academic literacy documented on standard measures of grammatical competence is different in kind from the phenomenon under investigation here, namely, the ways in which learners are apprenticed, through observation and assisted performance, into culturally accepted practices of language use in society. In Benjamin's case, we further believe that resistance to conformity with native-speaker norms, based on in-depth awareness of those norms, of the social constructs they represent, and of the range of acceptable choices within them, may in fact be indicative of advanced knowledge of French.

Conclusion

In the present study, we have attempted to demonstrate that learning about subtle features of a key sociolinguistic feature of French does appear to take place for the study abroad participants involved in our research. As a contribution to the ongoing debate on the utility of study abroad in language learning, we believe that the approach taken here may represent an initial step toward mapping heretofore relatively unexplored domains of growth in socially-situated knowledge about language during study abroad. With Thorne (in press) we argue that inquiry into "lived" language learning may lead us beyond "proficiency" to a more complex and nuanced understanding of advanced level abilities, including the "meta-cognitive awareness of sociolinguistic differences and potentially conflicting pragmatic demands" to which Freed refers (1995: 27). Study abroad participants clearly do have opportunities to observe and to participate in socially meaningful and immediately purposeful activities. We believe that the assessment of the study abroad experience in terms of language learning should expressly include attempts to investigate what this access means: how, when and why it translates into active engagement and socio-cognitive development.

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A p p e n d i x   A

Tu/Vous Choice Situations from the Language Awareness Interview

For each of the situations, explain whether you would call the person you are talking to "*tu*" or "*vous*" and how you decide.

1. You are eating lunch in the university cafeteria when one of your classmates sits down across the table from you and greets you. The classmate is about your age but you are not yet personally acquainted with them.

2. and 3. You are being interviewed for a part-time job babysitting for a 6 year old boy. When you meet the boy's mother, do you call her "*tu*" or "*vous*"? When you meet him for the first time do you call the boy "*tu*" or "*vous*"?

4. and 5. You have been frequenting the same bakery for several weeks and the lady at the counter now recognizes you and often exchanges pleasantries with you when you visit the bakery. She is about 50 years old and has a daughter your age who sometimes works at the bakery after school. What do you call the older woman? What do you call the younger woman?

6. You are walking down the street when you run into someone you met at a party last week.

Appendix B
Transcription Conventions

The transcription system adapted from vanLier's *A Classroom and the Language Learner* (1988) was employed for each of the three interviews (pre-departure, midterm, and end-of-experience). Detailed pause lengths were not noted, since overall content was of concern and not the pause lengths or the mid-word intonation. The system employed includes the following conventions:

- The initial of the learner's pseudonym is used to indicate present speaker.
- Long pauses, of five seconds or more, are indicated with three periods: …
- Intonation is marked three ways (comma, question mark, and period):

  oui, →? rising intonation, suggesting intention to continue speaking

  oui? →? rising intonation in a question

  oui. →? falling (utterance final) intonation

- One or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound.

- <u>Underlining</u> indicates marked prominence through pitch or amplitude.

- A hyphen indicates an abrupt cut-off with level pitch.

- Single parentheses ( ) indicate an unclear or probable item.

- Double parentheses (( )) indicate transcriber's comments.

- Capital letters are used only for proper nouns, not to indicate beginnings of sentences.

- Unclear items for which no interpretation can be derived are indicated with (xxx)